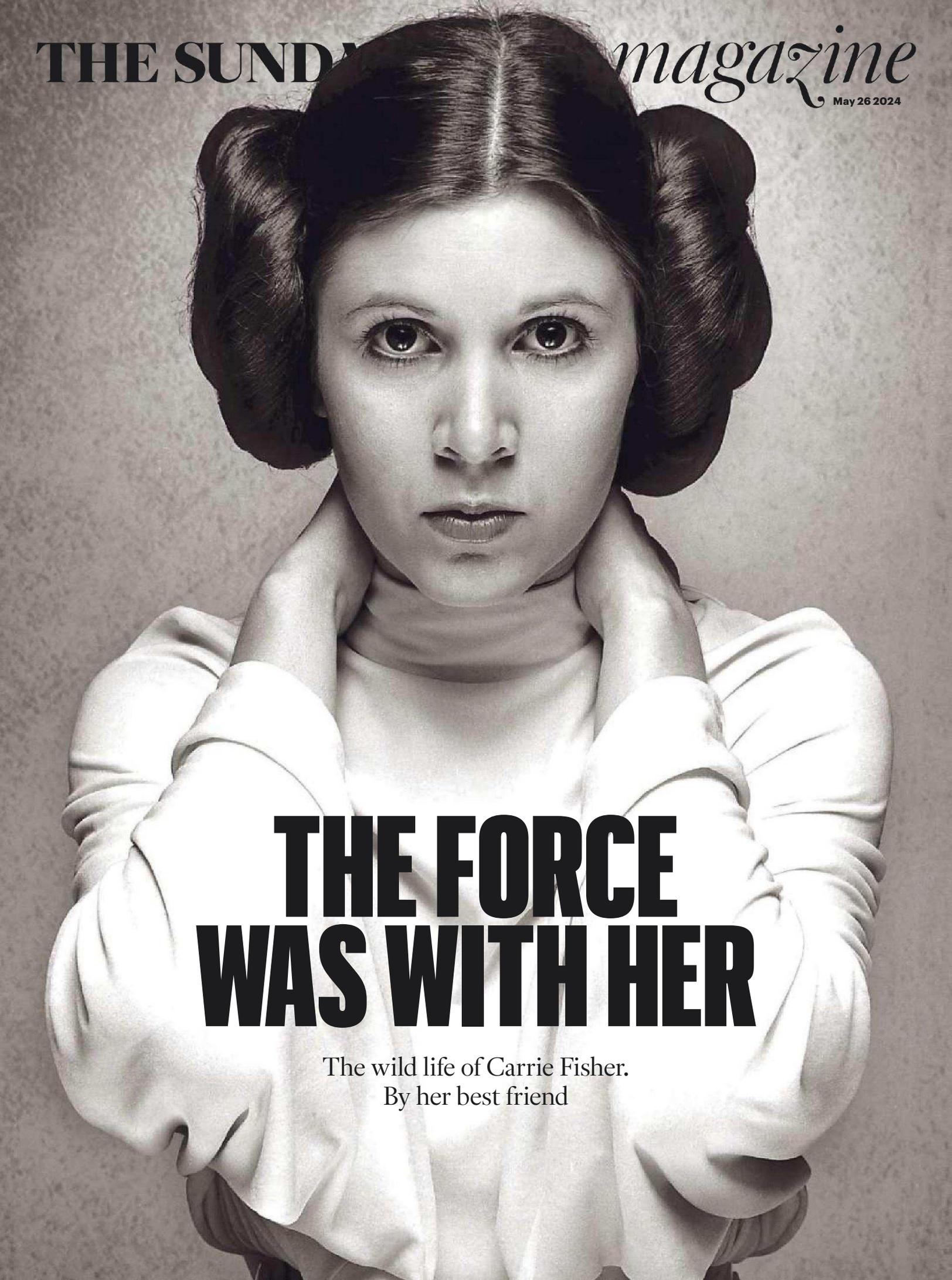


THE SUNDAY

magazine

May 26 2024



**THE FORCE
WAS WITH HER**

The wild life of Carrie Fisher.
By her best friend



LLOYDS BANK

At last, something from the bank you'll want to read

Welcome to Club Lloyds. The bank account that lets you choose from a range of exclusive benefits, like a yearly magazine subscription.

🔍 Search Club Lloyds



There's a £3 monthly fee, which we waive for customers paying in £2,000 or more a month.





THIS WEEK IN 1967

Dick Van Dyke jumps for joy at a press call at the Dorchester hotel in London on May 30. The American actor was about to start work on *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, in which he played the widowed inventor Caractacus Potts. The character is English but Van Dyke didn't dare try an accent again after his attempt at Cockney in 1964's *Mary Poppins* was ridiculed. Photograph by Chris Travis.

26.05.2024

5 Matt Rudd

Why have I become a birthday curmudgeon?

6 Relative Values

The Little Mix singer *Leigh-Anne Pinnock* on her mum *Debbie's* accidental leaks to the press

10 Mishal Husain

The BBC presenter tells *Rosie Kinchen* how the partition of India shaped her family — and what her future holds beyond the Today programme

20 Toy soldiers

How a fake army with props designed by a film studio deceived the Nazis on D-Day. By *Taylor Downing*

28 COVER: My princess

The actor *Griffin Dunne* on his best friend, *Carrie Fisher*

34 Out on the streets

Images of protest, joy and pain in Britain from the 1970s to the 1990s, by the photographer *Mike Abrahams*

39 Table Talk

Show-stopping suppers made simple by *Clodagh McKenna*. *Charlotte Ivers* visits *Ottolenghi's* soulless Bicester Village outpost and *Will Lyons* on northern Italy's juiciest reds

44 Farmer Clarkson

Look out! The multinationals are coming to transform a family farm near you

46 Health and fitness

Duncan Craig goes inside the



minds of the Strava cheats. Plus, are you getting enough protein? Probably

50 Driving

The Volkswagen ID.7 — a sober, dependable throwback to VW's glory days, says *Richard Porter*

58 A Life in the Day

Stephen Mulhern on tricks, tailoring and growing up on a Cockney market stall

© Times Media Ltd, 2024. Published and licensed by Times Media Ltd, 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF (020 7782 5000). Printed at Walsstead Bicester Limited, Oxfordshire. Not to be sold separately

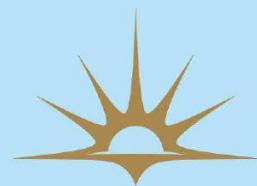
15 night Caribbean
holidays from

£1,099 pp

Based on Inside cabin cruise K506A¹



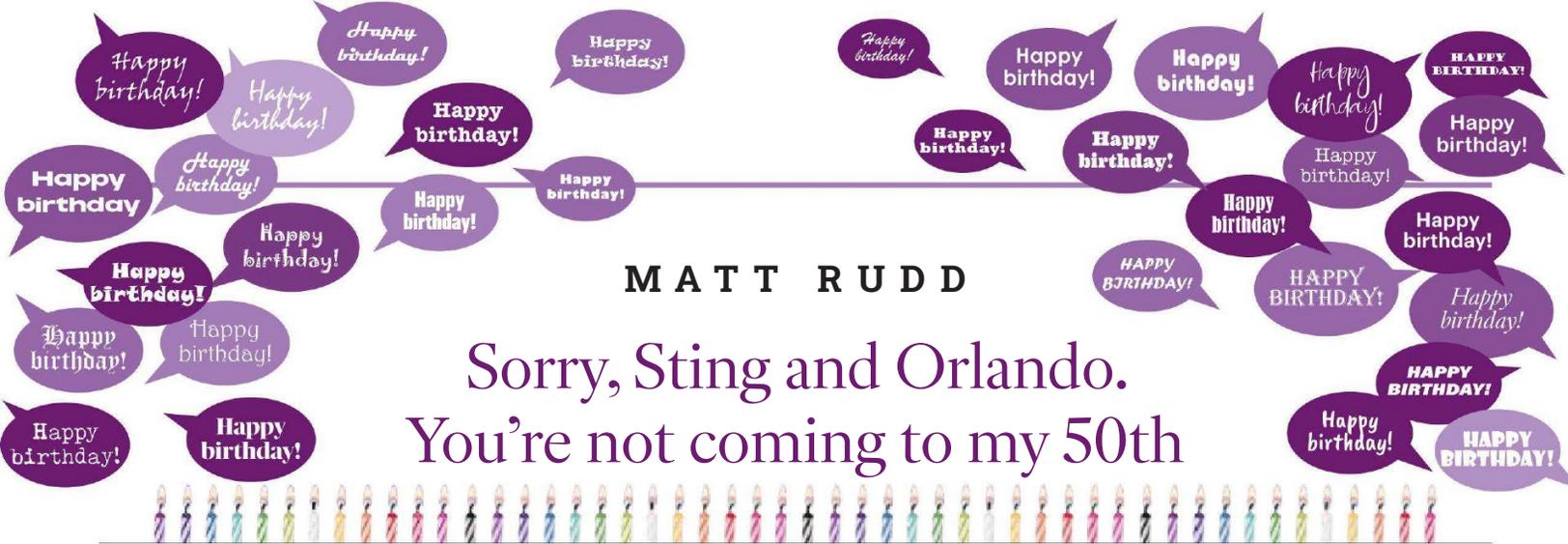
**HURRY! ENDS
4 JUNE 2024**



P&O CRUISES

¹Early Saver price of £1,099 per person is based on two adults sharing the lowest grade of Inside cabin available on Arvia cruise K506A, inclusive of economy class flight from London and transfer. Book by 4 June 2024. Prices may vary for other departure airports, are subject to availability and may go up or down. All flights are subject to availability. For up-to-date prices and full T&Cs applicable to Early Saver prices, please visit www.pocruises.com.





