

MATURE TIMES

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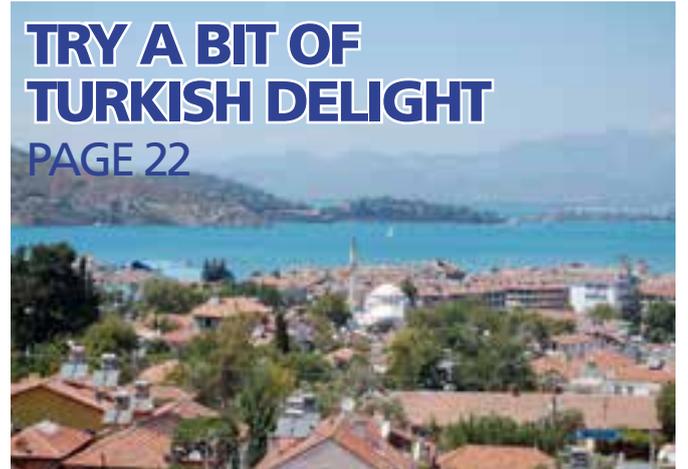


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What's in the Queen's Speech for older people?

As we all know, a new government is now in power and Boris Johnson has secured a significant majority following last month's sensational election victory.

FOLLOWING THE paralysis that we have all had to endure in parliament in the run up to the election together with the impasse over Brexit, the fact that Johnson has secured such an overwhelming majority means that he can now govern the country, with very little challenge to what he wants to do and how he wants to do it.

With such a commanding position it's important that we get back to running the country for the benefit of us, its citizens, investing in our infrastructure, in our NHS and dealing with the challenges that will face us as a past member of the European Union once we leave at the end of this month as Boris has promised.

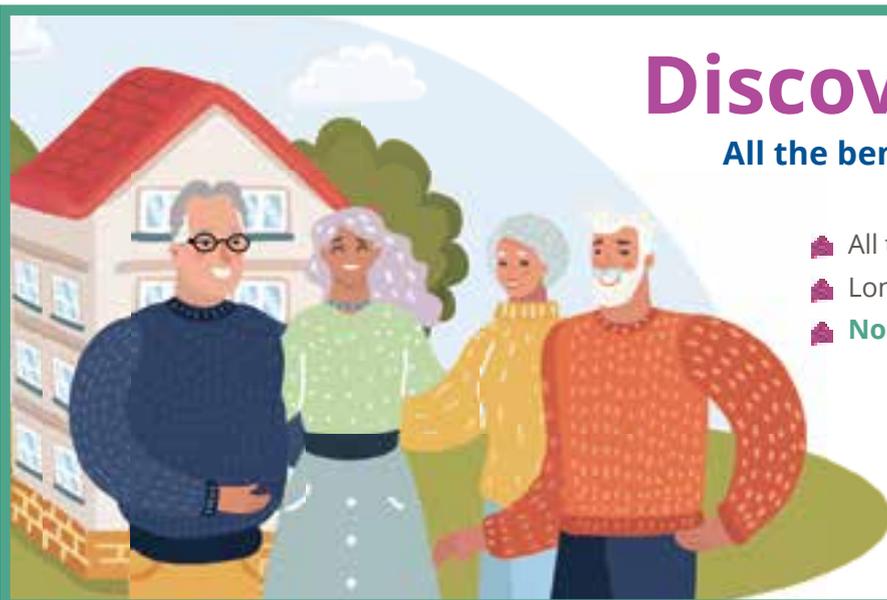
The Queen's Speech

The government sets out its stall in the Queen's Speech. In essence it outlines the laws that the government wants Parliament to approve in the forthcoming session and officially marks the start of the parliamentary year. Tradition dictates that a new government can't start to govern properly until a Queen's Speech has been delivered and debated on by MP's. The speech is then voted on by MP's, largely a symbolic move, and then the government can set about its business.

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COMMENT

What do we want for 2020?

The start of a New Year and therefore the time for reflection. In her speech on Christmas Day the Queen acknowledged that 2019 had been "quite a bumpy year". As understatement goes, I think that one is just about right.



Here are some of the things we would like to see happen in 2020

AS WE say in our front page story this edition the biggest issue that older people will want to see addressed, or at least substantial progress being made towards solving the problem is in relation to Social Care. This has been neglected for so long and so many people have had to suffer, and suffer quite needlessly as a result.

It is good to see that the government have made substantial commitments towards trying to find a cross party solution to the problem, but let's not kid ourselves, this is a problem that is going to be difficult to resolve. The chances of finding a solution that are acceptable to all are slim indeed but all we can do is watch the progress that is made and ensure that this issue doesn't slip back down the political agenda and again get sidelined.

The question of free TV licences for older people is another area that needs to be resolved as this universal benefit will not be available to all from the beginning of June this year, instead it will become a means tested benefit.

It seems like our prime minister is on a collision course with the BBC with his various pronouncements over the last few months. What is certain is that for now, from June many older people are going to be worse off by having to pay for their TV licences. This is an issue that many older peoples charities are continuing to campaign on – all we can say is that we support the provision of free TV licences for all over 75s – so watch this space as we will continue to keep you updated on progress as this debate continues to rumble on.

The NHS and our Health Service is another area that we need to see substantial progress on – and again it is good to see that the government has put this at the front of their political agenda with the announcements of significant investment in these services.

Once again though the proof of the pudding is in the eating – and we need to see significant progress made towards achieving improvements not just for older people but for society as a whole. We must, however, also acknowledge that change and improvements will take time to implement and to come on stream so we must be patient as well. However, I think most people are quite rational and as long as we can see that progress is being made and that the promises that have been given are being implemented, then we can accept that whilst improvements will take time, they will eventually come to benefit us all.

Public transport is another area where we need to see investment and commitments made. Unfortunately too much of our public transport system is run for profit and not as a public service anymore and this puts pressure on services, particularly those that don't pay their way.

Unfortunately it is those very services that tend to be used more by older people, especially in rural areas. Without access to good public transport, older people can be reluctant to go out and that therefore causes social isolation and loneliness. As we all know, loneliness can have many adverse health effects on people meaning they may need to rely on our overstretched NHS more and more – do you recognise that vicious circle? I know I do!

We also need to give serious thought to how we tackle pensioner poverty which is on the rise again. It is abhorrent that in an advanced and forward thinking country like the UK an estimated one in six pensioners live in poverty. This is a stain on our society and one that should be eradicated.

It is clear that there is much to be done in the year ahead and rest assured we here at Mature Times we will continue to do our best to champion the rights and views of older people. Whatever area it is, if it affects older people, then we want to bring this to your attention and campaign to eradicate the issue that make life difficult for older people.

What would you like to see change? Why not write to us at the normal address?

The senior moment

by Andrew Silk, Editor



Extreme Weather

IS OUR weather this winter more extreme than normal, or am I just imagining things? We had a massive deluge of rain in the run up to Christmas, rain that fell on already heavily saturated ground, and rain that had nowhere to go. So much so that on the Sunday before Christmas the Environmental Agency had issued more than 100 flood warnings across the UK.

These warnings follow on from the severe flooding that parts of Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire experienced from unprecedented levels of rainfall in November of last year when even more flood warnings were issued – some 147 in total.

Perhaps this is why in the Queens Speech the government committed to spend some £4bn over the course of this Parliament on improving flood defences across the country – but of course that is too little too late for those people that have been severely affected this winter.

But can we ever predict what mother nature will do, and when? Well in fact no we can't, all we can do is look at history and the areas that we know are hard hit and try and make things better to prevent them from happening again in the future. But the fact is that weather will be unpredictable – and solving a problem in one area will not stop a problem from occurring elsewhere.

Whatever you think the reasons are, the fact is that each year that goes by some part of the country will be devastated by flooding, just look back through the history of recent years. All that this does is go to show that £4bn will not be nearly enough to prevent this from occurring – this is an issue that will happen year after year and therefore the investment in solving these issues need to be ongoing, year after year, not just for the duration of this parliament. And that is one hell of an environmental challenge for this government going forward.

Racism In Sport

I WAS deeply upset to see the scenes that took place at the recent Tottenham Hotspur v Chelsea football game just before Christmas where the Chelsea player, Antonio Rudiger was subject to vile "monkey chants"

from some so called Tottenham fans.

This was the first time that a Premier League game had ever had the so called "Protocols" enforced with three separate public address announcements made advising the crowd that "Racist behavior amongst spectators is interfering with the game".

But unfortunately, this is a repulsive form of abuse that appears to be on the rise in football – it is not the first high profile incident to occur during a football game this season – and I am certain that it won't be the last – sad as I am to say that!

But it is not just a football thing, it is a society issue as well. And whilst high profile incidents attract massive condemnation, and rightly so, what about those innocent people that go about their daily lives and, through no fault of their own, have to suffer such vile abuse with little or no recourse?

Racism has no place in our society and neither does discrimination or intimidation in any form. As a country we should be ashamed when these incidents make the press, but we should also be ashamed about all those incidents that don't make the headlines as well. This is a curse that needs to be eradicated and it is nothing less than disgraceful that as a society we still allow things like this to happen.

Happy New Year

AND FINALLY, the advent of another New Year, a time of hope and a time to reflect. There's no doubt that 2019 was a difficult year for many reasons, but being an optimist I am much more hopeful that 2020 will be a year of change and a year of improvement for us all.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a prosperous and happy New Year and hope that you will continue to read and support Mature Times throughout 2020 – after all without your support we don't have a paper. You might not agree with all that we stand for, but fundamentally we are the champions of older people's rights – and the largest publication in the UK dedicated to fighting the corner for older people. In this difficult and fragmented media landscape it remains extremely important that the voices of older people are represented and that is what we dedicate ourselves to doing.

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PUBLISHER

Highwood House Publishing Limited
Suite G, The Old Vicarage Business
Centre, Somerset Square, Nailsea,
Bristol, BS48 1RN

Tel: 01275 852317

admin@maturetimes.co.uk

EDITORIAL

Editor: Andrew Silk
editorial@maturetimes.co.uk

DISTRIBUTION

distribution@maturetimes.co.uk

SALES

Tel: 020 7520 9474

Fax: 020 7520 9475

Landmark Publishing Services
Anne Marie Fox amf@lps.co.uk
Sharon Davies sharon@lps.co.uk

Design: Martyn Davies
design@maturetimes.co.uk

Promotions/Competitions:

promotions@maturetimes.co.uk

PR/Marketing:

marketing@maturetimes.co.uk

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Economy receives boost after Conservative election victory

THE IMMEDIATE effect of Boris Johnson's recent election victory was seen as the confidence that Company Directors felt in the economy going forward leapt sharply upward following the election, entering positive territory and reaching its highest level since the 2016 EU referendum, according to the latest Confidence Tracker undertaken by The Institute of Directors (IoD).

In a poll of its members conducted in the vote's aftermath the IoD found that overall confidence in the economy for the year ahead reached positive 21%, up from negative 18% last month, also marking the largest positive swing ever recorded by the IoD.

Directors' confidence in their own firms also increased to positive 46%.

The pick-up in confidence was accompanied by a significant increase in leaders' investment intentions for the year ahead. A net balance of 18% expected their investment levels to increase.

Long term uncertainty

Hiring expectations also increased, albeit slightly, while the bulk of members anticipated higher costs in the 12 months ahead, highlighting that the new Government has its work cut out to support the labour market and to cut firms' mounting costs.

The research found that the current state of the economy remained the top challenge for directors, followed by continued uncertainty around the UK's future relationship with the EU.

Tej Parikh, Chief Economist at the Institute of

Directors, said:

'Britain's directors will be entering 2020 with a little more cheer than might have been expected only a few weeks ago. A firm majority government means that business leaders, whatever their personal views, now at least have a framework around which they can put in place plans to invest, hire, and expand.

'There are undoubtedly some exciting policies for businesses in the Government's agenda. Plans to increase and broaden R&D tax credits are a positive move, as is the commitment to lower business rates and investment in the skills system. For the longer-term, ambitious proposals on broadband, infrastructure, and regional growth are music to the ears of many in the business community who want to finally see the dial shift on the UK's lagging productivity growth.

'Clearly, however, the uncertainty surrounding the UK's long-term relationship with our largest trading partner remains a cause for concern. Our members' confidence has proven sensitive to Brexit developments over the past few years, and this is likely to continue during negotiations in the year ahead.'

The research is further evidence that business likes a settled political environment and backs up many commentators views that once a majority government was in power that could govern then whatever the outcome of Brexit, confidence would start to seep back into the UK economy and the businesses that operate in that environment.

Renewable power outperforms gas

New power generation record for renewables - outperforming gas for first quarter ever

RENEWABLEUK, THE trade body for the UK renewables energy industry say new official figures show that renewables generated a record amount of electricity between July and September last year, outperforming gas.

The latest "Energy Trends" report published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy shows that in the third quarter of 2019 renewables provided a record 38.9% of the UK's electricity, exceeding gas at 38.8%.

The Government report highlights what it describes as "a strong performance from renewable sources". This new quarterly record for renewables beats the previous one of 36.8% set in the fourth quarter of 2018.

Low carbon electricity (renewables and nuclear) rose to a record high of 57.3% due to increased renewables generation. Generation from fossil fuels decreased to a record low of 40.1%.

The report states that the rise is due to increases in renewable generation capacity as well as favourable weather conditions, particularly for offshore wind. It highlights wind as the principal source of renewable generation, providing 19% of the UK's electricity in Q3.

RenewableUK's Head of Policy and Regulation Rebecca Williams said:

'We've reached a historic tipping point with renewables outperforming gas for the first quarter ever. This is great news for all of us who are committed to reaching net zero emissions as fast and as cheaply as possible. As MPs take their seats in the new Parliament, we're looking forward to working closely with the new Government to speed up the transition to clean power.

'Wind is playing the leading role in this, generating nearly 20% of our electricity between July and September. We need to use a wide range of technologies to tackle dangerous climate change, including onshore wind as well as offshore, innovative floating wind and tidal power'.

RenewableUK members are building our future energy system, powered by clean electricity.

They bring them together to deliver that future faster; a future which is better for industry, bill payers, and the environment. They support over 400 member companies to ensure increasing amounts of renewable electricity are deployed across the UK and access markets to export all over the world.

To find out more visit www.renewableuk.com

Whirlpool in the news again

NEARLY EIGHTY fires have been caused recently by Whirlpool washing machines, as a result of an overheating door locking system.

The faults are thought to have been identified in just over 500,000 washing machines made by the company and sold in the UK under the Hotpoint and Indesit brands since 2014.

This is hot on the heels of the previous recall the company made last year of around 800,000 tumble dryers that were also in danger of catching fire.

Apparently this was a fault with the heating element that meant that excess fluff could be caught inside increasing the risk of fire.

Recall programme

The company are to start a recall programme on the affected machines this month, but have been criticised for not acting earlier and undertaking the recall programme as soon as the fault was identified.

If you own either a Hotpoint or Indesit washing machine that you have purchased since 2014 you can go online and check whether your machine is one that is considered at risk and will be one of those that will be recalled by the company.

You will need to have details of the model of machine that you own as well as the serial number of the appliance (you can find the serial number on either the inside of the door or the back of the machine).

Alternatively you can call the free helpline that is open daily.

If you find that your appliance is one of those that is affected then you should immediately unplug this and refrain from using it.

You will then have two options once the recall programme starts and that is to have the machine repaired in your home, free of charge by a qualified engineer or you can elect to receive a like for like replacement washing machine which will also be

provided free of charge.

However, the company has given no time frame for dealing with the problem or when individual machines that are affected will be re-called.

This could mean that customers are left without a washing machine for an indefinite period.

It has refused to give cash refunds to those that are affected which would allow people to go and buy an alternative machine which they could then start to use immediately.

The company has been criticised by MP's for its approach to the problem following on from the issues that were seen with last year's tumble drier recall.

Rachel Reeves, who chaired the Business Committee in the last Parliament, which investigated the Whirlpool saga, called for those affected by the washing machine recall to be offered a refund, rather than just a repair or replacement.

'I understand Whirlpool is refusing to offer refunds to consumers hit by this latest safety problem in what seems to be a never-ending saga,' she said.

'That refusal will further damage consumer confidence and shows a lack of respect for the people on whom Whirlpool's profits depend.'

The company defended its decision not to offer a refund by saying that a refund would not ensure the fire-prone machines were withdrawn from people's homes, which was its priority. It has put in a range of plans, including hiring engineers and building up call centre staffing to help resolve the problem.

The company said it was in contact with various second-hand sales platforms to alert them to recall and ensure the affected products were not sold, as it had for the tumble dryer recall. It said very few of these appliances would still be in stock with regular retailers and should not be sold.

To find out if your machine is affected then you can visit www.washingmachinerecall.whirlpool.co.uk/ or call 0800 316 1442

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NEWS

What's in the Queen's Speech for older people?

Continued from Page 1

The last Prime Minister to lose a vote on the speech was coincidentally a Conservative and that was Stanley Baldwin way back in 1924. The chances of Boris losing the vote this time around are very slim indeed.

So what is in the Queen's Speech this time?

Well, to put it bluntly, as Queen's Speeches go this one was a whopper with the government setting out 36 separate pieces of legislation that it wants to see get done over the life of this parliament.

The Prime Minister made it clear that he wanted to repay the trust of the voters who gave him his massive majority and that he

NHS will become a priority with an annual increase of £34bn

wanted to "release the country from the stranglehold of indecision" that it has faced in the run up to the election.

So let's look at some of the pledges:

The NHS

The NHS is a key service for many older people in this country, and one that has come under intense scrutiny and pressure in recent years as a result of under-investment in both staff and facilities. The government has indicated that in this parliament the NHS will become a priority and has pledged an annual budget increase for the service of just under £34bn to be effective by the year 2023 – 24. It has also pledged to build 40 new hospitals, recruit 50,000 more nurses and 6,000 more doctors as well as a further 6,000 more primary care practitioners. It is anticipated that these changes will enable some 50 million more doctor appointments to be available each year.

It has also pledged to provide free hospital car parking for the most vulnerable.

Social Care

On social care the government has pledged to "ensure that the social care system provides everyone with the dignity and security



"No one who needs care will have to sell their home to pay for it."

they deserve and that no one who needs care will have to sell their home to pay for it". Additional funding of at least £1bn a year will be made available for adult and children's social care for every year of the parliament.

The government also announced that it will launch a cross party consultation on whether to introduce into law a 2% increase in Council Tax specifically to go towards funding adult social care – a move that is, if approved, expected to add an additional £500 million a year to the monies that local councils have available to spend on care provision.

Pensions

Several announcements were made in

relation to pensions which included the introduction of a "pensions dashboard" allowing people to access information on schemes online. There will also be protection of the current triple lock.

However, no announcements or provisions were made for the so called Waspi women in the speech which will disappoint many.

The Police

The government has stated that it will look to make our streets safer and to do that it will recruit an extra 20,000 police officers across the term of this parliament. It will also look to introduce tougher sentencing for terrorists and other serious criminals.

The government has also said that it will



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The government pledged that Britain should be carbon neutral by 2050. Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

look to introduce a new criminal offence that makes it illegal to set up unauthorised camps. Such legislation will allow the police to move in and arrest unauthorised campers as well as seize their vehicles and other property, preventing the paralysis that we saw in Central London and other cities last year with the Extinction Rebellion protests.

Criminal Justice

As alluded to previously, tougher sentences will be introduced for the most serious criminals and terrorists including a minimum sentence term of 14 years for the worst offenders. Further, the point at which discretionary release can be considered for

those convicted of terrorist offences that are no longer deemed dangerous will be moved from the current half way point in their sentence to two thirds of the way through.

Criminals who have been given life sentences will also see the minimum terms they must serve increased to bring them in line with other offenders. Meanwhile, tougher community sentences which will include longer curfews and more hours of community service work will be introduced to punish those that are considered regular, repeat or prolific offenders.

Climate change

The government has reiterated its pledge

that Britain should be carbon neutral by 2050 and to aid getting there has vowed to ensure that those who convert to electric vehicles will always be no further than 30 miles away from a charging point.

Part of the plans to tackle climate change will see some £4bn invested in improving flood defences across the country and £9.2bn invested to improve energy efficiency in schools and homes. A £500 million Blue Planet Fund will also be introduced to help protect our seas from plastic pollution and overfishing.

Education

This is another area where the government is pledging to spend big with school spending increasing by some £14bn over the next three years. Every secondary school will receive an extra £5,000 per pupil to spend and each primary school an extra £3,750. Teachers will also be given a pay rise and the government, in a bid to attract more teachers into the profession is guaranteeing a minimum starting salary for all of £30,000 by 2022.

An additional £1.8bn will be made available over the five years of this government to upgrade and rebuild further education colleges across the country.

Security

RECOGNISING THE increasing impact of technology on our National Security the government is looking to introduce new and modernised powers to allow the security services to better fight threats from hostile states such as the novichok attack in Salisbury.

And the above are only some of the highlights as

they affect older people – there are many more other bills that the government will be looking to introduce and legislate on. It's early days yet, but there is a lot of business for the government to get through.

Let's not judge too early

As we all know, the proof of the pudding of course comes in the eating, and we will have to wait and see what progress the government makes towards achieving its targets over the coming months and years.

The hardest problem that the government has to solve in relation to older people is of course the social care conundrum and this is something that needs to be prioritised and a working solution found sooner rather than later. The quicker cross party consultation on this issue takes place the better for all.

But the initial moves seem encouraging – rest assured we will be monitoring progress over coming years – Boris – you've now got the majority, now it's time for you to start to deliver on your promises.

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Colin Cox is not your usual NZ farmer. He's had an adventurous, amazing life and been featured in TV, radio and press interviews. Along with the late Sir Peter Elworthy he was an early pioneer in deer farming and helped set up the possum fur industry in New Zealand.

It was not until 2002, at the age of 60, that Colin became aware of the unique feature of possum fur – that it is hollow and thus able to trap heat.

With this in mind he began experiments and over the next few years Colin found that specially treated possum fur when placed **directly against the skin** of the wearer's lower back had the effect of relieving their lower back pain in varying degrees. From these trials came the now



Fur against skin as in right hand photo

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Mahe Drysdale Wins Olympic Gold

The real breakthrough came in 2011 when, struck down with osteoarthritis, Olympic rower Mahe Drysdale was struggling to train through his intense pain. There were days when he could not.

He had tried just about everything to end his back pain, but nothing worked. In desperation he agreed to trial the belt and, to his great delight, gained significant pain relief. Only then was he able to resume daily on the water training again.

Just 12 months later in 2012, against all odds, Mahe won his first Olympic gold medal while wearing the belt. Continuing with the belt he repeated his win in 2016.

Since first trying the possum belt back in 2011, Mahe Drysdale has worn it virtually every day since and freely admits that it has changed his life.

In 2020, Mahe will again be competing and wearing our belt, at an age when most rowers have retired. We wish him all the very best.

Some Further Case Studies

Isapeli Aholelei from Auckland suffered severe back pain from osteoarthritis for several years. This also affected her sleep. Some months ago she purchased a belt and now reports a 40% drop in pain and is able to sleep much better.

Fraser Gordon is an active farmer. He severely damaged his back in his 30s lifting stray sheep over a fence into a neighbour's property. He spent about 40 years in severe pain. Five years ago he acquired a belt and says the results have been nothing short of incredible in that when he wears the belt he has virtually no pain at all. Due to his own experience he has bought and given away more than 20 belts over the past few years.

Vietnam veteran Don Merito wrecked his back jumping out of helicopters and from moving trucks. For over 30 years he was in agony and could only garden for about 20 minutes a day. Wearing the belt he can now garden all day and for the first time in years enjoys a good night's sleep. 'It's a miracle' says his wife.

We have many stories like these on our website and in our **free brochure**.

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COMMENT

Over 80s saving government billions

New analysis finds our over 80s save government £23 billion a year through the unpaid care they give loved ones

Almost a million over 80s now provide care, up nearly a quarter in eight years

NEW FIGURES by the charity, Age UK show that an army of carers amongst the oldest old in our society (80 years old and over) provide 23 million hours of unpaid care a week which adds up to 1.2 billion hours of care a year, saving the health and care system a massive £23 billion a year.

Almost 1 in 3 (30 per cent) older people aged 80 and over are carers and since 2010 the number of carers in this age group has rocketed by nearly a quarter (23 per cent) to 970,000.

Health problems for carers

The staggering amount of hours of caring a week comes at a cost to carers own health and wellbeing, many of whom already have their own long-term health conditions, and are unable to leave the home or get sufficient breaks from their caring duties. New analysis shows that seven out of ten (71 per cent) have long standing health problems of their own with nearly 1 in 2 (46 per cent) having difficulty with moving about at home, walking or lifting carrying, or moving objects.

Furthermore, 24 per cent of carers in this age group are caring for more than 35 hours a week while a further 13 per cent are caring for more than 20 hours a week. As our population continues to age it is estimated that there will be 4.6 million

people aged eighty and over by 2030.

The Charity is highlighting the huge but often hidden contribution to our society by older carers while also shining a light on the shocking levels of care being provided by them.

The majority of these older people are looking after a partner as older couples try to manage living at home for as long as possible, leaning on each other for support. A minority care for disabled sons and daughters.

Numbers on the rise

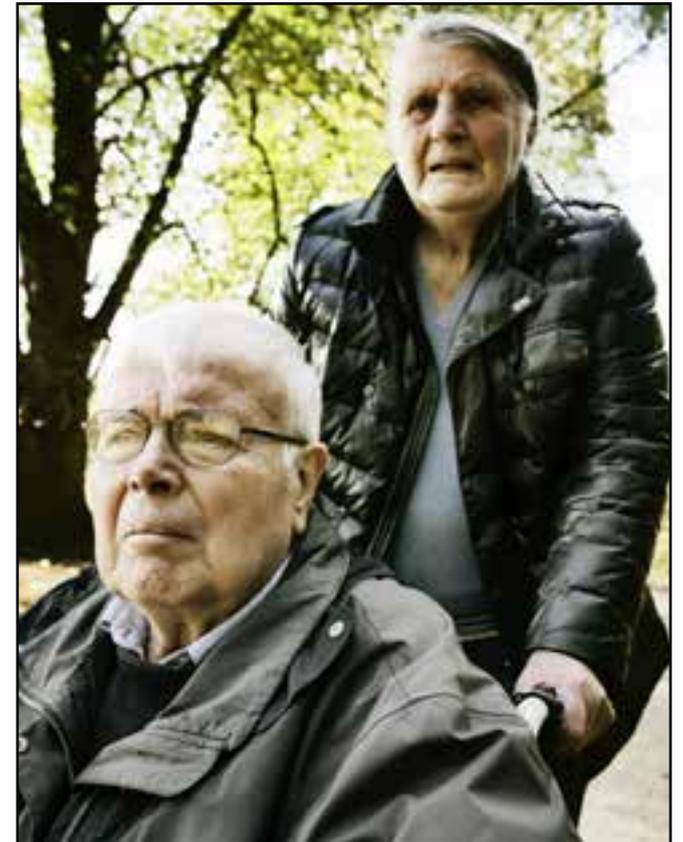
Meanwhile, the total number of carers aged 65 and over who are providing informal care for another person has risen from 2.7 million to 3.3 million in the last eight years.

Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director at Age UK said: 'Nearly a million over 80 year olds are gifting the Government a whopping £23 billion a year and it's high time these fantastic older people got something back in return. Almost all of them willingly provide care for the person they love, typically a sick or disabled husband or wife, son or daughter, but by repeatedly failing to sort out our social care system the State is exploiting their goodwill and often leaving them to manage incredibly difficult situations alone. The burden placed on these older Carers' shoulders is not only physical and emotional but financial too, because after years of government underfunding so many older people who need care are having to pay for it themselves, wiping out the savings they've worked hard for all their lives and sometimes resulting in the family home having to be sold.'

Calls to refinance and reform the care system

'Blessed as it is with such a substantial Parliamentary majority, our new government is better placed than any in the last twenty years to refinance and reform social care. The Prime Minister has promised to fix care and now he needs to follow through, with no more excuses or delays – surely it's the least our brilliant older Carers deserve.'

Len, 84, full-time carer for his wife said: 'I have only one hand,



arthritis of the spine, nodules on the nerve canals in my spine and I've suffered from two strokes. I don't have time to think about me! I didn't even realise I had had one stroke, let alone two! We've each worked for most of our lives, paying our taxes which we still pay on our pensions, which seems grossly unfair.'

Fatbergs – what exactly are they?

WE ARE all becoming, or at least I hope we are, more environmentally conscious as we start to realise the damage that our waste and rubbish is doing to our planet.

Something new or something different tends to gain news headlines and so it is over recent years with the advent of the "fatberg", which have slowly found their way into our language and our consciousness. I'm sure you have all heard of them but what actually are they?

Well, if you actually look at them, fatbergs are actually probably one of the most disgusting things that you will ever come up against. Thames Water, who are dealing with these things every day actually define what a fatberg is on their website – they say a fatberg is "a very large mass of solid waste in a sewerage system, consisting of things such as congealed fat, oils and sanitary products that have been put down the drains or flushed down the toilet."

They go on to say, in an almost Orwellian manner that fatbergs "Quietly expand day after day, the congealed rancid masses of human waste, fat, oil and wet wipes are menaces, unique to 21st century living. Capable of breaking the sewage system, their threat lies in the ability to wreak sewage havoc in homes and businesses. Sewers designed only for water, toilet paper and human waste are increasingly used as a rubbish bin. The sewer system simply cannot cope."

This is because as a society we tend to flush more and more waste products down our toilets and drains and therefore into our sewage system. Many of us now throw used cooking fat and oils down the drain rather than allowing it to cool and then disposing of it in our bins, thinking it is better to wash them away than send them to landfill, not being aware of the



damage that doing so can be helping to inflict. When we then flush other products that take time to degrade down the toilet, products including wet wipes, sanitary products, cotton wool and used condoms for example that will mix with the used oils and fats, then congeal then we are at risk of blockages starting to form. Once a blockage starts to form it can build up quite quickly and start to cause damage to the sewerage system.

Once a blockage begins to form, waste products can't get past it to the sewage works where they need to go to be treated and therefore with nowhere to go, the waste

products simply start to back up until, ultimately, it has to go back to where it came from.

How serious are they?

Well, the simple answer is very!

In fact they can be colossal as can the damage that they can do. In September 2017 Thames Water engineers encountered what became known as "The Whitechapel Fatberg". This was the largest ever fatberg discovered in our sewerage systems – it was estimated to be twice the length of two Wembley football pitches and to weigh the same as 11 double decker buses, around 130 tonnes apparently. To clear

the thing was no pleasant job – it took eight engineers several weeks to clear the fatberg – blasting away at it with high powered jet hoses and clearing between 20 and 30 tonnes of disgusting waste each shift which then had to be taken away for treatment elsewhere. The thing was so big, and the operation to clear it so vast that it became a regular news item in its own right. In fact a public vote actually gave it a name and christened it "Fatty McFatberg".

In another incident, Thames Water engineers found a huge 40-tonne fatberg blocking a sewer in South London. It was cleared following a heroic effort by their engineers, who even pulled out some of the monster blockage with their hands. The mass, which weighed the same as three red buses, was clogging up an underground sewer in Greenwich and took three weeks to clear, using a combination of high-powered water jets to blast the blockage loose and removing the debris by hand. They pulled out tonnes of fat, grease and other material as they battled the fatberg, which at points had taken up 80 per cent of the sewer's capacity.

How to prevent them from occurring?

Advice from Thames is that to help reduce the risk of fatbergs forming in the future, we all have a responsibility to ensure only the 3Ps are flushed down the loo - pee, paper and poo!

Cooking oils and fats need to be left to cool and solidify before being disposed of in the bin, instead of putting them down the drain. If in doubt, remember to bin it – don't block it.

So there you go – let's all do our little bit and stop these disgusting things from rearing their ugly heads again!

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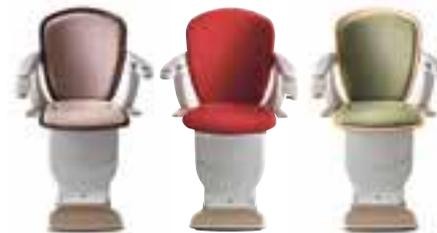


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FINANCE

Cash machine closures go on, and on



CASH MACHINE closures mean more than 115,000 people now have no cash point in their postcode, according to research from consumer group Which?

There are no cash machines in 130 postcodes, meaning an estimated 115,000 plus people struggle to withdraw physical money. A further 129 areas have only one cash machine, and of these 84 charge a fee to take money out.

Which? said the 259 areas were also at risk of cashpoints closing in neighbouring postcodes, further stranding those reliant on cash.

Gareth Shaw, of Which?, said: 'The countless communities across the UK with shockingly low cash machine provision show that measures intended to guarantee access to cash simply don't work – and point to mismanagement of the broken cash landscape that is leaving many people struggling.'

No ATM, no Post Office

Many customers living in cash deserts with no ATM may also be unable or unwilling to withdraw money at Post Offices. Of the 130 regions with no cash machine, 36 also have no Post Office branch.

A Which? statement said the firm also 'believes Post Office access is not a direct substitute' for a physical cash machine and that customers prefer using ATMs.

Martin Kearsley, of the Post Office, said: 'We are a hugely important part of the solution to this problem – our 11,500 branches, including 6,000 in rural areas, provide a significant free-at-the-point-of-use cash withdrawal and deposit network.'

As the demographic most reliant on cash and also the least mobile, the elderly are hit hardest by cash machine closures.

Caroline Abrahams, of Age UK, the charity, said: 'It's unacceptable that so many communities are being left without access to cash. The steady withdrawal of free cashpoints up and down the country shows we are drifting towards becoming a cashless society, with nowhere near enough consideration being shown for those who are being left behind.'

Cashpoints have been closing or charging for withdrawals after the rising cost of providing these machines led many operators to demand fees.

Cash machine providers can afford to supply free ATMs because they are paid per withdrawal by debit or credit card firms. But last July Link, the cash machine network, began the first of a series of cuts to these "interchange fees", leading to many free machines having to charge or close.

Britain is currently losing free machines at a rate

of around 600 a month according to Which? These closures are happening as figures show that cash usage in the UK continues to decline – in 2017 the use of debit cards to make payments overtook the number of transactions undertaken with physical cash for the first time and this trend continued into 2018 when cash payments fell to an estimated 10.9 billion, a decline of some 16% on the previous year.

Figures from UK Finance show that cash payments predominantly tend to be for low value purchases with over half of all cash payments being for a value of £5 or less, whilst some 78% are for £10 or less. Meanwhile, in contrast, the average cashless debit card transaction was £9.64 at the end of 2018.

The figures also show just how much in decline cash usage is in our society. In 2008 some 60% of retail transactions were undertaken in cash, a figure that showed a rapid decline to just 28% in 2018. Furthermore, UK Finance predicts further rapid declines in cash usage over the next 10 years to just 9% of all transactions by 2028.

Withdrawals in decline

Meanwhile, cash machine usage is also in decline with figures showing that the actual volume of cash machine withdrawals has declined by some 17% since its peak in 2012. The decline was more rapid across 2018 than in previous years with cash withdrawals down some 7% on 2017 levels whilst the value of cash withdrawn across the year also fell by 8%.

Access to cash has been worsened by bank branches closing. Towns and cities have lost a third of their branches in the last five years, falling from 9,803 to 6,549.

The closures have been driven by the four largest banks, which were responsible for 77% of all physical branches shutting. The worst was RBS, owner of Royal Bank of Scotland and NatWest. The group shut 1,050 outlets, or 56% of its total, between January 2015 and August 2019.

Now Which? wants the new government to legislate to make sure consumers can keep accessing and paying with cash.

Rural communities are hit harder than towns and cities, according to another report last month. Those living in the countryside have to travel three times further to find a free ATM than urban dwellers.

Since October any community without a free cashpoint has been able to apply to Link to have one installed. More than 100 towns and villages have already applied.



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‘Winter burnout’ leaving you exhausted?

For many of us, the real culprit could be a lack of magnesium.

At first, Annie Evans thought it was a depressing sign of getting older. Just getting washed and dressed in the morning was leaving her too worn out to do much else.

‘It was more than just tiredness,’ says Annie. ‘I was exhausted all the time. But at 74, I was just putting it down to old age.’

By the time winter arrived, Annie was left with ‘no energy at all’.

So when her husband heard that a magnesium supplement could help, she knew she had to give it a try. Annie found the difference remarkable. ‘After just two weeks, I was like a new woman,’ she says.

Like Annie, more and more British people are discovering a link between a lack of magnesium in their diet and a lack of energy that can get worse with age.

That’s because magnesium is an essential mineral that contributes to our normal psychological and muscle functions. Low levels of it in our bodies can lead to tiredness that affects both our muscles and mood.

It helps our muscles and nervous system function correctly, keeps our bones and teeth strong and is important for brain functions like concentration and

memory.

But the latest National Diet & Nutrition Survey has shown that only half of us in the UK are getting our recommended daily intake of magnesium, and it gets harder as we get older.

Magnesium is naturally present in foods like kale and spinach, black beans, nuts, bananas and whole grains. Our bodies have to absorb magnesium to take advantage of its benefits. The ease with which a mineral is absorbed by the body is called ‘bioavailability’. But magnesium isn’t always so ‘bioavailable’.

“..I realised that I had no energy at all. I put it down to age..”

‘Some magnesium salts may contain a high concentration of magnesium but it’s not easily released into the body because it’s not so soluble,’ explains Miriam Ferrer PhD, head of product development at FutureYou Cambridge, a leading



nutritional supplement company.

To address this, the FutureYou Cambridge scientists set out to develop a supplement specially designed to maximise the body’s magnesium uptake, called Magnesium+.

Magnesium+ works by using a bioavailable formulation called magnesium lactate, a highly soluble organic form that’s easy for the body to absorb.

After a few months on the supplement, Annie found she was able to maintain her energy levels.

‘I can enjoy gardening again without getting very tired,’ she says. ‘Since then, I have taken Magnesium+ religiously every day.’

Try Magnesium+ Before You Buy It

FUTUREYOU, a Cambridge nutraceutical company known for its well researched nutritional supplements, has announced that it is offering new customers the chance to try its flagship energy product Magnesium+ for just the cost of the £1.50 postage.* The company has built a large following of customers, most of whom

“Within a week, I felt that I had regained my energy, both mental and physical,”

are over 50. The offer is aimed at the over 50s, who commonly suffer with low energy and fatigue, but is open to people of all ages.

It comes after the Cambridge firm

received positive reviews for its best-selling energy product on Trustpilot, the independent online review platform.

‘Having felt listless, low and apathetic for some time, with frequent leg and eyelid cramps, I decided to try these good quality magnesium supplements. Within a week, I felt that I had regained my energy, both mental and physical, and now, 3 weeks on, my cramps have almost disappeared. So far, thoroughly recommended,’ says Sara.

Adam Clevely, FutureYou’s CEO, explains the thinking behind the offer: ‘After receiving so much positive feedback on Magnesium+, our team is confident that people will love it within their first pack. ‘So we’ve decided to offer that first pack for free, because our team is excited to spread the word



about Magnesium+ with as many customers, who have been leaving us people as possible – as excited as our such amazing reviews.’