MATT RUDD

Sorry, Sting and Orlando. You're not coming to my 50th

It was at about lam in a marquee last October that I came to a sudden but blindingly obvious realisation — I don't like big birthday parties. One of my closest friends was in the process of turning 50 and because she has always been the most sociable person I know, she was making a meal of it. There was a curry van and a full bar. There was a dancefloor and there were DJs. There were glittering dresses and emotional speeches and, sweetly, sickeningly, her village choir turned up to honour her with several quite long songs. The celebrations went on long into the night, we all drank far too much and somehow no one drowned in her swimming lake. She says it's a pond but it's a lake. Then, because she lives hundreds of miles from any hotels and she'd invited hundreds of people to her birthday, I had a choice of places to sleep: a child's bunk bed or the back of my Renault. I chose the latter and woke up in the morning with a hangover, a sore back and several people looking in at what they thought was a corpse.

It was at about 9.30pm at a small country house hotel last weekend that I came to an equally sudden but less blindingly obvious realisation — I like small birthday parties. One of my other closest friends was turning 60. She didn't want a fuss so it was just them and their grown-up kids, Harriet and me, and three other couples. We had a fabulous dinner. There was no dancing and no one sang quite long songs at us. I could hear what people were saying to me and they could hear what I was saying back. Shortly after midnight we all retired to actual beds. Nobody slept in my Renault.

What on earth is wrong with me? I've always loved a big birthday party. My 40th was one giftwrapped tiger cub short of Uzbek dictator-level revelry. My 30th lasted three days. My twenties were just one party after another, like *The Great Gatsby* minus the money and the poignant, meaningful ending. And now I've become that grumpy old man who sits with the wallflowers and shouts, "Speak clearly into my ear trumpet, the music is too loud."

Is it an age thing? Not sure. Jeff Bezos, 60, looked like he enjoyed having hundreds and hundreds of random guests at his space-themed mega-bash in



January. I doubt he knew half the celebrities his fiancée, Lauren Sánchez, had invited, but he looks happy enough in the million photographs he posed for. I would have hated it. I'd have spent the whole evening worrying about the caviar running out. I'd have had a whisper-argument with Lauren in one of my kitchens — "Why did you invite Orlando Bloom?" "I didn't." "Well, why's he here then?" But this is because I'm a curmudgeon and Jeff is the king of parties. Why am I not the king of parties?

If it's not age, maybe it's the associated fatigue? I can no longer drink with abandon. I can't even stay up with abandon. And I'm far too old and too tall to sleep in the back of a Renault.

Or maybe it's a decline in sociability. I still like meeting new people, but only in small doses and controlled environments. I don't like meeting lots of new people in one go. I definitely don't like meeting them at a party.

"HI, I'M MATT!"

"LAWN MOWER."

"SORRY?"

"THE FISHMONGER IS IN THE BUCKET!"

"GREAT, ME TOO."

For the past three years at least Harriet and I have been discussing plans for an extravagant joint 50th next summer. Those conversations have involved long guest lists and fancy catering and maybe we should hire a field of tepees and I wonder if Sting still charges a million quid per performance? But last week, on the way back from the very small 60th, I plucked up the courage and confessed — I don't want a big birthday party, I told her and started to sob uncontrollably. Harriet looked relieved. She didn't either.

The new plan is more streamlined. Sting is cancelled. Orlando Bloom is off the list. The Kardashians will have to find something else to do that weekend. Harriet and I are going to Rome for the weekend, or maybe Lyons for the day, or maybe the New Forest for the afternoon, perhaps with some friends, perhaps not. We're curmudgeons but we're curmudgeons together. It's awful but it's a relief.

What is wrong with us? ■

Giant sei whales have been spotted off Argentina's Patagonia coast for the first time in a century — a victory for conservationists. Hunting

brought the blue-grey mammals, which can grow to a length of nearly 20m, to the brink of extinction in the 1920s and 1930s. Commercial

whaling bans over the past five decades have allowed the population to recover — albeit slowly. They breed only once every two to three years.



GOOD NEWS!

RELATIVE VALUES

Leigh-Anne and Debbie Pinnock

The Little Mix singer and her mum on overcoming shyness and surviving the pop machine

Leigh-Anne

I grew up in High Wycombe with my mum, my dad and my two older sisters, so I'm the baby. One of my strongest memories is my mum always working really hard. When I was young, she was doing night school with the Open University to become a teacher and worked as a manager at Tesco during the day. She would come home from work, be Mum and then study at night. That drive was instilled in us all from an early age.

I was super-shy growing up, which was annoying because I always knew I wanted to sing. I'd sing all the time at home, to the point it annoyed the neighbours, but being painfully shy in public was so frustrating. I eventually came out of my shell when I was a teenager.

I was 19 when I auditioned for *The X Factor* in 2011. My family didn't think too much about it at first, but when I started getting through the stages we realised it could really be something. Everyone was in shock because things like that didn't happen to girls from High Wycombe. After we won the show as Little Mix we were whisked away from our parents and, from that moment on, we didn't really see our families properly for years. But everybody understood that we were working hard and Mum was always at the end of the phone. Being catapulted into superstardom so young, with social media just taking off and so much scrutiny directed at us, I needed her more than ever.

Our families came to the shows when they could, and when our mums came it was really special. My mum, as a teacher, couldn't be there for the whole ride but I have so many beautiful memories of her coming to America or on tour in the UK, and when we shot the music video for our single *Power* all our mothers appeared in it, which was so fun. We've shared so many amazing times. Winning our first Brit award in 2017 was a huge moment — Mum was ecstatic, she knew how much we wanted it. The next day we flew to America to support Ariana Grande at Madison Square Garden. Our album *Glory Days* was out at the time, and we always say those really were the glory days.

My mum holds everything and everyone together. She's more of a tough love person, but because I am super-sensitive she always knows when I just need a cuddle. I'm grateful to have both sides of her. She will also get Fomo if she's not invited on a night out with us. She's become known as a party animal.

Doing my documentary, *Leigh-Anne: Race, Pop and Power*, in 2021 was a very big lightbulb moment. I had never really spoken that deeply about race and how I was feeling. My parents are both mixed race but were of a generation that were more inclined to just get on with things and to pretend that anything to do with racism

or race was not happening. Hearing about how I was feeling and seeing me fight against it obviously made them sad, but they also thought it was incredible that I was doing something about it. When you think about Little Mix it's all rainbows, but you don't think about any dark side of the music industry.

Mum is always on Twitter and has been known to leak stuff, so she's a nightmare. My managers would say, "Whatever you do, don't tell Debbie," but the fans loved it. And she does clap back and reply to trolls sometimes because she's quite protective. I can only imagine how it would feel seeing your daughter being talked about in negative ways. Having my own twin daughters now, I know I would lose it.

Having two 2½-year-old girls running around causing chaos makes me so grateful to be able to call on my own mum. I don't know what I'd do without her. It has definitely brought us closer.

Mum has been there every step of the way. She had been through 11 years of Little Mix so could see we had formed the most incredible sisterhood, but she also knew we needed the break we took in 2022, and that I needed to stand on my own two feet with my solo career. I hope seeing me tackle it on my own has made her proud. My strength is from her. She's my rock.

Mum has been known to leak stuff on Twitter. My managers would say, "Whatever you do, don't tell Debbie"



Main: Leigh-Anne, 32, and, Debbie, 60, at Leigh-Anne's house near Buckinghamshire. Right: in High Wycombe in 1992



Debbie

Leigh-Anne's dream was always to be a singer. We knew her voice was good but we didn't think it could ever happen, partly because she was a very shy child. She was going to go to university to become a music teacher, but she said she wanted to take a year out to pursue her music and I thought, why not? Then she came home one day and said she had made it past the first audition for *The X Factor* and asked me to come along to the next one. Every week we didn't know if she was going to get through, but then she did, and then when she won it, it was just out of this world. Afterwards Kelly Rowland, who was a judge at the time, advised me to keep her as grounded as possible, so we tried our best to do that.

Little Mix were talented girls who enjoyed what they did and worked so hard for it. They were just four ordinary girls and they adored each other. I remember, after they won, we were sitting in a bar at Wembley Arena and the girls were brought in to say goodbye to us. It was strange because they immediately became this Little Mix machine and we didn't see them properly after that for a long time.

I have been in trouble a few times for commenting on something that I shouldn't have on Twitter. The things people used to write about all the girls made me wonder

STRANGE HABITS

Leigh-Anne on Debbie
She makes a gross throat itching noise

Debbie on Leigh-Anne
She has a phobia about flies getting into the house, so won't open windows, even on hot summer days

how people can be so nasty. I didn't realise how much things affected Leigh-Anne until she made the documentary. It was tough to watch. My dad was from Barbados and her dad John's father was from Jamaica, so we saw ourselves as a West Indian family. We didn't talk much about colour when the kids were growing up. High Wycombe was quite multicultural and so we fitted in. Until Leigh-Anne started talking about her experiences we thought she was just living the dream.

It was sad seeing Little Mix take a break, but when Leigh-Anne was in the band she was in a bubble the whole time and everything was done for her, so it was an artificial life in a way. Things are different now. She always wanted to give it a go as a solo artist and is a great mum too. And her husband, Andre Gray, is such a good dad. He is away a lot because of his football career, playing in Saudi Arabia, but they're a lovely little family.

Leigh-Anne can be vulnerable. Every now and then she just needs a cuddle and to be reassured. Or to be told how the washing machine works. But really she's still the same girl she always was — kind and hard-working — and that's something to be proud of ■

Interviews by Helen Cullen.

Leigh-Anne Pinnock's debut EP, *No Hard Feelings*, is out on Friday

THE HEIGHT OF REFINEMENT



Official Fuel Economy Figures for the Range Rover 24MY range (excluding PHEV) in mpg (l/100km): Combined tests in accordance with EU legislation. For comparison purposes only. Real world figures may differ. CO₂, fuel conditions, load, wheel fitment and accessories fitted.