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FINANCE

Banking is about to get more expensive!

IF YOU are a customer of HSBC Bank and you regularly use an overdraft facility on your current account then the likelihood is, that from the end of March this year, banking will probably get more expensive for you.

This is because the bank is going to introduce a single overdraft rate for its UK customers of 39.9% meaning that some customers could be paying up to four times more to use their overdraft facility than they do now.

Currently, the bank has a published tariff that states that it will charge its customers between 9.9% and 19.9% for an arranged overdraft facility, that is one where an overdraft is pre-agreed between the bank and the customer, but with effect from March this year that tariff will be scrapped and the flat borrowing rate of 39.9% introduced.

Some fees removed

To partly offset the effect that these new charges will have on its customers the bank has said that it will remove the £5 daily fee that it currently charges customers who go overdrawn without permission and also that it would allow the first £25 of any overdraft to be free of interest charges on some of its accounts.

As always banks try to put a positive spin on their announcements, especially when these appear to be at the detriment of customers, as is clearly the case here. An official spokesperson stated that as a result of the bank removing the £5 daily fee for unauthorised overdrafts seven out of every ten of its customers who use an overdraft



would be better off or no worse off as a result of it introducing these changes.

As the bank has between eight and nine million customers who hold a current account with it in the UK that suggests that in excess of 2.4 million people could be being charged more should they use or require an overdraft with HSBC, no matter how short term that need might be.

FCA compliance

The announcement and changes are being driven by the need for HSBC and all the other banks to comply with new rules that are being introduced by the banks regulator, the Financial Conduct Authority which will come into effect at the beginning of April this year. These rules will require banks to charge a simple annual interest rate on all overdrafts

and to also eliminate fixed fees entirely. It is aimed to make borrowing money more simple and easy to understand.

Nationwide

The only other bank to already implement changes to its overdraft rates so far and ahead of the enforced changes is Nationwide who announced in July of last year that it would introduce a new single interest rate across all of the current account products that it provides, this rate being effective from November last year. And what rate did it announce it would charge its customers from that date? Well, rather surprisingly that was 39.9% and it is clear that HSBC has now decided to follow Nationwide and charge the same amount. What's the betting that as other banks announce changes to their current accounts and overdraft facilities that they will also use this rate?

Extra borrowing charges

With an estimated 19 million people across the country using arranged overdrafts, this is not a small problem, in fact it could potentially cost customers millions and millions of pounds in extra borrowing charges. Further announcements are expected in the run up to the April implementation date so if you use an overdraft, or occasionally go overdrawn on your current account watch out for these changes – if you don't it could prove very expensive!

If you are in doubt as to how these changes may well affect you then contact your bank direct.

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Better hearing brings triple joy for family.

Couple Alan and Joy Walton urged daughter Alison Acton to try Amplifon after being amazed by the results

Ninety-five-year-old Alan Walton can now enjoy conversations with his grandchildren after struggling with his hearing for years.

He and wife Joy have found their lives have changed dramatically thanks to Amplifon – so they didn't hesitate to recommend the hearing specialist to daughter Alison Acton.

"We couldn't manage without our Amplifon hearing aids now," says Joy, 89. "We used to have great difficulty having a conversation but now I can speak to Alan from a different room and he can hear everything I'm saying."

"Dad can chat with his grandchildren now so it's really changed his life."

The couple had previously used hearing aids elsewhere but found they were still having problems, so decided to visit an Amplifon clinic 15 months ago.

"Everything was so much better – the service and how much sharper everything was when we put our hearing aids in," Joy said.

Alan has found huge improvements through the use of a microphone, which can be worn by people he is speaking to. It means he can enjoy chatting to his 11 grandchildren three sons and daughter whenever they come to visit.

Alison, 59, first discovered her hearing was suffering when she started to struggle to hear certain letters and sounds about three years ago.

She had full ear piece hearing aids from elsewhere but was still unhappy – so she went with her parents' recommendation.



Joy Walton, Alan Walton & Alison Acton, Amplifon customers

"They were great and the first appointment was very thorough, much more extensive than anything I'd had before," she says. "I could trial the hearing aids for about two weeks and straight away everything was so much clearer."

One bonus has been the fact the settings can be controlled using an app on her phone or by touching the ear pieces, making it easy to get the balance just right.

"That means if you're talking to people you can touch your ear to make an adjustment and you don't look rude for getting your phone out," she adds.

The hearing aids used by both Alison and her parents can be easily recharged overnight, leaving them ready for a day of uninterrupted hearing including, for Alison, in her work as an environmental health officer.

"Meetings are so much clearer now," she says. "There are also other sounds that I can hear now that I couldn't before. My husband used to joke that I could never hear the ding on the cooker to know when tea was ready, but I can hear that now. It's also much more comfortable when I'm in a crowded situation and I say 'pardon' on the phone much less now."

There are also other social benefits for all three. "People think you're rude when you're deaf sometimes because you might not always respond to what's being said, but that's definitely not the case," she says.

The family would definitely recommend Amplifon to others, she said, adding: "I'd say go and have a go and see what they can do for you – we've never regretted it." ■

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LIFESTYLE

Games can protect thinking skills in older age



WE HAVE all known for a number of years now that stimulating the brain through the playing of games is good for your mental health as well as your mental wellbeing. But now it's been confirmed – people who play games – such as cards and board games – are more likely to stay mentally sharp in later life, a recent study suggests.

Those who regularly played non-digital games scored better on memory and thinking tests in their 70s, the research found. The study also found that a behaviour change in later life could still make a difference.

And it's not too late to start as people who increased game playing during their 70s were more likely to maintain certain thinking skills as they grew older.

Repeated tests

Psychologists at the University of Edinburgh who undertook the study tested more than 1,000 people aged 70 for memory, problem solving, thinking speed and general thinking ability.

The participants then repeated the same thinking tests every three years until aged 79. The group were also asked how often they played games like cards, chess, bingo or crosswords – at ages 70 and 76.

Statistical models

Researchers used statistical models to analyse the relationship between a person's level of game playing and their thinking skills. The team also took into account the results of an intelligence test that the participants sat when they were 11 years old.

Lifestyle factors

They also considered lifestyle factors, such as education, socio-economic status and activity levels. People who increased game playing in later years were found to have experienced less decline in thinking skills in their seventies – particularly in memory function and thinking speed.

Researchers say the findings help to better understand what kinds of lifestyles and behaviours might be associated with better outcomes for cognitive health in later life. The study may also help people make decisions about how best to protect their thinking skills as they age.

Dr Drew Altschul from the School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences at Edinburgh University commented 'These latest findings add to evidence that being more engaged in activities during the life course might be associated with better thinking skills in later life. For those in their 70s or beyond, another message seems to be that playing non-digital games may be a positive behaviour in terms of reducing cognitive decline.'

Meanwhile, Professor Ian Deary, Director, Edinburgh Lothian Birth Cohorts said 'We and others are narrowing down the sorts of activities that might help to keep people sharp in older age. In our Lothian sample, it is not just general intellectual and social activity, it seems; it is something in this group of games that has this small but detectable association with better cognitive ageing. It would be good to find out if some of these games are more potent than others. We also point out that several other things are related to better cognitive ageing, such as being physically fit and not smoking.'

Why not now turn to page 23 and have a go at our monthly Crossword puzzle? Ed.

The participants were part of the Lothian Birth Cohort 1936 study, a group of individuals who were born in 1936 and took part in the Scottish Mental Survey of 1947.

Since 1999, researchers have been working with the Lothian Birth Cohorts to chart how a person's thinking power changes over their lifetime. The follow-up times in the Cohorts are among the longest in the world.

The UK's population continues to rise

BY ANDREW SILK

AS WE all know the UK remains an attractive proposition as a country in which to live. We have long been a destination of choice for many people from poorer countries who are seeking a better way of life and who have skills and are able to contribute to our economy and cultural diversity – and long may this continue – after all it is a sure sign of a civilised and welcoming country.

Now I'm not going to make this an article about immigration as I know just how divisive and incendiary a topic this can be, but take a look at what is happening to our population as a whole and you will see that, as a subject, immigration is not going to go away.

Recent figures released by the Office for National Statistics, considered the recognised national statistical institute of the UK, show that across the next 10 years the population of the union as a whole is expected to increase by some 3 million people, to just under 70 million, of which net international migration into the country is expected to account for 73% of this projected growth.

By far the greatest growth is expected to be seen in England whose population is anticipated to grow by around 5% over this period, a far higher rate than that for Northern Ireland (3.7%), Scotland (1.6%) and Wales (0.6%).

But what the figures do show is that the rate of population growth is actually slowing, in fact the predictions for growth now seen are at the lowest rates than for any of the last 25 years. The figures show that the population actually increased by 9 million (15.1%) between 1993 and 2018, but that for the 25 year period from 2018 to 2043 growth is projected to decline to 6 million (9%).

Why is this?

It's for a variety of reasons not least of which is that the birth rate continues to decline, but also at the other end of the scale the fact that the growth of life expectancy is actually starting to stall, if not decline slightly. The figures estimate that in the



next 10 years there will be around 7.2 million births against 6.4 million deaths, therefore natural population growth of just 800,000 over the period.

Meanwhile, the projections for migration to and from the country support the fact that the UK remains, despite all our problems, an attractive place for migrants to settle. Across the 10 year period some 5.4 million people are expected to move long-term to the UK from abroad whilst 3.3 million of our population is expected to emigrate.

But as a society we do continue to age and the number of older people is expected to continue to increase, especially figures for the elderly elderly. These show that the proportion of the population aged 85 and over will almost double over the next 25 years from 1.6 million in 2018 to approximately 3 million by 2043.

But what does all this mean for our country going forward?

Well, the simple answer is that a growing and increasing population brings with it huge challenges that not only this, but other UK governments in the future will have to face.

The fact that the population continues to age is a challenge in itself. Just consider all the increased stresses and strains that this will put on the welfare state and care services that will be increasingly needed to support people in later life as they age.

This is before we even begin to contemplate the impact on our chronically underfunded and under-resourced NHS. Then there is the growing pensions budget to consider – as more people become eligible for the state pension future funding pressures will begin to be seen, especially as the proportion of the population in the workforce continues to decline.

We haven't even mentioned the housing crisis and the lack of affordable and suitable accommodation for an ageing population – there simply isn't enough of this to go around. And that's before we even take into consideration the fact that the UK has a housing shortage already – we simply aren't building enough houses for the existing population nevermind enough to house the projected increase in numbers as well!

And then of course there's the impact on transport as people need to get around. In many towns and cities our transport system is woefully inadequate and more and more people will only exacerbate that.

If you thought that the country was at breaking point then think again – it's only going to get worse if these predictions prove to be correct!



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COMMUNITY

Look out for the warning signs of malnutrition

Age UK and the Malnutrition Task Force are urging everyone to look out for warning signs of malnutrition in older relatives and friends.

NHS DIGITAL figures show that between 2007/08 and 2017/18 the numbers of older people aged 60 or over diagnosed with malnutrition have more than trebled from 1,405 to 4,988.

Of the 12.2 million older people who live in the UK, over a million (around one in 10 people) over the age of 65 are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition – and the vast majority of those (93%) live at home so often their malnourishment goes unnoticed.

Data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) shows that various complex factors are contributing to the rise in diagnosis of malnutrition among older people. These include over 230,000 people aged 75 and over having difficulty with the physicality of eating, such as cutting up food, and above 1.9 million having difficulty eating food because of a dental condition.

Poverty

Not being able to afford to eat may be another cause of malnutrition, particularly for those older people living in poverty. ELSA's data states that over 360,000 people aged 50-64 and over 29,000 65-74 year olds admitted having to cut or skip meals because they didn't have enough money.

Dianne Jeffrey, Chair of the Malnutrition Task Force, said: 'It is shocking that 1.3 million older people suffer from or are at risk of malnutrition in our country and the root of the problem doesn't just lie with poverty. There are other contributing factors which add to the risk. Public health

messages that don't always relate to this age group; a lack of ability to shop, eat and drink at home without help. As well as loneliness and isolation, grief and bereavement, poor physical and mental health or a lack of awareness of the risks by health and social care staff.

'However, whether you are slim or even if you are seemingly overweight, you can still be malnourished and a couple of days of not eating can have serious physical effects for older people. If this is not addressed many of these people will eventually be admitted to hospital which is often the first time malnutrition will be identified.'

Increasing numbers of people diagnosed with malnutrition is a cause for concern because poor nutrition can be both a cause and consequence of ill health. Signs will often go unnoticed until they have made a negative impact on health and wellbeing. Malnourishment can cause long-term health problems for otherwise healthy and independent older people. It can also mean more visits to the GP, increased chances of being admitted to hospital and longer recovery times from illness.

Treating someone who is malnourished is two or three more times expensive for the health care system than someone who is not malnourished and identifying and addressing the problem



could result in significant savings. Estimates put the cost of malnutrition on health and social care is expected to be at around £13 billion by 2020 and that figure is estimated to rise further with the rapidly ageing population.

How to spot malnutrition

It is sometimes quite difficult to recognise that you or a loved one is unintentionally losing weight. However, you can look out for warning signs. Some of the things to look out for include rings being loose and slipping off, clothes looking too big, belts needing to be tightened. Look for dental problems, loose teeth, sore mouth or loose dentures. All will make chewing and swallowing difficult or some may just have a small or general lack of appetite.

How to help

If an older family member or friend is not getting

enough to eat and drink, here are some practical tips that may help:

- Encourage a visit to their GP to rule out other health conditions and offer to go with them.
- GPs can arrange for referrals to a dietitian or speech and language therapist if required as they can teach exercises to help with swallowing difficulties and offer advice about dietary changes (such as foods that are easy to swallow).
- If teeth or dentures are a problem, make an appointment with a dentist. Some dentists will make home visits.
- If older people can't face a large meal, offer small meals and snacks throughout the day.
- Move to full-fat foods like milk, yoghurt and cheese.
- If there is difficulty with chewing, try eating soft foods such as scrambled eggs or yoghurts, but suggest they visit the dentist.
- If you do the shopping, draw up the shopping list together.
- If there is difficulty opening items, make sure to pick up items that are easy to open.
- Make food smell and look appealing as the aroma of cooking can stimulate the appetite.
- If eyesight is a problem, try using a blue coloured plate – this helps people to see what they are eating.
- Introduce a regular snack around a favourite TV programme.
- Suggest an outing to a local café with you or that they go with a friend.
- If they have a care worker that prepares their meals, ensure the care worker is aware of the previous suggestions and that your loved one's requirements are in the care plan.

For a guide on eating well later in life visit: www.malnutritiontaskforce.org.uk/resources

Do you have trouble sleeping?

MANY OF us do and it is a fact of life that as you age, your ability to sleep and the regularity of your sleep patterns do become affected.

But it's also a well known fact that getting the right amount of sleep has major health benefits in terms of your mental and physical well being. But if you struggle to get your eight hours a night, what can you do to help and improve both the length and the quality of the sleep that you get?

What affects our ability to sleep?

Sleep apnoea affects many people. This is where you may get interrupted sleep as a result of your breathing stopping and starting irregularly, you may be making gasping, snorting or choking noises as you struggle for air, you may have broken sleep and wake up a lot or you may snore loudly.

Sleep apnoea is where the soft tissues in the throat collapse temporarily, hence why you have problems breathing, and can be caused by you being overweight, particularly if you are carrying excess weight around your abdomen and neck.

For women, the menopause can be a major disruptor of your sleep patterns especially when you suffer from hot flashes. Not many people realise that to fall asleep your body temperature actually has to decline by around 1 degree, therefore it's important to avoid any type of activity that can raise this before you go to bed, but of course hot flashes are natural, so therefore difficult to avoid.

Believe it or not giving up work can affect your ability to sleep. This is because when you are in work you have a steady routine – you probably wake up at the same time each day and you have the physical exertion of working which can cause tiredness which will help you sleep.

As you grow older the chances are that you will be prescribed medication to help with health conditions. Many medications can also affect your ability to sleep or can be a contributor to



broken sleep.

With age also often comes the problem of insomnia where no matter what you do or try you always have trouble in getting a good night's sleep. There can be many reasons behind insomnia, some of which have already been mentioned, however, age related insomnia becomes harder to treat.

What can you do to make it better?

Well, each of the problems can be treated in different ways. For sleep apnoea it might be something as simple as losing the excess weight that you are carrying. But if that doesn't work then you might have to seek help from other sources. If it is a problem then visit your GP and ask them to look at prescribing you what is called a CPAP machine. This gently pumps air into a mask that you wear over your nose and mouth at night while you sleep and is aimed at keeping those airways open and thus stopping the

snoring and other problems that sleep apnoea causes.

For women going through the menopause you should try and follow a regular sleep schedule by going to bed at the same time each night, also try and avoid napping in the late afternoon or evening.

Diet can also help, so avoid large meals in the evening and try to avoid consuming caffeine after 6.00pm at night. Dehydration can also cause you to wake in the night so make sure you drink some water before you go to sleep and keep a glass topped up by your bedside. You should also try and keep your bedroom at a comfortable temperature, keep it as quiet as you can and shut out artificial light, all of which can trigger you to wake during the evening.

If you have retired, then try to maintain some similar form of routine. For example try to get up and go to bed at the same time as you did before. Maybe take a walk or do a little exercise each day to use up some of the energy that you previously used when working.

If medications are affecting your sleep patterns then talk to your GP as alternatives with different or no side effects may be available. However, sometimes it is just a fact of life that some of the medications you are prescribed will lead to broken sleep – and alternatives may not be available.

If you suffer from insomnia because of age then again discuss this with your GP. It may be that a course of cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia (CBTi) can help whereby a therapist will work with you to try and change your attitudes to sleep and introduce a routine to your pre sleep activities. CBTi is available on the NHS and has a good track record of success.

Whatever it is that affects your ability to get a good night's sleep it's important that you do something about it and not let it affect you long term. To do so can bring on other health related conditions and that's something we should all try and avoid at all costs.



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HEALTH

Help Us, Help You – Before It Gets Worse campaign launched

WITH THE NHS and in particular A & E Departments coming under unprecedented levels of pressure at this time of year, a new campaign has been launched.

The *Help Us, Help You – Before It Gets Worse* campaign is aimed at helping the public and particularly the most vulnerable in society – the over 65s and those with underlying health conditions as well as their carers – to understand the things they can do to stay well this winter, and if they get ill, where to get advice and get well sooner.

The NHS is here to help you when you're poorly. Every 24 hours the NHS comes into contact with more than a million people and as we all know it can be especially busy during the winter months.

Exposure to cold indoor or outdoor temperatures increases blood pressure and can increase the risk of heart attacks, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases. Research also shows that for every one-degree centigrade drop below five degrees in outdoor average temperatures, there is more than a 10 per cent increase in older people consulting their GP for breathing problems, a 0.8 per cent increase in emergency hospital admissions, and a 3.4 per cent increase in deaths.

The *Help Us, Help You* campaign highlights that the public can benefit by following the expert advice of NHS staff; to prevent an illness getting worse; to take the best course of action; and get well again sooner. This includes:

- Encouraging people to call NHS 111 or visit www.111.nhs.uk online to find out what to do and where to go when they have an urgent

but non-life-threatening medical concern instead of worrying, self-diagnosing, or second-guessing what they should do.

- Asking pharmacists, who are qualified healthcare professionals, for advice before minor ailments or winter illnesses get worse.
- Using evenings and weekends appointments with a GP, nurse or other healthcare professional at a local practice or another nearby NHS service.
- Checking in on older neighbours, relatives, and friends who may need a bit of extra help this winter.
- Encouraging those who are most at risk from cold weather – over 65s and those with long term health conditions – to prepare for the lower temperatures by stocking up on food supplies and making sure they have any necessary medication.

People who could be at particular risk from flu including people with underlying health conditions, a learning disability and adults aged 65 years old and over are still encouraged to get the free flu vaccination. The vaccination is the best protection we have against an unpredictable virus. That's why the flu vaccine is free for those who are eligible because they really need it. If you are eligible for the flu vaccine, contact your general practice or pharmacist to get it now.

NHS 111 can also be contacted via Next Generation Text on 18001 111 or by NHS 111 BSL interpreter service. To use the BSL service and for more information in alternative formats visit nhs.uk/111

ADVERTORIAL

How a "Kiwi Possum" ended double Olympic gold medal winner's back pain agony

IN 2011 rising New Zealand Olympic rower, Mahé Drysdale was diagnosed with osteoarthritis.

Many days the pain stopped him training. Drysdale tried everything. Nothing worked, his future looked bleak.

Then he heard about about a possum fur belt... although sceptical Mahé gave it a try.

Three weeks later the pain was largely gone and he was training again.

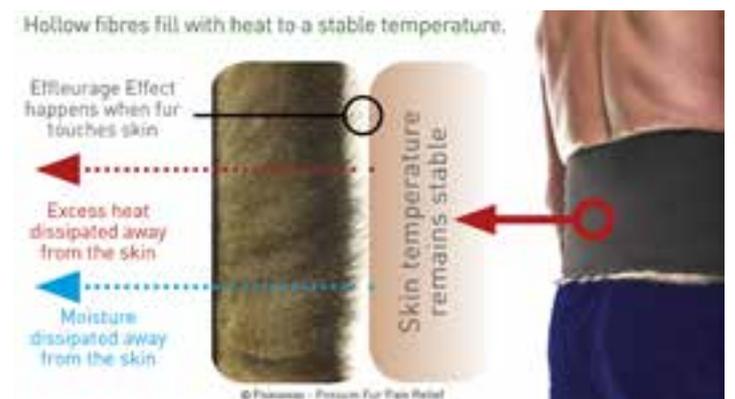
At 2012's London Olympics, Mahé won the Single Sculls gold. Winning it again in Rio in 2016.

Mahé wears his belt almost every day and admits he wouldn't have won without it.

In New Zealand the Brushtail Possum is a national pest. Every night they devour over 20,000 tonnes of fruit, berries and leaves, as well as small birds, their eggs and chicks.

Trappers establishing the fur industry brought the possum to New Zealand in 1858. Without predators, by the 1980s their numbers had swollen to around 70 million.

The New Zealand authorities have a campaign to eradicate the possum by 2050 – currently their numbers have stabilised at around 30 million.



Some 20 years ago a Japanese researcher discovered possum fur – like that of the Polar Bear and Arctic Fox – is hollow to trap the animal's body heat.

Learning this New Zealander, and long time lower back pain sufferer, Colin Cox wondered if possum fur could help with pain relief – like a hot water bottle does.

Colin made and wore a basic possum fur belt. He was delighted: his pain was reduced.

He made belts for friends. Results were highly encouraging – wearers reported significant pain relief.

Since Mahé Drysdale started wearing his possum belt, thousands of New Zealand back pain sufferers have also found relief using them.

Now they're finally available in the UK. To find out more go to www.PainawayUK.com or call 0800 024 8676.

Snowdrops – a beautiful sight

THEIR SCIENTIFIC name is Galanthus but we know them much better as the simple snowdrop and they are one of the first flowers of the year to come into bloom.

Their name comes from the Greek gala and anthos – gala meaning "milk" and anthos which means "flower" which explains why they are sometimes also called the "milk flower". You may also see them referred to as "February fairmaids" or "Candlemas bells" whilst one variant is called the "Green Man" which can often be used to represent the cycle of rebirth that traditionally happens with the appearance of each new spring.

And whilst they are often seen to symbolise purity and hope, folklore also states that bringing a single one of these white flowers inside will bring ill-fortune, hence another name for them which is the "death flower". Ancient folklore says that a single flower may just cause your milk to sour and eggs to spoil – not quite as drastic as the "death flower" but nevertheless not all that pleasant either.

They are a popular garden plant, often planted in dense clumps in and around the edges of woodland, gardens and other shady areas. For many they represent the first sign that spring is on its way – something I think we all look forward to especially if we have had a harsh winter.

But they are a hardy species having often to thrive in harsh weather conditions. So much so that their leaves have enforced tips which ensure that they can successfully grow through snow if the weather is really bad. Rather surprisingly, they also have a sweet and pleasant odour when in full flower – why not try smelling a few this year you will be pleasantly surprised.

Collectable

The Victorians, in particular, used to collect these little bulbs with a passion, collectors of snowdrops are also known as galanthophiles and high prices can be paid for



single bulbs of the rarer varieties. And there are plenty for eager collectors to go for – whilst there are only 20 known species of the plant there were believed to be nearer two thousand different varieties.

Back in 2012, a single bulb of the variety "Green Tear" was sold for some £360 but this figure was surpassed in 2015 when a single bulb of the variety "Woronowii Elizabeth Harrison" fetched £725 after a frenzied auction with over 30 separate bidders taking part. But wait a minute, the record has since gone even higher when a bulb known as "Golden Fleece" was reportedly sold for £1,390 on e-bay.

But did you know that they also have a medicinal benefit and are known to be used in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. They contain a chemical called galanthamine that when isolated from the bulb is used to help improve sleep as well as stimulate certain receptors within the brain.

Ever popular

Their popularity has now spawned an ever increasing industry and many gardens that have a large snowdrop population hold regular events and tours to allow people to admire them in their natural settings.

Not surprisingly, the National Trust has a lot of snowdrop displays that you can go and visit, in fact too many to mention. But if you want to find out what is on near you then go and visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/places-to-see-snowdrops. Alternatively, members of The National Garden Scheme that have large displays also open their gardens for visitors. More information can be found at www.ngs.org.uk/find-a-garden/snowdrop-gardens/.

As a splash of colour early in the year snowdrops really are worth getting out to see so why not make it a mission of yours this year?

A Low Tech Solution to Mobile Phone Problems

Modern mobile phones (smartphones as they're called) are amazing things. More powerful than those old mainframes that filled entire buildings - and yet so small you can fit them in your pocket.

There's no need to master a programming language to use them. And they can do everything from browsing the web to emails, taking photos to watching TV and lots more. Oh, and phone people or send texts of course!

All that whether you're at home on the sofa, at a cafe, in a hotel, waiting for a train or even sitting on the bus.

But (there's always a "but" with modern technology, it seems), it's not always as simple as that.

Sometimes it's simply not obvious how to do the things you want to do. Or you might not be aware of the things your phone could do for you. Not all of them would be things you're interested in, but some of them almost certainly would be handy.