RANGE ROVER



36.8-23.5 (7.5-12). WLTP CO₂ Emissions 201-272 g/km. The figures provided are as a result of official manufacturer's economy, energy consumption and range figures may vary according to factors such as driving styles, environmental



**“I am thinking
about what is
beyond Today”**

**The BBC presenter
Mishal Husain has
been digging into
her grandparents'
dramatic survival of
the partition of India
– while looking to
her own future**

**INTERVIEW BY
ROSIE KINCHEN**

**PORTRAIT BY
STUART McCLYMONT**

Only the *finest* cuts of British beef are carefully matured to make our *Tesco Finest Steaks* tender and full of flavour.



...Just so you can set the smoke alarm off, again.

TESCO
finest★

Serving Suggestion. Available in selected larger stores.

Mishal Husain is a consummate professional. Her morning interviews on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme, which she has been presenting for over a decade now, are slick and merciless. Woe betide ministers who turn up unprepared. Her interview with James Cleverly in January was a case in point: first she took the home secretary to task over his language after he appeared to call Stockton-on-Tees a "shithole" in the Commons — she swore seven times in under a minute on air to highlight the point — then she calmly unpicked the government's claim to have cleared the asylum backlog.

So it takes me a moment to acclimatise to seeing her off duty — padding around her home barefoot and taking out some freshly baked biscuits from the oven. Husain, 51, has just finished an epic project — a family memoir she has been working on for the best part of three years. It tells the story of her four grandparents and the role the partition of India played in their lives. Three of them were born within the boundaries of what is now India, but all ended up in the newly established state of Pakistan, only narrowly escaping the horrific sectarian violence that engulfed the country in 1947 as British rule came to end.

I'm curious to know what this means to Husain, who as well as being one of the safest pair of hands at the BBC is one of the most prominent Muslims in Britain — and something of an enigma, lacking the ego that lands so many of her fellow presenters in the news.

We are talking at a time when religious tensions in Britain and around the globe are on a knife edge, and inevitably perhaps Husain has been dragged into the fray. In October, shortly after Hamas launched its brutal attack on southern Israel, Kelvin MacKenzie, the former editor of *The Sun*, criticised her "hostile" interview with a spokesman for Benjamin Netanyahu, saying: "Suspect it's difficult for Ms Husain [to be] impartial when you are a Muslim and in your household you view it as your 'people' being attacked. So why does the BBC put forward Ms Husain for these interviews?"

She brushes this off. "This is a really hard time to do my job, but that's not because of my heritage, it's because this is a difficult story, full of pain and suffering." Rows over BBC bias are inevitable, she says. "It's very hard to imagine a world in which people directly affected by these events, either October 7 or the subsequent war, are going to agree that the BBC has got it right."

Her faith, she says, was never really an issue growing up and she didn't think about it until she arrived at Cambridge University in the 1990s. Husain was born in Northampton in 1973, the elder child of her Pakistani immigrant parents, Imtiaz, a urologist, and Shama, who had worked



Husain in Cairo reporting on the Arab Spring for the BBC, 2011

as a producer for the Pakistan Television Corporation before becoming a teacher.

Husain had an itinerant childhood, moving with her family to the UAE as a toddler. She went to the British School there until they relocated to Saudi Arabia when she was 12, at which point she returned to the UK as a boarder at Cobham Hall, a private girls' school in Kent. She felt rootless compared with her peers. "They had houses that their families had lived in for a couple of generations. It felt as if there was a network that they fitted into and I was always shuttling around," she says.

She read law at New Hall (now Murray Edwards College), Cambridge, where she met other British Muslims for the first time, "people from the same heritage who had grown up here rather than the slightly unusual way I'd grown up". She recalls someone asking if she was Muslim first or British first. "It was the early Nineties and I remember being, not shocked by the question, but genuinely confused. There were things that others were debating or thinking about that were just not a part of my life."

After a master's in international and comparative law, she moved into journalism,

Husain recalls someone at Cambridge in the early Nineties asking if she was Muslim first or British first. "I was genuinely confused"

joining the BBC as a junior producer in the newsroom before finding a talent in front of the camera. She rose up through the BBC World News and joined *Today* in 2013.

The idea for a book had been swirling in her head, she says, ever since she went to India in 2014 to report on the election of Narendra Modi and the rise of his brand of Hindu nationalism. She wrote a personal piece about her family's experience of partition for *The Sunday Times*, but it was the death of her father in 2016, at 73, that gave her a sense of urgency. "I realised that, actually, my parents' generation, the generation who could just about take me to some of these places and say, 'We lived down that street,' was disappearing."

Partition is a story that is still rarely told in Britain, but one that matters in a country where almost 10 per cent of the population is of Asian descent. "Indians and Pakistanis and their descendants in this country are very unevenly affected by partition," Husain says, and whether or not people have thought about it will depend on whether their families were directly affected. It happens that all of her grandparents were.

On her father's side, Mumtaz, a Muslim doctor, and Mary, a committed Catholic, married across religious lines and had to consider what moving to Pakistan would mean for them. Her mother's parents, Shahid and Tahira, were at the heart of the political drama, with Shahid working as private secretary to Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, who was commander-in-chief of the Indian army. "My grandparents were witnesses to one of the most important moments in 20th-century history, how the Empire gave way to nation states in south Asia."

Fortunately they seemed to have recognised the significance. Her grandfathers had both written memoirs, while Tahira had recorded tapes and Husain was able to interview Mary's sister Anne, who is 99 years old and living in Oldham. In 2020 Husain found Shahid's record in the Sandhurst archive while filming a report about the Indian army ►

4 | A110 R TURINI



Alpine A110 R Turini: fuel economy and CO₂ results for the Alpine A110 R Turini in mpg (l 100km) combined: 41.5 (6.8-6.9). CO₂ emissions: 156 g/km WTP figures shown are for comparability purposes. Actual real world driving results may vary depending on factors including weather conditions, driving styles, vehicle load or any accessories fitted after registration. For more information, please see alpine-cars.co.uk

for the BBC, and was also able to locate an old recording of him being interviewed for the BBC Urdu Service — hearing his voice again for the first time since his death 30 years previously.

The impact of partition on the older generation is clear. They grew up believing they would always be citizens of the British Empire, then watched as the dream of new nations turned sour — and only narrowly escaped with their lives.

Both sets of grandparents would grow disillusioned in Pakistan, but it was in this newly formed country that Husain's own parents met — when Mumtaz and Mary Husain were assigned a house on Steward Road, in Rawalpindi, in the north of Punjab province, next door to where Shahid and Tahira Hamid were living.

Husain's mother, Shama, befriended her father, Tazi, and they wrote to one another after he moved to England in 1967. By 1970 he told his family he wanted to marry her and two years later it was official.

Her book is, on one level, an effort to put her own life into context — for herself and the three sons she has with her husband, Meekal Hashmi, who works for an investment firm and is also of Pakistani descent. Her children, she says, “have no concept of their grandparents before they came to this country and I thought, I don't want this to be a blank for them”. Ultimately, she says, she wanted to record the story for her children and “the millions of people with the same heritage as me”.

It is also an attempt to highlight the long-term impact of partition. At one point Husain's husband saw her surrounded by historical tomes and said, “I thought you were writing a family story.” But she found it impossible to separate the two. She recalls spending summers in Rawalpindi with her grandparents Shahid and Tahira, and their sadness at not being able to visit India, so bad were the relations between the two countries. “You never saw what we left behind,” her grandmother would say.

“Guria,” Shahid would say, using Tahira's nickname, which meant doll, “no regrets.”

Faith and identity were a fundamental part of her grandparents' stories. Mary, the Catholic daughter of an Irishman working for the East India Company and his second wife, was raised by nuns. She was training to be a nurse in Lahore when she met and fell in love with Mumtaz, a Muslim medical student from Punjab. Both families were scandalised by their decision to marry, which they did in secret, having gone to great lengths to find a priest and an imam who would each carry out the service.

Husain's maternal grandparents, Shahid and Tahira, were Muslim but their homes fell within the boundary of modern-day India. Tahira's family came from Aligarh,

The partition generation

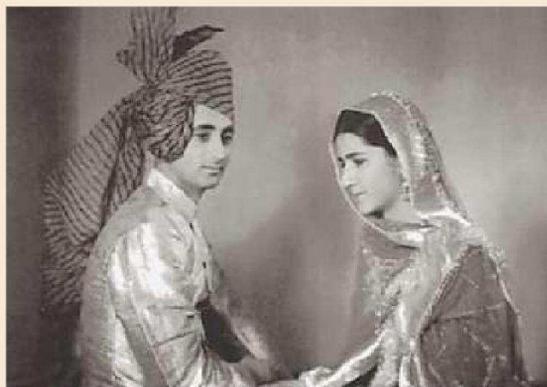
PATERNAL GRANDPARENTS

Mary Quinn, a Catholic from southern India, married **Mumtaz Husain**, a Muslim from Multan, in 1942. He joined the Indian army in 1943. During partition in 1947 they moved to Peshawar, Pakistan.

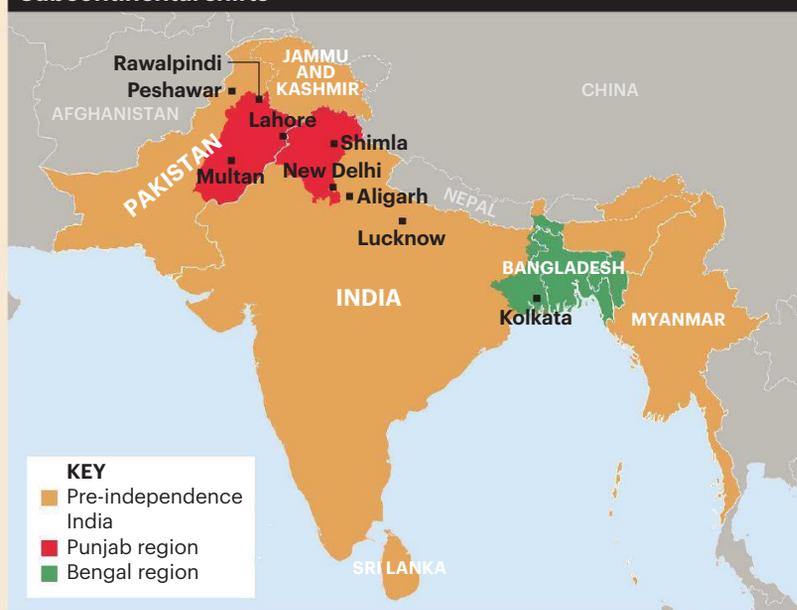


MATERNAL GRANDPARENTS

Shahid Hamid, from Lucknow, and **Tahira Butt**, from Aligarh. Shahid was private secretary to Field Marshal Auchinleck, commander-in-chief of the Indian army. Both Muslims, they moved to Rawalpindi, Pakistan.



Subcontinental shifts



which was renowned for its Muslim university, while Shahid's was from Lucknow, in northern India — he could trace their ancestry back to the Prophet Muhammad. Husain can remember being shown the family tree. Both sets of grandparents ended up in the military, Mumtaz having taken a stipend in his final

year of medical school, when the Allies were desperate for recruits. Shahid joined the Indian army earlier, just as the British were allowing “natives” to become officers for the first time. He went to Sandhurst and served in Burma during the Second World War before he was appointed as private secretary to Auchinleck in 1946. ▶

OAKWRIGHTS®

Celebrating 25 Years

**Where tradition meets innovation
in the art of timber framing.**

From oak frame homes and garages to extensions and pool houses, our dedicated team will guide you every step, ensuring your oak frame vision reflects quality, sustainability, and unparalleled beauty.

01432 353 353 | enquiries@oakwrights.co.uk | oakwrights.co.uk



Scan to discover more about Nicola and Simon's luxury garage and stylish room above accommodation.



By then it was widely accepted that India should be returned to self-rule, but the question of what form that should take was fraught, amid a background of growing tension between India's Hindu majority and Muslim minority.

In spring 1947 Louis Mountbatten, the King's cousin, was sent to Delhi as the last viceroy of India, to ensure a swift transition to independence. Plans were hurriedly drawn up to divide India into two states, one predominantly Hindu and the other majority Muslim. Independence on August 15 brought about one of the biggest mass migrations in history as millions of people found themselves on the wrong side of the hastily drawn lines. Muslims travelled to Pakistan; Hindus and Sikhs to India. Ethnic and religious tensions that had been

building for years reached boiling point. Up to a million of these refugees are believed to have been killed in a series of horrific massacres, with casualties on all sides of the religious divides.

Husain's grandparents narrowly avoided the bloodshed. Mary and Mumtaz, who had been commissioned to the medical branch of the Pakistan air force in Peshawar, near the Afghan border, were booked on a train from Delhi to Lahore the day after independence, with their four children under the age of four. The route would take them through the Punjab and some of the most notoriously violent areas, but they changed their minds at the last moment when a British RAF officer offered them a spot on a flight. It was a fateful decision: when the train they had booked

arrived in Lahore not a soul on board was alive — everyone had been butchered (see extract, below).

Shahid's recollections of those months is damning of Mountbatten. Auchinleck and Mountbatten, the two British men at the heart of the handover, were arguing, with Mountbatten apparently failing to grasp the sensitivity of the task he had been given and rushing to meet an unnecessary deadline for independence. Husain's grandfather "was of the opinion that if you tried to do anything as quickly as possible in a context that's as complex as India, not just the political parties but the ethnicities and religions and language, that was not a good idea", she says.

Shahid had already taken up his post in the new Pakistan army in Rawalpindi by ►

How my grandparents escaped a massacre

At midnight on the eve of India's independence from British rule, Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister, uttered his famous words on India waking to life and freedom. The next morning, August 15, 1947, Mumtaz and Mary and their four children were still in Delhi. Mumtaz had received orders to report to the medical branch of the new Pakistan air force in Peshawar, close to the Afghan frontier, but it was difficult to know how to get there.

"With each passing day one heard gory tales of trains and busloads of Muslims arriving at their destinations with bodies butchered, and the same 'compliment' being paid back with trains and buses the other way," he wrote. "The dilemma confronting all optees for Pakistan was how to get across." He had already been to the station in Delhi to get a first-hand account of security on the westbound trains. The situation had improved, the station master told him, and he had booked tickets for the six Husains on a train to Lahore and then Peshawar.

In his final days at Air Headquarters he took his leave of colleagues. One Hindu officer spikily said it was not goodbye but au revoir: "We will see each other soon, maybe within six months. I would be surprised if your Pakistan even lasts that long."

Amid the farewells Mumtaz met a British RAF doctor based in Peshawar who was in Delhi for meetings. "I've come here by plane and the Dakota will be returning empty," he said. "I advise you to change your mind and go by that



In the chaos of partition Muslim refugees crowd on to trains to flee to Pakistan in 1947. Many were killed in sectarian attacks

aircraft." Mumtaz's boss, Group Captain Madhu Shrinagesh, told him he should take the option.

There were social farewells too, including a dinner at Shrinagesh's home the following night. "It was a rather sad affair," Mumtaz remembered, with toasts, many drinks downed and considerable emotion. Shrinagesh's wife, Jaya, wept as she hugged Mary and said she still hoped they would change their minds about Pakistan. Mumtaz was almost in tears as he said goodbye to Shrinagesh.

The plane was leaving on the 17th, which meant they were in Delhi for the independence festivities. Mumtaz struggled as he saw celebrations and fireworks, knowing that at the same time "blood was being spilt over the streets and the sands of the countryside".

When the Dakota took off and flew low over Punjab he and Mary spotted telltale

signs of violence. "It was a depressing sight," he said. "Some cultivated fields but mostly burnt ones, perpetrated by wild mobs a month or so before."

They could see people too, columns of men, women and children, trying to keep together for safety, on foot or in bullock carts. Most were travelling towards Pakistan, but there were also columns moving in the opposite direction. Other military families were on board and all the adults remained at the windows, transfixed, for the duration of the flight: "No one could snatch themselves away, despite the horrendous drama being enacted below." They learnt later that the train they had been booked on became one of the notorious "ghost trains" of that time, arriving at Lahore full of bodies.

"Not a living soul survived," Mumtaz said, news that wore Mary's rosary thin. "Don't I keep telling you," she said, "about the Virgin looking after us always?" He worried about the responsibility he had for her, not only as his wife but because of all she was leaving behind, and he hoped he had made the right decision. "What kind of a country will it turn out to be? What happiness will we find in it?" he wondered. "Once more we were launching into the unknown."

© Mishal Husain 2024. Extracted from *Broken Threads: My Family from Empire to Independence* (Fourth Estate £18.99). Order from [timesbookshop.co.uk](https://www.timesbookshop.co.uk). Discount available for Times+ members

CELEBRATING
35 YEARS
OF SURFACE DESIGN



Ceppo Sicilia Honed Marble

MANDARIN STONE

NATURAL STONE | PORCELAIN | DECORATIVE TILES

15 INSPIRATIONAL UK SHOWROOMS

mandarinstone.com

the time the worst violence broke out, but Tahirah and the children were staying at Auchinleck's summer house in Shimla. A young Hindu officer was sent to bring them down and her aunt and uncle vividly recall the lines of armed men by the sides of the road and the fear of the adults. The officer advised them to use their nicknames, as a way of "masking their Muslim names", in case the adults were attacked. Once out of the hills Auchinleck flew them to Pakistan on his private plane.

Husain knew the basic facts when she started researching, but the motivations and consequences fascinated her. "Why did my grandparents choose Pakistan? What was the background?"

Mumtaz came from a part of the Punjab that was designated to become Pakistan, and in theory he had no choice but to go. But what would that mean for Mary, a practising Catholic whose family was in southern India? In the end she was the one who convinced him to go, so he would be close to his family, but Husain believes it would have been a hard choice to live with.

"My grandmother was a very believing Catholic and I think her life was not easy," she says. They had a network of people in similar interfaith marriages. She was able to make occasional trips home, but as an army wife and with tensions continuing to flare, erupting into all out war over Kashmir later that year, it became virtually impossible. "She wasn't totally isolated but she was a very, very long way from home."

On a trip to Mumtaz's home city of Multan in the 1950s, Mary was given a burqa to wear on arrival by her in-laws. "Mary, despite the shock she must have felt, received it with her usual aplomb," Mumtaz remembered. "She was assured that she only had to wear it from Multan station to the house, and despite her obvious discomfort she did so," Husain writes. "'We were a complete family from there on,' he said, 'because Mary was prepared to give all to the cause, except of course conversion from her faith, which was never directly asked of her.'"

For Shahid and Tahirah the decision to move to Pakistan was more straightforward as they were both Muslim. But the impact of partition and how it was handled was not. Shahid had been a loyal citizen of the British Empire. While researching her book Husain found Shahid's first passport, which he applied for in order to go to Sandhurst — the cover faded and worn but the national status clearly recorded: "British subject by birth". Husain writes that the mishandling of partition dented his previous "admiration for Britain and the British". He could not understand, she writes, "how a country with such a great sense of justice and order could be so deficient in its leaving of India".

Husain grew up conscious of her grandparents' wistfulness about the



Tracing her ancestry with her mother, Shama, in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, earlier this year

partition, but also a frustration about how little was known about the period over here. Shahid, who had kept a diary throughout, had published a partition memoir himself, in 1986. But Husain says the book did not make much of an impact then. "I think the time wasn't right for it," she says. "He actually wrote down 'real history only emerges when you've considered all points of view'. In 1986 I don't think Britain was ready for his point of view." Husain believes this is starting to change. "I think there is more of an acceptance that you have people accessing the same period from different angles and all those angles matter."