Sometimes it can drive you mad trying to do the simple stuff, because it just isn't obvious until someone shows you.

You can ask a friend, of course. But if they have a slightly different model of phone they might not know. Or if they're a young technological whizz, they just do it for you, leaving you none the wiser for next time. Or say "You just do this"... and seconds later it's done and you still don't know how!

The obvious thing would be for the manufacturers to include a decent manual with each phone - but they never seem to. At best you get a couple of small pieces of paper telling you how to charge it. As if that was all you need to know!

Maybe it's because manuals - paper books - are seen as too "old fashioned". Some manufacturers put a manual on the device itself as an ebook - great if you already know how to use it... in which case you don't need the manual!

That's where a set of books from a small company in the North of England come in. The company is called The Helpful Book Company and lots of their customers say they certainly live up to their name! They've published *iPhones One Step at a Time* and *Android*

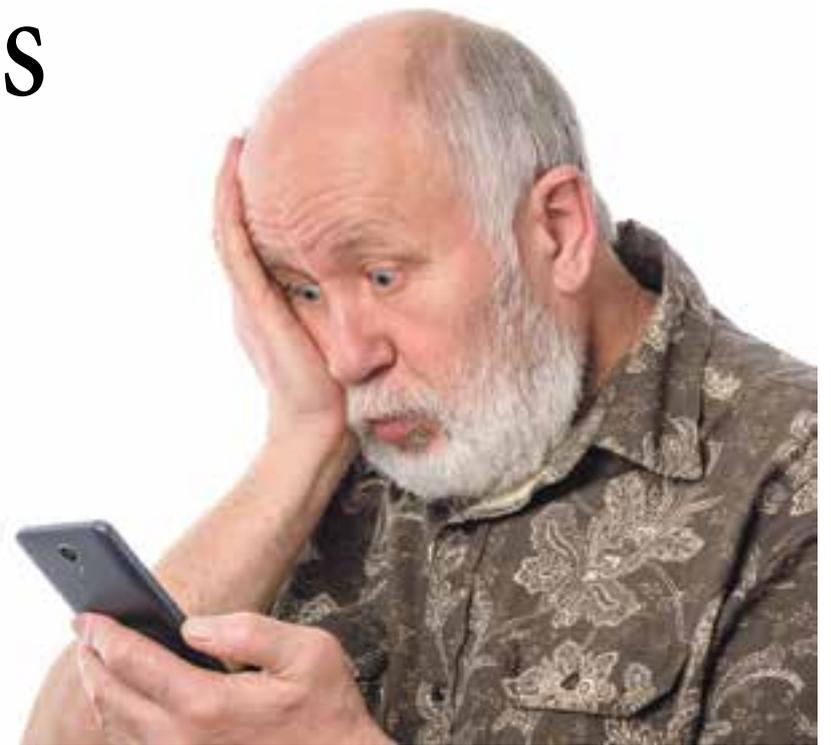
smartphones One Step at a Time - and these books have proved hugely popular with all sorts of people who have a smartphone - but who aren't experts at using it.

Whether you're frustrated with the very basics, want to know what else it can do for you or wish you knew how to do some of the slightly fancier things, this book might be just what you need.

"Plain English without the confusing jargon & gobbledegook"

It explains everything nice and simply, in plain English, without all the confusing jargon and gobbledegook. And it has lots of pictures showing exactly what to do - where to tap the screen and so on.

The company have already published books about computers and tablets that have helped thousands of people. But they actually started much smaller - the author wrote some notes to help



Modern phones can be baffling but there's a solution...

his Mum and Dad on their PC and realised that other people might find them useful too. Several thousand happy people later, he decided to bring out a book on smartphones as well - and if you've ever been frustrated with your smartphone, it's worth finding out more.

As a small independent publisher, the books aren't in the shops or available on Amazon, but you can get a free information pack telling you about what's covered in the books, who they're suitable for and how to get hold of them from the company - just ring 01229 777606

An End to Getting Frustrated with your Smartphone

Finally discover how to get it to do what you want, easily (and find out what else you can do with it, too)

At last, using your smartphone can be easy, simple and stress-free. Find out how...

Modern mobile phones - smartphones as they're called - can do so much more than just make phone calls.

From browsing the web wherever you are, checking train times, acting as a sat nav... And best of all they can make it so easy to keep in touch with family and friends - in so many ways, from sharing photos to making video calls.

But using them isn't always as easy as you'd want - and that's putting it mildly!

Do the manufacturers do it on purpose?

Sometimes it can seem like the manufacturers deliberately make them complicated - and how you do things is often hidden away. It might be easy once you know, but until you've been shown the easy way, it can drive you mad.

In fact only yesterday I was talking to someone whose Mum had got a new all-singing-all-dancing phone - but she couldn't work out how to answer a phone call on it! She's not daft - it's just that it's different from what she'd used before and the phone didn't come with a manual telling her what to do.

Whether you have similar problems or you're trying to do something slightly more advanced, the thing is, it can be easy to use them... once you know how. But until you've been shown, it can be like talking a different language.

That's why I've published two books: *iPhones one Step at a Time* and *Android Smartphones One Step at a Time*.

Plain English... and that's not all

They explain how to use the phone, in plain simple language with pictures of the screen showing you exactly where to tap or slide your fingers. No jargon!

What's covered?

I can't list it all here. But amongst other things, you'll discover:

- The basics of controlling it - swiping, tapping, opening apps and so on.
- How to use it as a sat-nav... in the car or even on foot.
- Send emails from your phone.
- Most phones have a good camera so you can take photos: here's how to use it properly (and for videos).
- Share photos with friends around the world - quickly and easily.
- See updates, photos and video clips from friends and family - as soon as they "post" them.

- Instant messaging and how to use it
- Make it easier to read the screen.
- Video phone calls - a great way to keep up with family who live a long way away
- Browse the web at home or out and about.
- Choosing and downloading apps

And obviously, you can make phone calls and send and receive text messages. ("Voicemail" is covered, too)

All explained nice and simply. (Find out more in the free information pack - read on...)

What one reader had to say:

"Thanks for a fantastic smart phone book. Very pleasant staff as usual."

I think this book should be sold with every smart phone. I have learnt so much from it, the info you get with the phone is non-existent."

Smart phones are quite complex, and your books speak in plain English."

Only half the story

That's only half the story but I don't have room to explain here. I've put together full information on the books - who they're for, what they cover and so on.

What's more the books also come with a free gift - no room

to explain that here either.

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HEALTH

Cervical cancer: it's important to get checked whatever your age

CERVICAL SCREENING. It's that invitation that you get every three years if you're between 25 and 49 or every five if you're between 50 and 64. But how much do you know about screening? Is it still relevant as you get older? Why aren't women invited after 65? Let's help clear up some of that confusion.

Is screening still relevant for women over 50?

Yes! There is a misconception among some people that cervical cancer only affects young women, but this is simply not true. Women of all ages can get cervical cancer and this is why cervical screening is so important as it can stop cervical cancer before it even starts.

One in four women don't take up their cervical screening invitation and, while attendance is at its lowest among young women, we also see attendance fall as age increases. Around one in three women aged 60-64 don't attend when invited.

There are lots of reasons for this. Cervical screening isn't always an easy test. It can be embarrassing or scary and difficult to get a GP appointment. It can also be painful, especially post-menopause which can put some women off. Similarly, having had a previous bad experience can deter people from returning.

HPV, the virus that causes cervical cancer, is very common. Most of us will have it in our lives and normally the immune system clears the infection, often without ever knowing it was there. In some cases, it can cause the cells of the cervix to change. If not treated, they can sometimes turn into cancer. It is passed through sexual contact and there is a misconception that if you have been with the same partner for a long time or don't have a sexual partner then you are not at risk of cervical



cancer. Yet HPV infection can often lie undetected in the body for many years so it's important to keep up to date with your screening.

Over 65?

If you're over 65 and have never been for screening or didn't go for your last test then you're still eligible to have one. Just contact your GP. If you are over 65 and your last three tests came back as normal then your risk of developing cervical cancer is very low, this is why you are no longer invited for screening.

So what if you start to experience symptoms?

The most common symptoms of cervical cancer are bleeding after sex, in between periods or after the menopause, lower back pain that lasts for a long time or unusual vaginal discharge.

Regardless of your age, if you experience any symptoms then do go and see your GP. It's likely they are something other than cervical cancer but do get them checked out.

Can we ever eliminate cervical cancer?

Yes, with the HPV vaccination and cervical screening we know one day we could make cervical cancer a disease of the past. However that is a long way off and every day another nine women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and two of those will sadly lose their lives. The HPV vaccination means women in their 20s and under have a high degree of protection against cervical cancer, however among older women we are sadly seeing increases in the numbers diagnosed.

Increasing understanding and attendance of cervical screening is the best way we have of reducing the numbers diagnosed with, and losing their lives to cervical cancer.

Cervical Cancer Prevention Week runs from 20-26 January and we want to smear the myths and facts around cervical screening and HPV. Help us get the facts out. Find out how you can join the campaign at www.jostrust.org.uk/ccpw

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust is a charity that work tirelessly to raise awareness of cervical cancer, its causes and how to prevent it. To find out more about the charity and its work visit www.jostrust.org.uk

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UNOBTRUSIVE

Another Stiltz customer chose to proudly display his lift instead of hiding it away. Mr. Knowles from Cambridgeshire installed his homelift into a glazed conservatory extension. It created a link between his kitchen and upstairs landing and enabled him to move around his home freely once again.

Mr. Knowles was drawn to the contemporary look and feel of his homelift, *"I liked the design because it is transparent on all sides and doesn't look like an unattractive, square box. It's very stylish and allows natural light from the garden to flood in through the glazed extension as well as allowing me to enjoy the view"*.

So, if you're facing an "Upstairs, Downstairs" dilemma and dread downsizing or cluttering up your stairs with a cumbersome stairlift, here's a neat and fast way-to-the-top solution.

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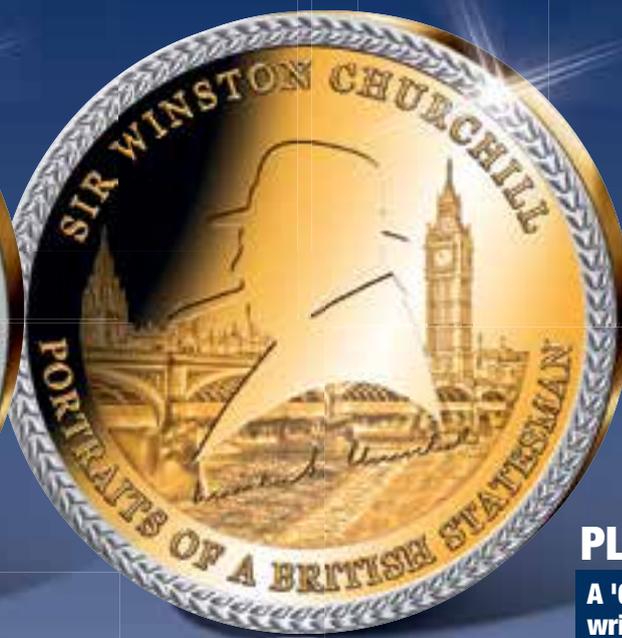
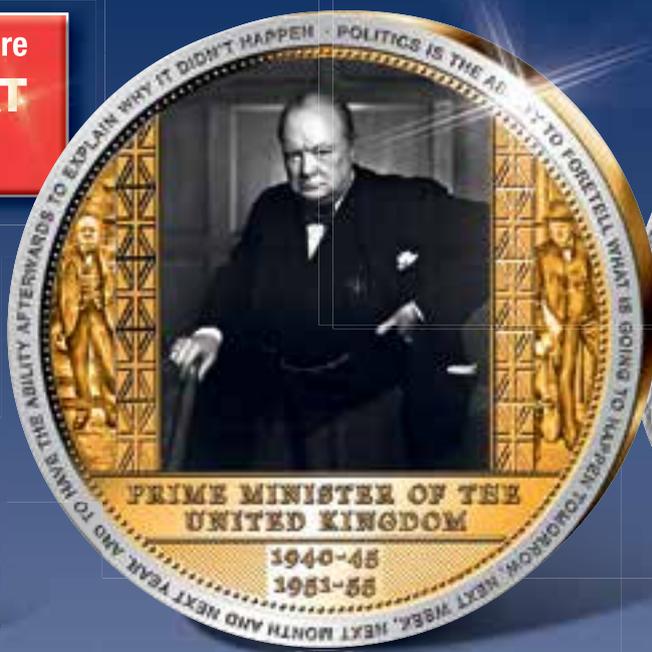
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TRAVEL & LEISURE

Holiday tips and pointers

BY ANDREW SILK

NOW THAT the Christmas and New Year festivities have come and gone, we are deep into bleak January and February – my least favourite months of the year, and I'm sure I'm not alone in expressing that sentiment.

The old year has passed – some might say hurrah to that – and the new one is here, but of course it's still the middle of winter.

Is it any wonder then that as soon as we hit Boxing Day our TVs and other media light up with those tantalising visions of warmer climes, of far flung exotic destinations and sun. Do you remember that? It seems a long time since we've seen it!