Husain immersed herself in history books to get a perspective beyond the recollections of her grandparents. They were very pro Auchinleck, who returned to Britain in 1948. Shahid and Tahirah would visit him in Suffolk afterwards, and he would raise the Pakistan flag to greet them.

"People's listening habits have changed. I do understand when people say they prefer to listen to music in the morning"

There is, I sense, another reason she has tackled the book now. Husain has been presenting *Today* for 11 years, during which time the format has changed and been modernised. John Humphrys was replaced by

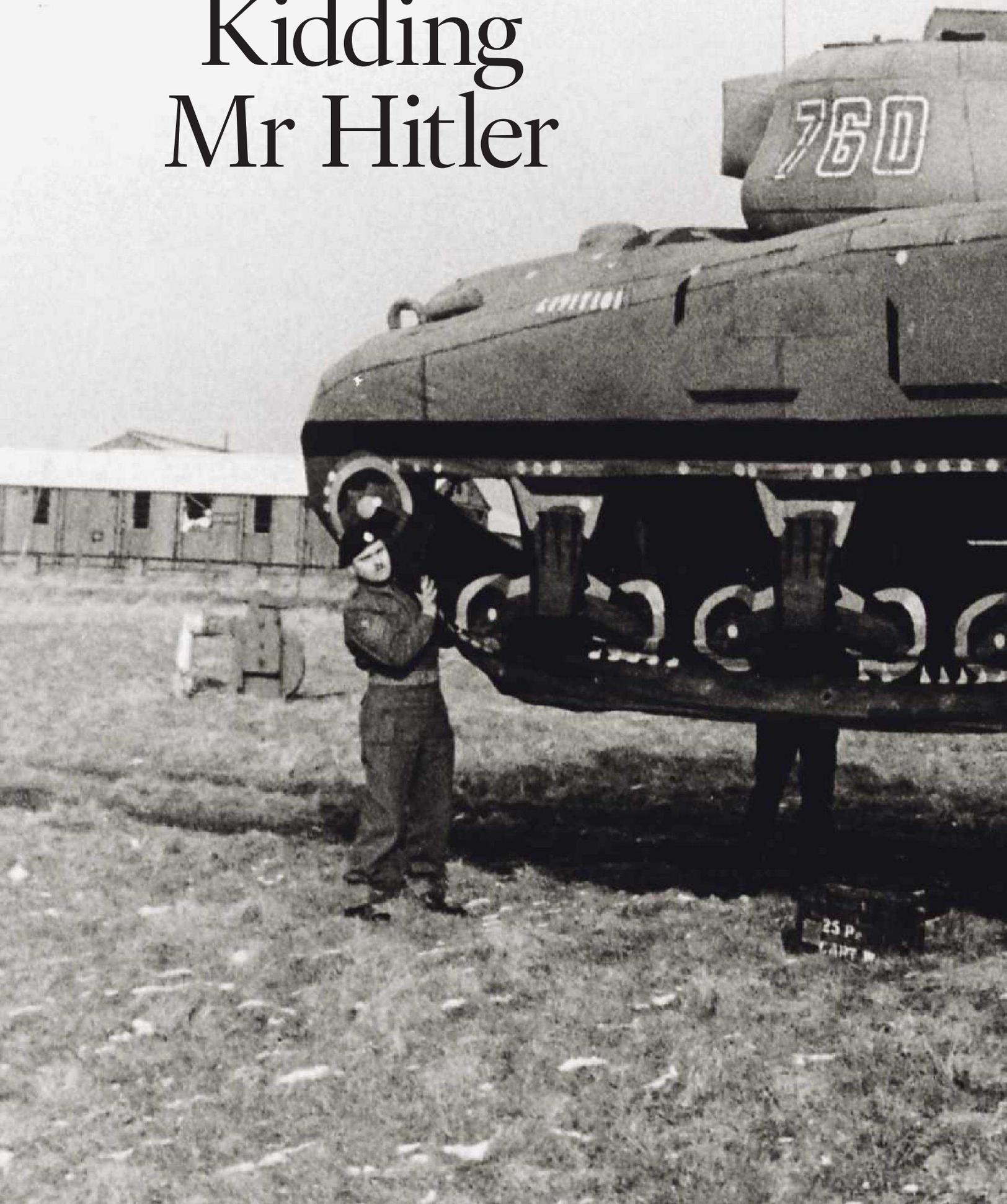
Amol Rajan three years ago and now Emma Barnett is taking over the reins from Martha Kearney. Husain took on the job when her sons were of primary school age and says, surprisingly, that the early mornings worked very well with family life. "As long as you are disciplined with your sleep. I would come home, have a nap and be with them after school," she says.

The programme has changed since she joined. Having two female presenters on the same day was newsworthy then, now it is entirely unremarkable. Audience figures are also dwindling, down 800,000 according to recent reports. "People's listening habits have changed. I think the pandemic changed us and very hard news stories have changed us. I do understand when people say they prefer to listen to music in the morning." Presenting *Today* is still a privilege, she says, and I get the sense that she enjoys the role of mentor. In 2018 she published *The Skills: How to Win at Work*, and she says she has spoken to "Emma and Amol", the two *Today* hosts who still have young children, about the benefits of the early-morning slot.

At the same time she is clearly ambitious. Her sons have now either left home for university or are on the cusp of doing so and she is looking forward to having space in her life. "I am thinking about what is beyond *Today*. I'm wondering what the next act of my career might look like," she admits. She has been an intermittent presenter of the *News at Ten* slot that is now vacant since Huw Edwards left the corporation in disgrace. Clive Myrie has been touted as a frontrunner for the job. Husain won't be drawn on whether or not she wants it. There was a report earlier this year, however, that she would be taking over the BBC's royal events coverage. She says she hasn't been asked and suspects the role might be shared out — but she does have form.

It was Husain who conducted the only interview with Harry and Meghan after their engagement, meeting them for an informal conversation. "It was very relaxed," she says. "They were very enthusiastic and excited about each other." Meghan talked about the Commonwealth. "I walked away thinking, this makes sense, they'll be the ones who do loads of commonwealth relations, and William and Kate will be the more senior ones doing the ceremonial side of things here." Clearly that was not to be, Husain sighs. And with that she flips back into the role of interviewer: she has thoroughly researched me, asks about my own Sri Lankan heritage and provides tips in case I too want to write a book. And how are the biscuits, she adds ■

Kidding Mr Hitler



In the run-up to D-Day a fake military unit — armed with inflatable tanks and dummy fighter planes made by Shepperton film studios — was created to throw the Nazis off the scent. *Taylor Downing* tells the story of the war's most audacious bluff

Troops carry a rubber M4 Sherman tank used in the Allied decoy operations



General Hans Cramer was a German officer of the formal, Prussian school. Strict, proud and rigid, he did not take kindly to surrendering. Forced to admit defeat in Tunisia in May 1943, his army disintegrating around him, he insisted on wearing his finest dress uniform to the last. He and the general accompanying him when they surrendered to a British officer were dressed immaculately in long-waisted tunics, green breeches and highly polished boots. When asked to hand over their pistols they contemptuously threw them down at the officer's feet.

However, on arrival in Britain some weeks later Cramer was in a rather better mood. Senior Wehrmacht commanders were sent to Trent Park, a magnificent Georgian mansion to the north of London, and lived in some luxury while incarcerated there. They were served good food, were permitted to take walks in the spacious grounds and allowed a ration of whisky every evening. Cramer had his own bedroom, sitting room and a batman to attend to him. The grandeur of the surroundings played on the general's sense of self-importance. No wooden huts and barbed wire for him.

Moreover, Cramer was encouraged to listen to BBC radio and to talk freely with the other senior generals. But there was method in the madness. The house was like a large studio set with hidden microphones behind every painting, inside every plant pot and even under the floorboards. British intelligence officers listened in as the German officers discussed many aspects of the war. Their postprandial conversations yielded many fascinating gems of intelligence about future military plans and scientific projects that some of them thought would help rescue the Third Reich.

In the spring of 1944 Cramer was mysteriously transferred from Trent Park to a camp in Wales. In May, as he was in failing health, it was decided to release him as part of a prisoner exchange. He would be repatriated to the Third Reich via the

A local sailing barge accidentally ran into one of the hoax landing craft one night on the River Orwell in Suffolk. The shocked crew had to be detained until after D-Day

Swedish Red Cross. On the day of his release a car came for him with a driver, a guard and two British officers as an escort. The journey from Wales to a port on the south coast from where he would sail to Sweden was long. The two escort officers were extremely friendly and chatted in German with him. Soon they found themselves surrounded by large numbers of Allied troops, American and British, all clearly preparing for a big event — the invasion of occupied Europe.

Cramer grew wide-eyed at the scale of activity he saw out of the car window. He was also amazed at how indiscreet the chatty officers were. Another sign of the lack of soldierliness of the British, he thought. The two officers let it be known that they were driving through Kent. As all road signs had been removed years before to confuse the Germans in the event of an invasion, Cramer had no reason to doubt what he heard.

In fact the pair were not army officers at all. They were from MI5 — part of what was known as the Double Cross team. The whole charade was just one element in the deception leading up to D-Day — a grand plan to convince Hitler that any Allied

Captured German generals lived in luxury at Trent Park, a bugged mansion to the north of London; General Hans Cramer in 1941



invasion of mainland Europe would come not on the beaches of Normandy but 200 miles away to the north, around Calais.

In 1944 the Germans had a large force, the 15th Army, consisting of two panzer divisions and several infantry divisions, protecting the well-fortified Calais coast. The objective of the ambitious British deception plan was to keep that army there, well away from the Normandy landings.

On returning to Germany, Cramer was soon telling his old boss, Rommel, that he had seen evidence of a large army in Kent preparing for an invasion just across the Channel to the Pas-de-Calais. Cramer had seen genuine troops preparing for a real invasion. But in reality he had not been in Kent. He had been driven near to the Dorset coast, where Allied troops were amassing before D-Day.

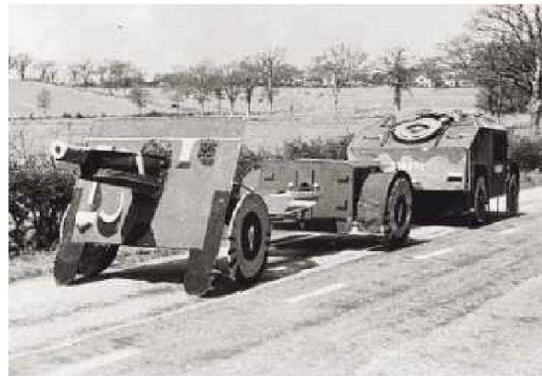
Cramer was whisked away to Hitler's mountain retreat in Berchtesgaden, where he repeated what he had seen and heard to the Führer. How could Hitler fail to be impressed by a report from one of his most-decorated generals of what he had seen with his own eyes? Misleading Cramer was an ingenious piece of play-acting from inventive minds within British intelligence. But it was only one of many deceptions.

The real army — and a pretend one

The planning for Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of northern Europe, was on a colossal scale. A quarter of a million men assembled in a series of encampments across southwestern England with all their vehicles, weapons and armoured support. Seven thousand vessels would carry them across the Channel to Normandy.

The invasion fleet of transports, landing craft and assault ships was supported by 7 battleships, 23 cruisers and 104 destroyers. Dozens of squadrons of Allied fighter aircraft would keep the skies clear of Luftwaffe counterattacks. The night before the invasion three divisions of Allied airborne troops would be dropped to secure key points on the flanks of the assault. By sea more than 132,000 men would land on five beaches on a 50-mile stretch of Normandy coast. Two gigantic floating harbours would be towed in separate pieces across the Channel from ports as far north as Scotland and assembled off the beaches. Overlord was probably the most daring and certainly the most complex operation of the war.

The American military leaders had wanted an invasion of northern Europe at least a year earlier. The British prime minister, Winston Churchill, and his military chiefs had argued for postponement. They had lived through the disaster of Dunkirk, the evacuation of more than 338,000 Allied troops in 1940, and knew that a failed landing before aerial and naval supremacy had been secured would spell disaster and set the war back by at least a year. Finally, under pressure from Stalin, who rightly felt the Soviets were



bearing the brunt of the land war with Nazi Germany, it had been agreed to go ahead with the invasion in June 1944.

At the same time, as the Allies agreed to launch the invasion on what would be called D-Day, they agreed to begin the deception that would fool the Germans as to when and where it would come. "In wartime, truth is so precious it should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies," Churchill told Stalin.

General Montgomery's chief deception organiser argued that it was not enough to make the Germans think an invasion was coming in the Pas-de-Calais; the Allies had to act as though this was the case. The deception planners came up with the idea of creating a hoax army in southeast England, in Kent, Essex and Suffolk, that looked as though it was training to invade across the shortest stretch of the Channel. At first such a vast deceit seemed impossible. How could they conjure an army of a quarter of a million men that didn't exist? Quickly they realised that they had to find a way.

First they gave the force a name — the First US Army Group — better known by

Fake landing craft, artillery and trucks were deployed in southeast England to distract from the real invasion force

its acronym, Fusag. German signallers had picked up on the existence on paper of such a unit earlier in the year. Now the Allied deceivers pretended that this force was to spearhead the invasion. To make it realistic it had to include some real troops, so several US and Canadian divisions that were in reality training for the Normandy invasion were allocated to Fusag in the early months of 1944. New fictitious divisions were also added and given names, insignia and located at training camps or barracks. Signals units were dispatched to start sending the sort of messages that such divisions would, in reality, create. A host of orders and instructions were sent down the command chain that would be picked up by German interceptors. They were sent in code, but some so simple that the Germans could easily make sense of them. Along with formal military plans and outlines of

training regimes, these signals included gossip about officer promotions and courts martial, just as would have been the case had such units actually existed. Soon German military intelligence began to report on the assembly of a large army of troops in the southeast of England.

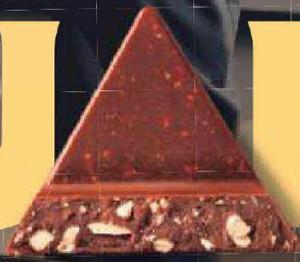
Rubber tanks and fake news

This imaginary army had to be equipped accordingly. Set designers and technicians from Shepperton film studios were asked to design dummy landing craft, tanks and aircraft that would look real if photographed by German reconnaissance aircraft. The landing craft were about 170ft long and 30ft wide, made out of heavy canvas stretched across a steel frame and floated on empty oil drums. Two battalions of the Worcestershire Regiment were trained to assemble them and it took 30 men about seven hours to build a dummy landing craft under cover of darkness. Two hundred and fifty of these were built and "launched" at harbours in Dover and Folkestone. They were moored along the Essex coast, on the rivers Orwell and ►

ALS ↘ ↑



**NEVER
SQUARE**



TOBLERONE

ALC
HBE

Deben in Suffolk, and as far north as Great Yarmouth in Norfolk.

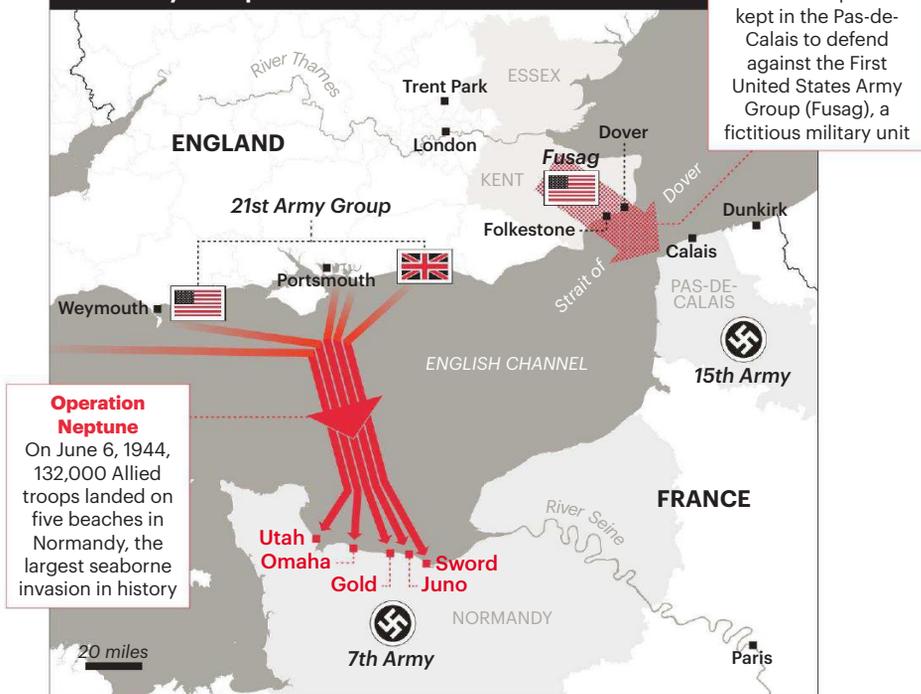
Large numbers of dummy tanks made of rubber and canvas on a metal frame were built and stored in long lines in assembly areas. Dummy aircraft were built and lined up on the tarmac on RAF airfields. And a large oil storage facility was built just outside Dover as a copy of the facilities being built in the southwest. But this one consisted of nothing more than canvas, wooden scaffolding, fibreboard and old sewer piping recycled from bombsites. From the ground it looked like a stage set. But it was only ever intended to be seen by the enemy from the air.

Allied reconnaissance aircraft were flown over the sites to photograph the dummy camps. RAF photo-interpreters were then asked to examine the aerial images. They announced they were not impressed. The machines looked convincing enough but the sites lacked a human presence. They said the formations would not convince an experienced photo-interpreter. So several battalions were ordered in and told to start brewing up in the early morning when the German reconnaissance aircraft were likely to pass overhead. The smoke from their fires would make it appear that large numbers of men were living alongside their equipment. They were also told to hang out towels and underclothes on washing lines.

When everything was ready, the Allied military authorities adopted a policy of what they called “discrete display” in the southeast of England, allowing occasional German reconnaissance planes to fly over the area to observe what was going on. This was in marked contrast to the southwest, where everything was hidden under camouflage and the assembled troops were allowed to use only smokeless fuel so as not to give away their position.

All the dummy sites were closed to the public but there were many challenges in keeping the plans secret. A sailing barge ran into one of the hoax landing craft one night

The D-Day deception



Operation Neptune

On June 6, 1944, 132,000 Allied troops landed on five beaches in Normandy, the largest seaborne invasion in history

Operation Fortitude South

German troops were kept in the Pas-de-Calais to defend against the First United States Army Group (Fusag), a fictitious military unit

on the River Orwell, near Felixstowe, and it promptly fell apart. No doubt the crew of the barge were astonished — but to prevent them from telling anyone what they had seen they were arrested and held in custody until after D-Day. Churchill visited one of the dummy tank assembly areas and was much amused when he saw four men lift up and carry away a Sherman tank that if real would have weighed more than 30 tonnes.

The deceivers thought creatively about the impact that large numbers of American

troops would have had on Kent or Essex villages. They got local newspapers to publish articles about villagers complaining of country lanes being blocked by American Jeeps and trucks. Letters were sent to newspapers about how American GIs were corrupting the local women. And someone wrote in complaining about the disgusting number of prophylactics he had discovered in a wood. These articles and letters were passed on to the various double agents operating under MI5's control, who duly fed them into German intelligence.