Yes, it's the peak holiday booking season that has just hit us and many of you will have been tempted to pick up the phone, go online or go really old school and visit your High Street travel agent to book your holiday for 2020.

Now that it's booked, and you've got something to look forward to, here are a few things you need to consider before you go.

Insurance

The most important thing to do is to organise your travel insurance as soon as you book your holiday – and don't take that offered by your holiday company either. This will always be more expensive than if you shopped around.

This will also mean that you are covered for any eventualities that may arise between you booking your holiday and you actually going,



such as should you fall ill and be unable to travel.

The airport or point of departure

If you are flying then make sure that you know just how long will it take you to get to the airport, how will you get there and if you are going by car where will you park it?

If you need airport parking make sure you book it in good time – you don't want to leave it until the last minute and then find it is expensive or there is none available.

Likewise, do you need a hotel before you depart or on your date of return? If so it's also advisable to book these early.

If you are going on a cruise and you are driving to a UK port, is parking included for the duration of your trip?

More practical

You've hopefully got plenty of time before you leave on your holiday – so why not use some of it to research your destination, especially if you are travelling to a country you have never been to before.

Where do you want to go? What do you want to see? How will you get around? What are the local customs? How practical and easy is it to get between places? Are you expected to tip and if so who and how much?

These are all questions that can be answered by a little online research and will help your trip run a lot more smoothly.

Do you need vaccinations?

Your tour or holiday operator should advise you of the requirements here when you book your holiday or you can always visit the NHS website which has comprehensive advice of what is required for each country.

If you need vaccinations make sure that you have them well within the timeframe needed before you depart.

Also, whilst considering vaccinations, do you need to take any other medications with you?

For example do you often suffer from an upset tummy, or do you need any insect repellents?

Visas

Again check whether a visa is required as these can often take some time to arrange – once again your tour operator should be able to assist you here.

Check your passport

It might seem a simple question, but do you actually know when your passport expires? If not please do check.

You will also need to make sure that you meet the regulations of the country you are visiting; for example some countries will require a minimum amount of unexpired time on your

passport.

The Foreign Office website has all the information that you need here.

Money

Always order your travel money in advance. Try to avoid buying it on the day you depart direct from the airport. By buying in advance you will almost certainly save yourself money.

If you intend to use your debit or credit card whilst abroad then also contact your card issuer and let them know the dates you will be out of the country and also the countries you will be visiting.

Contact Details

And just before you go make sure that you leave a copy of your itinerary with a friend or relative as well as your contact numbers – this might well be your mobile – but if so then make sure that it is enabled for roaming in the country you are visiting.

If you don't take your mobile then make sure that you leave the emergency contact number of your tour operator or that of the accommodation where you are staying.

Communicating

If you are visiting a country where English is not the main language then buy yourself a phrase book. This will not only help you understand and identify words on things such as menus and street signs, it might also help you to say the basics in the language of the country you are visiting.

You'd be amazed at how many times the service in a bar or restaurant improves if you simply say please or thank you in the local language!

And finally

Once you've done all the planning and you are actually there don't forget to relax and enjoy yourself – after all that's what a holiday is all about!



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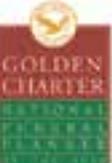
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The TV licence debate

THE BBC is again coming under fire in connection with the highly divisive issue of the TV licence, as the UK government announces that it is looking at the possibility of decriminalising the non-payment of TV licences.

Should this go ahead it is a move that could hit the BBC hard where it hurts the most – in the pocket.

At present, everyone in the UK that owns a TV has to pay the licence fee, irrespective

of whether they watch BBC programmes or not and failure to do so means they could be hit with a fine of up to £1,000 or even imprisonment.

But now it is believed that Boris Johnson has begun a full review of the BBC TV licence and the punishment for not having one. Apparently the prime minister has ordered a review of the sanction for non-payment of the £154.50 charge, which links directly to the BBC's funding.

Last financial year some 25.8 million households in the UK were recorded as having TV licences, which brought in a staggering £3.6 billion to the BBC's coffers.

However, the BBC hit back by warning that decriminalising the fee could cost the broadcaster £200 million a year thus making a massive hole in its funding budget.



In 2015, the previous government looked at whether a fine for non-payment could be issued under civil law instead, similar to the fees that are levied for breaking parking, bus lane and congestion charge rules. However, it recommended against changing the criminal sanctions regime, saying decriminalisation could bring with it an increased risk of evasion.

The current structure of the TV licence is enshrined in legislation until 2027 at least when the current Royal Charter governing the operation of the corporation ends. Although its future with regard to over 75s continues to come under question as free licences for all over 75s are due to disappear by right later this year and be replaced by a means tested system.

Out & About – around the UK

Troy: Myth and Reality

Where: The British Museum, Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3DG

Open: Daily 10.00am – 5.30pm
Friday until 8.30pm
Until 08 March 2020

Cost: £20.00 weekdays / £22.00 weekends

Tel: 020 7323 8181

More Information: www.britishmuseum.org

FROM THE Trojan horse and Troilus and Cressida to films and contemporary art, this exhibition tells the stories of Troy that have fascinated and inspired people for more than 3,000 years.

The story of a great city, plunged into a 10-year war over the abduction of the most beautiful woman in the world, is irresistibly dramatic and tragic.

The allure has sent adventurers and archaeologists in quest of the lost city, which is now widely believed to have existed, and the exhibition showcases the discoveries made by Heinrich Schliemann in Turkey in the 1870s, which changed the perception of this epic tale forever. A large number of his original finds, including pottery, silver vessels and bronze weapons, are on display in the UK for the first time in nearly 150 years.

But what of the heroes and the heartbroken, the women and the wanderers, who are said to have played a part in the Trojan War? Why have they inspired so many retellings, from Homer to Shakespeare and Hollywood? Visitors can get closer to these captivating characters by exploring the breathtaking art that brings them to life, from dramatic ancient sculptures and exquisite vase paintings to powerful contemporary works.

The exhibition includes responses to key objects created with participants from two charities, Crisis and Waterloo Uncovered, to highlight how the experiences of characters in the story resonate with displaced people and soldiers today.

Zandra Rhodes: Fifty Years of Fabulous



Where: The Fashion and Textile Museum, 83, Bermondsey Street, London, SE1 3XF

Open: Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat 11.00am – 6.00pm
Thu 11.00am – 8.00pm
Sun 11.00am – 5.00pm
Closed Mondays
Until 26 January 2020

Cost: £9.90 (£8.80 concessions)

Tel: 020 7407 8664

More Information: www.ftmlondon.org

IN CELEBRATION of 50 years of the Zandra Rhodes' label, this comprehensive exhibition explores five decades of the distinguished career of a British design legend.

The acclaimed British designer Dame Zandra Rhodes DBE

founded her eponymous fashion house in 1969 with a small collection. Her prints were Pop Art-infused commentaries on the world of Sixties Britain; the designer felt that there was inherent structure within the pattern that could work with and enhance the shape and construction of a dress. With this concept as a starting point and with her distinctive approach to cut and form, the house of Zandra Rhodes soon became one of the most recognisable labels in London.

This retrospective highlights 100 key looks, as well as 50 original textiles.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year



Where: The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 5BD

Open: Daily 10.00am – 5.30pm
Until 31 May 2020

Cost: £13.95 (£10.95 Concessions)

Tel: 020 7942 5000

More Information: www.nhm.ac.uk

THE 55TH *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* exhibition immerses you in the breathtaking diversity of the natural world.

Encounter the beauty and fragility of wildlife, see fascinating animal behaviour and get to know extraordinary species, exhibited on 100 stunning lightbox displays.

Go deeper and discover the surprising – and often challenging – stories behind the images during a time of environmental crisis.

A panel of international experts selected the awarded images from almost 50,000 entries by the world's best photographers.

Radical Women: Jessica Dismorr and her Contemporaries

Where: The Pallant House Gallery, 8 – 9, North Pallant, Chichester West Sussex. PO19 1TJ

Open: Tue - Sat 10.00am – 5.00pm
Thu 10.00am – 8.00pm
Sun & Bank Holidays 11.00am – 5.00pm
Closed Mondays
Until 23 February 2020

Cost: £12.50 (£6.50 Tuesdays)

Tel: 01243 774557

More Information: www.pallant.org.uk

DISCOVER A fascinating history of alliances and connections among the women artists of the early 20th century.

An artist at the forefront of the avant-garde in Britain – from her involvement with the Rhythm group during the late 1910s, to vorticism, post-war figuration and the abstraction of the 1930s – Jessica Dismorr (1885-1939) has since, unjustly, fallen into obscurity.

The exhibition explores how Dismorr and her female contemporaries engaged with modernist literature and

radical politics through their art, including their contributions to campaigns for women's suffrage and the anti-fascist organisations of the 1930s. It features 80 works including paintings, sculptures, graphic art and archival materials, some of which have never been exhibited before.

Artists include Dismorr's fellow Rhythmists, Anne Estelle Rice and Ethel Wright; Helen Saunders, the only other female founding signatory of the Vorticists; Paule Vezelay, who showed with Dismorr with the London Group, and Sophie Fedorovitch and Winifred Nicholson who exhibited at the Seven and Five Society in the 1920s.

Dismorr was one of only seven British women at D.O.O.D (de Olympiade onder Dictatuur) Amsterdam in 1936, the exhibition designed to counter Josef Goebbels' Nazi Art Olympiad, and her work will be seen for the first time in the company of other women who exhibited with anti-fascist organisations in the 1930s, including Edith Rimmington, Betty Rea and Barbara Hepworth.

The State of Us

Where: The Lowry, Salford Quays, Salford, Greater Manchester. M50 3AZ

Open: Sun – Fri 11.00am – 5.00pm
Sat 10.00am – 5.00pm
Until 23 February 2020

Cost: Free

Tel: 0843 208 6000

More Information: www.thelowry.com

FROM THE grotesque to the wonderful, this exhibition examines how the body and self are transformed, manipulated and reshaped to create a new "self".

The exhibition questions if technological intervention has out-paced natural order and examines how artists are imagining our "engineered evolution".

In natural evolution, humans are required to adapt to the environment; with engineered evolution, we begin to intervene for human preferences and desires. Some of the works on display dissect what we are while others lean into tomorrow to imagine what we might become. From growing a human hand to electrifying blood, these artists have created another way to look at our bodies and minds.



The exhibition also reflects on a past artistic example of this reshaping of ourselves. With Marvel comic art we can show a familiar depiction of how artists have reshaped the human body. The comics illustrate this progression, and how external influences from the art world impacted comic art.

The exhibition also features other contemporary artists who have also used the technology of today to reimagine and reveal the human body. With this new technology artists have been able to go even further in exploring the state of us, and where we might be in the near future.

TRAVEL & LEISURE

Try a bit of Turkish Delight!

BY ANDREW SILK

SOLO HOLIDAYS are in the news – more and more people are choosing to go on holiday alone. Perhaps this is as a result of travelers becoming more confident in their abilities to venture out alone, perhaps it's peoples incessant search for adventure, for new experiences or perhaps it's a refusal to accept that, just because you are single, you won't travel and see the places in the world that you have always wanted to visit.

Whatever the reason, solo holidays are the current big thing, just do a simple internet search and you will be amazed at all the choices that flash up on your computer screen – in fact so many you could be forgiven for feeling a little overwhelmed.

And guess what – you don't even have to be single to go on one! Yes, that's right – solo holidays are for all types of travelers, not just those free and easy singles. It might be that you are married or in a relationship but that your significant other is unable to travel with you because of work commitments, ill-health or they might simply not be interested in going to the same places as you are – whatever the reason travelling solo is the answer.

Except that you don't travel solo – well not if you go on a dedicated singles holidays with an experienced solo holidays operator – and to test out just how different, or not, these holidays were, I recently had the pleasure of travelling to Turkey as guest of one of the largest solo holiday operators in the UK – Solos Holidays.

What to expect?

Well, quite understandably, when arriving in your resort, I was based in the quite historic village of Kayaköy, just under an hour's drive from Dalaman Airport you have a sense of trepidation and a degree of nervousness. Some of the questions you might be asking yourself are what will it be like? Have I done the right thing? Will I get on with my fellow guests? Will there be enough to keep me occupied?

Well you needn't worry – after all remember that everyone else is in the same boat as you and are probably thinking the same things and asking themselves the same questions. The hotel was the Kayaköy Boutique Hotel on the edge of the village. The first thing you notice on arrival is that it doesn't feel like an hotel at all – it has a nice relaxed vibe, is not over bearing and actually feels like it could be your own private little villa set in the Turkish countryside.

The rooms here are enormous, and remember you have a double room all to yourself it being a singles holiday. Oh, and remember those questions that you asked yourself earlier? Well you needn't have worried, the hotel is exclusively for Solos Travelers so everyone else is travelling alone and with the same holiday company as you.

And this actually proves to be an advantage because everyone is actually curious about who their fellow travelers are, conversation strikes up easily, especially when sat around the relaxing outside bar, and people actually make an effort to engage with each other – after all you are going to be seeing each other every day for the duration of your stay.

And what about my fellow guests?