So Fusag had the troops needed to make up a large invasion force, was transmitting the sort of signals such units would generate and had the equipment necessary to mount a mighty cross-Channel operation. But it needed one more element to make it credible. Fusag required a commander whom the Germans would believe could lead the invasion.

General Patton, appointed commander of a fictitious Allied force, talks to US troops stationed in Britain, April 1944



The showman general

General George S Patton came from a long line of American generals; 16 members of his family had fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War. He liked to lead from the front, had an aggressive nature and was one of the greatest tacticians and tank commanders of the Second World War. But in 1944 Patton was playing no part in the planning of the real invasion as he had disgraced himself the previous year. While commanding troops in Sicily, Patton had viciously slapped some hospitalised soldiers suffering from war trauma — what we now know as post-traumatic stress disorder. He had threatened to shoot them if they didn't pull themselves together and get back ➤



into battle. There had been calls to send Patton home, but his commanding officer, General Eisenhower, decided to keep him on in the hope that he could find a role for him. Now his moment had come.

Patton was put in command of Fusag. Without doubt he would have preferred to be leading real troops, but as a natural showman he took to this new task with vigour. With a rodlike straight back, resplendent in a smartly tailored uniform, he looked the epitome of a great commander. Everywhere he went he was accompanied

Field Marshal Rommel, holding a baton, inspects German defences in Normandy; the D-Day landings, June 6, 1944

by photographers. He made speeches to troops in divisions that didn't exist, inspected tanks in pretend armoured units and was even joined by King George VI once or twice as he travelled around the southeast of England. The Germans thought Patton was one of the best generals the

Allies had and entirely believed he would be the man appointed to command the upcoming invasion.

Moment of truth

Germany's Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, commander-in-chief of the armies in the west, had become convinced from intelligence reports that the real invasion would come from southeast England to the Pas-de-Calais. But in the early months of 1944 Hitler began arguing that Cherbourg in Normandy would be

Sainsbury's



PORTOBELLO
table lamp
£45

the Allied objective. At other times he said it might be launched against Norway or the Netherlands. Probably he wanted to record belief in all options so that whatever happened he could claim to have been right. But by late spring he seemed more certain.

On May 27, just ten days before D-Day, Hitler had a meeting with the Japanese ambassador to Berlin, Hiroshi Oshima. Hitler spoke openly and honestly, telling Oshima that wherever the invasion came first, this would be a feint as the Allies would then “come forward with an all-out second front in the area of the Straits of Dover”. A transcript of their conversation was sent by Oshima to Tokyo. This was intercepted, deciphered and read with delight by Eisenhower and his team. They could barely believe how Hitler himself had taken the bait. It was as though they had written the Führer’s script for him.

The Germans also had a source in Britain whom they codenamed Josephine. There has been much debate over the years as to who Josephine was. Recent research has pointed the finger at Anthony Blunt, a senior figure within MI5 who was later outed as a Soviet double agent. In any case, in advance of D-Day nothing they heard from Josephine contradicted the deception operations.

The invasion was finally launched on Tuesday, June 6, a day later than scheduled because of a storm in the Channel. News of

the landings was to be withheld until 9.30 that morning, when all BBC radio stations would interrupt their broadcasts for the newsreader John Snagge to announce that “Allied naval forces, supported by strong air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the coast of northern France”, but omitting precisely where.

However, Berlin Radio had beaten the BBC to it. At 8am its newsreader had announced that Allied landings were taking place. The news was brief but the radio producers went on to report what they were sure was happening, that Allied troops were coming ashore in the Pas-de-Calais.

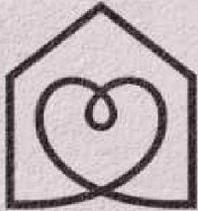
The deception team wrote to newspapers about how the GIs were corrupting women in southeast England. One complained about prophylactics found in a local wood

In reality from the early hours of June 6 Allied soldiers landed across five Normandy beaches — codenamed Sword, Juno, Gold, Omaha and Utah — eventually linking up to form a beachhead and push inland.

For six weeks after D-Day the German high command refused requests to transfer troops from the Pas-de-Calais. Hitler and von Rundstedt continued to believe Normandy was a diversion and that a second more significant invasion was still coming from Patton’s forces into the Calais coast.

By inventing an army that never was, the Allied deceivers had kept key German forces twiddling their thumbs around Calais while some of the decisive battles of the war were being fought hundreds of miles away. The invasion proved a great success but would be followed by nearly two months of intense fighting to break out from Normandy. In August the Allies liberated Paris; in September Brussels. But it was another six months before they crossed the Rhine. The final German surrender did not come until May 1945. Without any doubt it would have been much later had D-Day — and its extraordinary deception force — failed ■

***The Army That Never Was: D-Day and the Great Deception* by Taylor Downing (Icon £25). To order a copy go to timesbookshop.co.uk. Discount available for Times+ members**

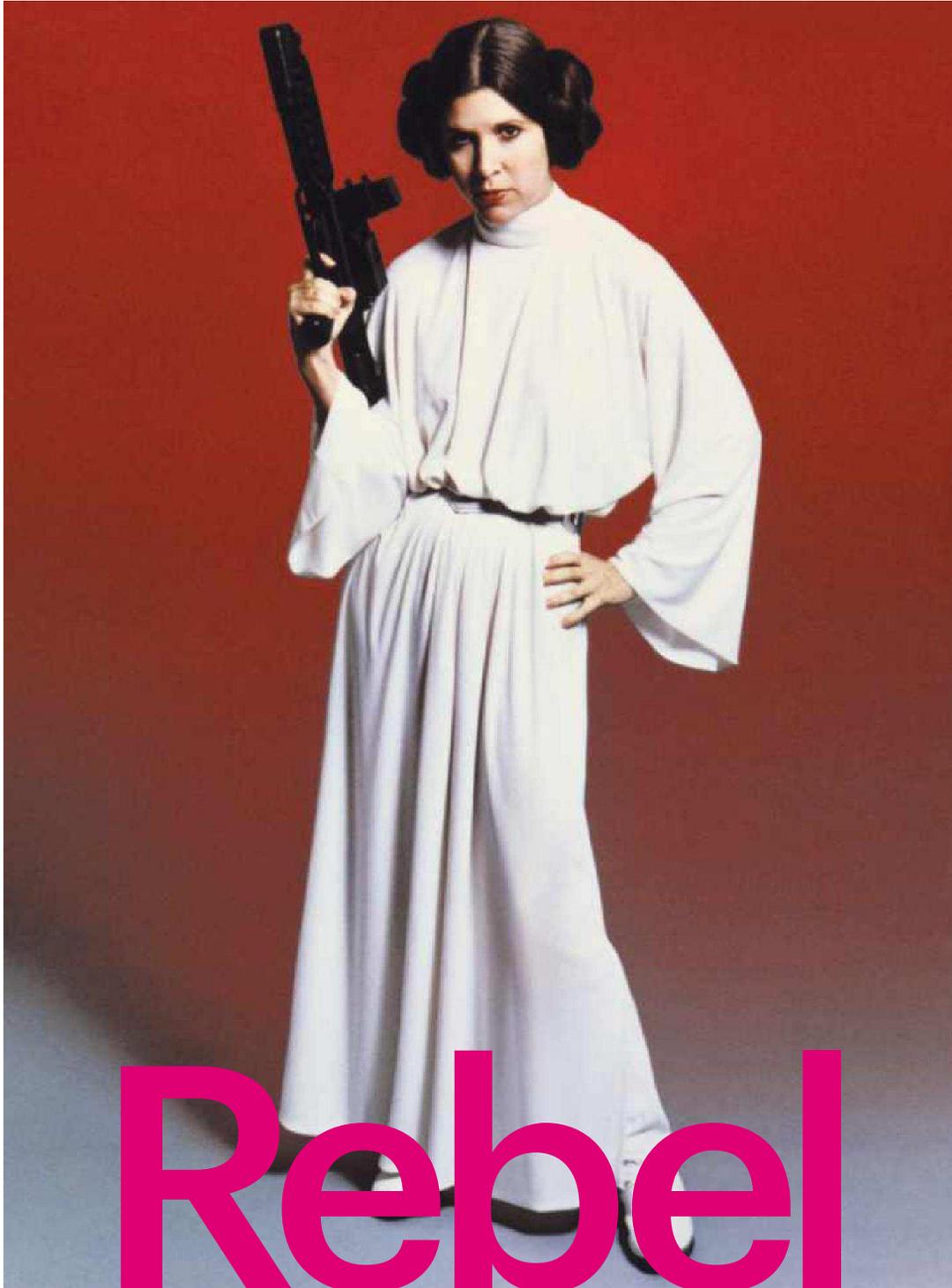
 **habitat**
love design, love habitat.

Proud to share our exclusive 60th collection.