Well, you might very well be surprised. There is a good mix of people and whilst it is true that the age of travelers tend to be in the 50+ age range, that's not exclusively so. Likewise, there was an almost equal mix between the two sexes which made for a balanced group with nobody being left out. One of the nicer things about travelling on a Solos Holiday is that the group tends to eat together each evening which sounds simple, but it actually is very important. One of the big complaints about travelling solo is the fact that you eat alone in the evenings and once the sun goes down it can be quite a lonely experience. Not here, you tend to gravitate towards having dinner with the "group" or with one or two fellow travelers with whom you have bonded.

One evening is also taken up with an organised visit to a

Fethiye, is a city and district of Mu la Province in the Mediterranean region of Turkey



local restaurant for dinner – again there is no obligation to attend but most people do.

What to do?

This is the beauty of a solos holiday. You don't have to do anything if you don't want to – there's a lovely pool with plenty of comfortable sunbeds, and even a hammock that you can just lounge around and enjoy during the day, go for a dip when you want, get a drink from the bar when you are thirsty, read your book, talk to your fellow guests or simply just relax and fall asleep as you see fit – the ambience and atmosphere encourages all of these. And the best thing of all about this is that there are no kids screaming and shouting to disturb the peace and quiet – remember it's a singles holidays so no children to be seen other than the grown up ones!

But there is also plenty to explore, not just in the local village but also in the surrounding area and trips are offered throughout the duration of your holiday which are organised for you by your Solos Holiday rep. But again there is no pressure to take these and if doing your own thing is what floats your boat then that is perfectly acceptable too.

My visit was short and so I didn't have the opportunity to sample all that was on offer, but what I did do was a great eye opener for the variety of experiences that are available.

You can't go to Turkey without visiting an authentic Turkish Bath. A short journey away was the lovely beach side village of Oludeniz where a morning was spent relaxing. You start with a brief sauna – I know it sounds bizarre given that you are already in a hot country – but the idea is to open up your pores and make your skin softer for the treatments ahead. You then get cleansed with some lukewarm water before lying on a warm marble slab where a fully trained hammam master scrubs and exfoliates your body, removing the dead skin. This is followed by a cleansing and relaxing warm foam massage.

By this time you are feeling suitably relaxed and ready for your body massage by a fully trained masseur, many different varieties are on offer – mine was a simple classic massage lasting 30 minutes. But boy was this relaxing in fact so relaxing that after it had finished as you are left to just relax and unwind I actually fell asleep.

But if a massage and Turkish Bath isn't exciting enough for you then Oludeniz is also known as a centre for paragliding, you see them circling the resort throughout the day and landing right on the promenade in front of the beach. Fancy a go? Well tandem rides are available – I was tempted but unfortunately we didn't quite have the time!

Another highlight, and again it's an organised trip, is to take a Sunset Cruise from the harbour of Fethiye. You cast off to sea late afternoon, and go out to one of the quiet secluded bays that are all over the coastline here where your

boat moors up and where you watch the spectacular sunset, have a few beers, eat a barbecued meal on board and enjoy some twilight music. But the best part of this trip is that once the boat has moored up you are free to go for a swim before dinner.

In fact you are encouraged by the boat owners to do so – and what's more you can launch yourself from the top deck of the boat into the crystal clear waters – try it, it's great fun and just like jumping into a lukewarm bath, the water is that warm!

Continuing the boating theme, why not go on a day trip that incorporates a gentle cruise down a reed lined river which was where some of *The African Queen* starring Humphrey Bogart was filmed, see 2,500 year old mountain tombs carved into the cliff face, visit a sulphurous mud bath, covering yourself in the stuff, that is said to have age restorative properties and finish off with a visit to a fantastic beach that is simply quite stunning. This is Iztuzu Beach – but that probably doesn't mean anything to you!

This is a peninsula beach at the head of the Dalyan River that is also known locally as Turtle Beach as by day it is populated by tourists who appreciate the sheer beauty of its setting, but by night it is occupied by a different population, and that is the endangered loggerhead turtles for whom the beach is an important and more importantly, protected nesting site. You never know, if you visit you might be lucky enough to see one of the turtles in the water – and trust me they are much bigger than you might think!

And it's value for money!

The good thing about Turkey is that it's relatively cheap compared to other countries. You will find that your pound goes a little further than in other countries so value for money is guaranteed.

In fact if you are a solo traveller, or considering taking the plunge for the first time, then this is an ideal holiday for you. You remain in charge, you decide what you want to do, you join in as much or as little as you want and you have company of like minded people. What else could you ask for?

Fact Box

A BIT about Solos Holidays: Solos Holidays has been helping the solo traveller since 1982, and now offers a wide range of trips across the world, from Portugal to Poland and Tanzania to Turkey. A Solos Holidays' Tour Leader will be present on each trip, to make sure everything runs smoothly and there are no single supplements. Groups are usually 10 people, but can reach 16 maximum.

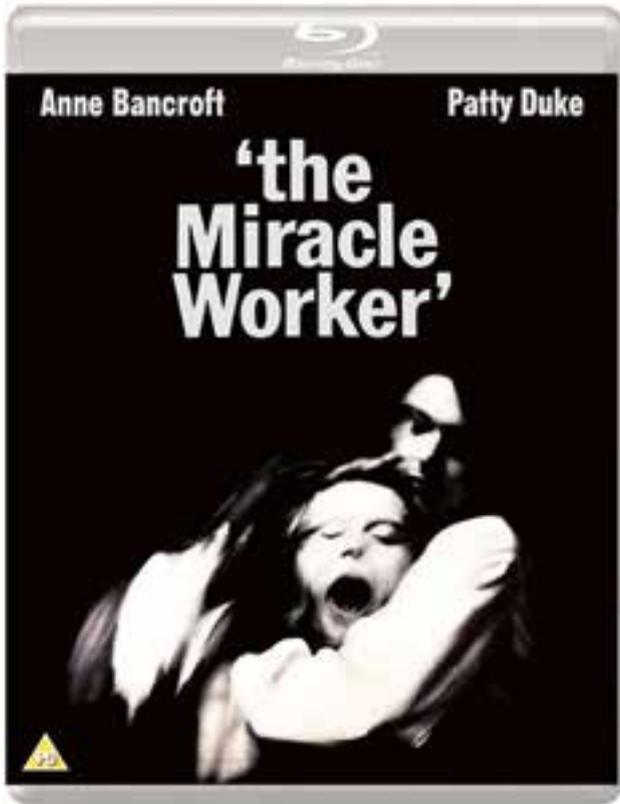
A bit about the hotel: New for 2019, the three-star Kayaköy Boutique Hotel is nestled in southwest Turkey, just outside the tranquil and ancient village of Kayaköy, a short distance from the resort town of Hisaronu with its myriad of bars and restaurants. The hotel has colourful gardens, where breakfast can be taken and an inviting outdoor pool complete with sunbeds and umbrellas.

How much? A seven-night ClubSolos Holiday, staying at three-star Kayaköy Boutique Hotel, costs from £669pp (in a standard room, no single supplement) including return flights (London Gatwick to Dalaman), welcome drink and information meeting, accompanying Solos Tour Leader, breakfast every day and two dinners (including one BBQ) and a one half-day Gulet Excursion.

For more information: www.solosholidays.co.uk/holidays/club-solos-turkey-7-nts

CROSSWORD COMPETITION

You could win one of three copies of a classic DVD this month



THIS MONTH you can win one of three copies of *The Miracle Worker*; Arthur Penn's heartfelt biographical story about the life of Helen Keller, starring Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke. Available for the first time on Blu-ray in the UK as part of the Eureka Classics range from 27 January 2020.

Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke are remarkable in *The Miracle Worker*, the Academy Award-winning story of Helen Keller. Ennobling and uplifting, this inspirational story of courage and hope is one of the finest works of art in the history of motion pictures.

Locked in a frightening, lonely world of silence and darkness since infancy, 7-year old Helen Keller (Duke) has never seen the sky, heard her mother's voice or expressed her innermost feelings. Then Anne Sullivan (Bancroft), a 20-year old teacher from Boston arrives. Having just recently regained her own sight, the no-nonsense Anne reaches out to Helen through the power of touch — the only tool they have in common — and leads her bold pupil on a miraculous journey from fear and isolation to happiness and light.

The Miracle Worker retails at £17.99 and Mature Times has three copies of this release to give away to this month's lucky winners. Just complete and return the prize crossword and you could be in with a chance of winning.

ANSWER ALL the clues to either the cryptic or coffee time questions – the answers to both sets of clues are the same – clip the crossword out, and send it to: **Crossword Competition, Highwood House Publishing Limited Suite G, The Old Vicarage Business Centre, Somerset Square, Nailsea, Bristol, BS48 1RN.** Entries close 24 January 2020. The first correctly completed crossword drawn out of the pith helmet wins. The winner of the November crossword was: Mrs G Armer, Milnthorpe

COFFEE TIME

ACROSS

- 1 Historically, a settlement with a cathedral. (4)
- 3 Adhered. (8)
- 9 A pioneer in radio transmission. (7)
- 10 Small bird of prey. (5)
- 11 Perfect vision. (6-6)
- 13 Renown. (6)
- 15 See 2 Down.
- 17 Treated with less importance. (2-10)
- 20 The fur of this animal is called nutria. (5)
- 21 Southampton, for example. (7)
- 22 A follower of Siddhartha Gautama. (8)
- 23 Pay attention to. (4)

DOWN

- 1 Such as Pere Lachaise in Paris, or Arlington in Virginia. (8)
- 2/18/15 A traditional lifespan. (5,5,3,3)
- 4 Tarnishes. (6)
- 5 It falls on 26 February this year. (3,9)
- 6 An animal's natural environment. (7)
- 7 Revolutions of a planet on its axis. (4)
- 8 A method of resuscitation. (5-2-5)
- 12 Unemended. (8)
- 14 Extremely drunk. (3-4)
- 16 _____ factor, a blood type. (6)
- 18 See 2 down.
- 19 Strike-breaker. (4)

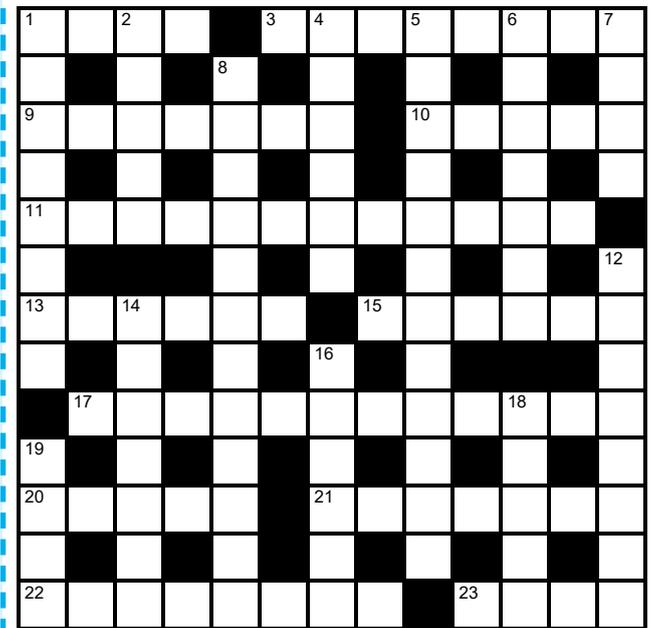
CRYPTIC

ACROSS

- 1 Vera missed out on the truth, leaving somewhere like London. (4)
- 3 Cat hated to be loose, preferring to have a partner. (8)
- 9 Inventor from Minorca? Yes, and no. (7)
- 10 Sort of horse ridden in leisure time? (5)
- 11 Normal way of seeing at the present time. (6-6)
- 13 Fame for scrambling up tree. (6)
- 15 See 2 Down.
- 17 Accorded less importance, I see Deutschmark phased out. (2-10)
- 20 Timid to back up rodent. (5)
- 21 If abandoned peas rot on the quayside here. (7)
- 22 Zola hits out at believer. (8)
- 23 I hear the man would care. (4)

DOWN

- 1 There we ultimately grieve, meet and cry out together. (8)
- 2/18/15 A lifetime played out on screen, theatre - finally died. (5,5,3,3)
- 4 This acronym incidentally names the stains. (6)
- 5 Editor stuck in a quiet newsday, perhaps, during Lent. (3,9)
- 6 The usual haunt of Sir Terence Conran? (7)
- 7 Times to be stunning when broadcast. (4)
- 8 Life-saving treatment needed where estuaries meet. (5-2-5)
- 12 As originally drafted, Edward was included in football team. (8)
- 14 Pickled food I'd mentioned. (3-4)
- 16 This sort of monkey rushes about. (6)
- 18 See 2 Down.
- 19 Neither pick it, nor picket. (4)



JANUARY CROSSWORD COMPETITION COMPILED BY NEWBEE

Title: Initials: Surname:

Address:

Postcode: Tel:

E-mail:

NOVEMBER'S SOLUTIONS

ACROSS:

1. Warm
4. Crib
8. Reindeer
9. Yule
10. De-escalated
13. Wigwam
15. Wassail song
17. Gift
19. Goodwill
20. Toss
21. Rock

DOWN:

2. Agendas
3. Mince Pies
4. Carol
5. Ivy
6. Rescue
7. Sled
11. Tugs-of-war
12. Aspirin
13. Wilson
14. Angelic
15. Writ
16. Angus
18. Too

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