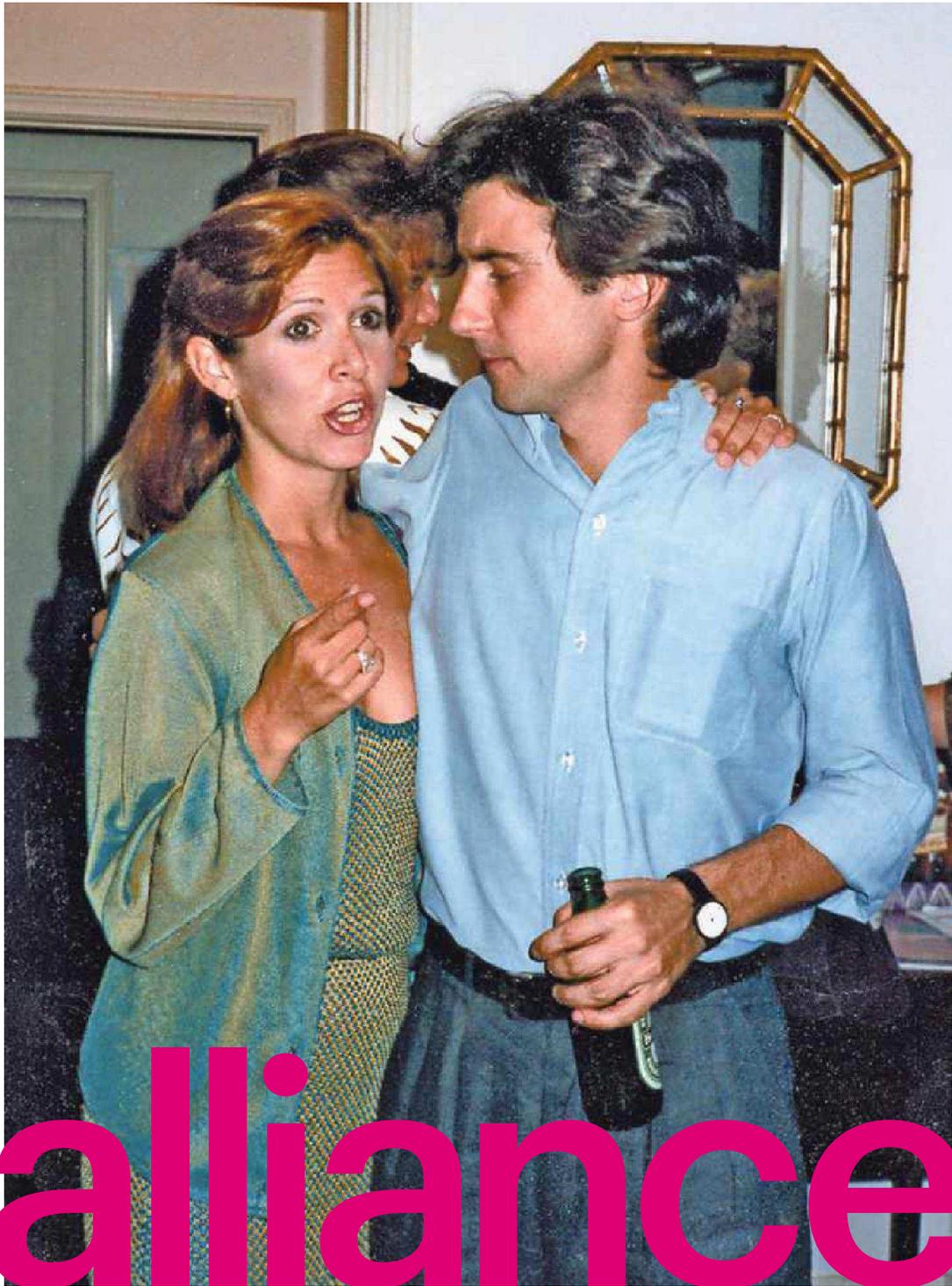


habitat.co.uk

Subject to availability. Selected stores.



Drug dealers in the flat. James Taylor crying in the bedroom. Romantic approaches from the Eagles.



As Carrie Fisher's best friend, the actor *Griffin Dunne* witnessed her intergalactic rise up close

One night

in 1971, when I was at my family home in Beverly Hills, my 14-year-old brother, Alex, announced: "I love Carrie Fisher." He used the word love a lot. "She's a girl I met today. She's coming over and I want everyone to act normal."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Just don't everybody act like it's a big deal that she's here. Don't ask her questions. Just don't... tell her I love her."

"Why would we say that?" I said.

"She doesn't know. I want it to be a surprise."

To that I replied, "Well, it will be a surprise if you just met her today. And not a good one either, if I can give you a little advice. Try to play it a little cool or she will freak." He wasn't taking in my brotherly advice.

"Don't do that thing you do with the girls," he said, breaking out in a French accent and kissing his hand over and over while chanting "*Ma chérie*".

I laughed, while nervously looking around to see if my embarrassment was showing.

"Just don't" — he suddenly reverted to a dead monotone — "trick her into liking you."

Carrie arrived and as per Alex's instructions I ignored her.

At the time I had just turned 16. Carrie was a year younger than me but looked exactly like the teen seductress in *Shampoo* she would soon play opposite Warren Beatty. I knew I had to get out of the room or I'd break my vow to Alex and to myself.

I was about to leave when she addressed me. "You're friends with Piper, aren't you?"

I didn't know who Piper was. Torn between admitting my ignorance or inquiring about him or her — both of which would have betrayed my brother — I shyly looked down. The effect, though unintentional, made me appear tortured and sullen.

"Griffin's friends with everybody. I don't even have a name at school. They just call me 'Griffin's brother,'" Alex said cheerfully, if not with downright pride. I was so touched, I wanted to kick his ass for making such a stupid remark in front of the woman he loved.

"Well, at least they don't call you 'Debbie's daughter,'" she said in reference to her mother, the actress Debbie Reynolds.

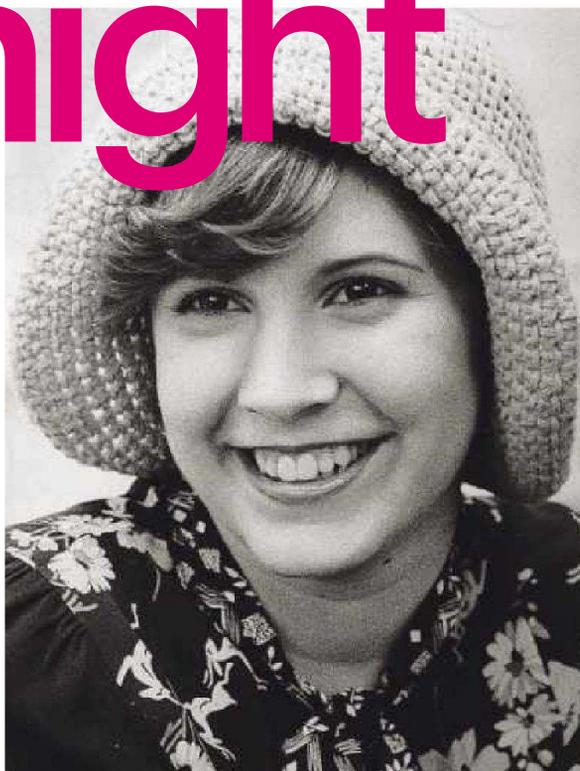
"Is that tough to live up to?" I asked. Oh shut up, I thought to myself.

"It's a burden, but I still get three square meals a day."

"There is that." Shut up!

"Always looking on the bright side."

"A glass-half-full kind of broad, are you?" Oh, for God's sake, what is wrong with me?



Fisher aged 17 at the Savoy hotel in London, July 1974



Making her screen debut at the same age in the 1975 comedy *Shampoo*

"Guilty as charged."

"Who's Debbie?" asked Alex, not keeping up at all.

"*The Singing Nun*. We saw it about five dinners ago," I reminded him, hoping to bring him back into the conversation.

Carrie later announced that it was a school night and she had to get home or her mother would worry.

"No, I'm kidding, she's asleep for a 5am

call and has no idea where I am, but I do have to get back. So nice to meet you all. Alex, your family seems incredibly well balanced. You must be very proud."

Best friends become best friends suddenly, and without knowing that's what's happening until it happens. One insignificant day, weeks later, I looked at Carrie and realised she would be in my life for a long time. Before I failed Spanish,

Best friends become best friends suddenly. One insignificant day I looked at Carrie and knew she would be in my life for a long time



With Griffin Dunne, left, and her Star Wars co-star Mark Hamill in 1977

I remember the teacher describing the eve of fluency as when one night you dream in the language and suddenly you can speak it the next morning. That is what it felt like when Carrie and I realised we were best friends. To the exclusion of everyone around us, we established our own Sanskrit that baffled the locals and established our reputation alongside the great pairings of all who came before us: Laurel and Hardy. Pork and Beans. Griffin and Carrie.

That we were platonic didn't comfort Alex; if anything, it made things worse. Our friendship, clearly destined for a long history, meant that my impossibly romantic brother would never have the chance to win his Guinevere. *Et tu*, Carrie, he must have thought when she introduced him only as "Griffin's brother" at a barbecue at her house, and he never set foot there again.

First of all, let me cut to the chase and say that Carrie never became my girlfriend. She knew, long before I did, that being lovers would diminish our possibilities. Carrie was a virgin when we met, and she lived for every lurid detail of my own sexual encounters: from my first kiss to postcoital anxieties I shared with no one but her. Her curiosity was so forensic that I felt like a cadaver undergoing an autopsy.

When she was 19 and living in New York, Carrie had a boyfriend, a sweet English actor named Donald, whom she'd been dating for the past few months. Donald had stepped into the same black hole as every man who had fallen hard for Carrie, and he did what every man before him had done: sought my advice on how he might win her heart. I was an acting student in New York at the time. I'd grown accustomed to watching these poor guys be drained of their confidence under her barrage of mixed signals, their late-night calls begging me to translate a cryptic postcard or a parting quip delivered after a furious make-out session.

Of all her confused suitors, Donald was the one I liked the most, and I was rooting for him. I couldn't bring myself to tell him that, shortly into their courtship, Carrie had

chosen to lose her virginity to me. As messed up as it sounds, there was a certain logic to Carrie's approach. For years I'd been walking her through the minutiae of every conceivable sexual act like an ordnance handler telling a housewife how to defuse a bomb. Yes, it can be scary, but not if you know what you're doing.

Donald was going to be the one, Carrie told me, on a night her mom was out of town and I was staying over at the Midtown hotel suite they were living in. Afterwards I was in the shower, and suddenly a severed bloody hand, convincingly amputated from the wrist, flew in and landed at my feet. The gruesome rubber prop was promotional swag given to Carrie by the publicist of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and had become the star of an ongoing gag between us. I first laid eyes on it under my pillow one night. I screamed like a little girl, but only for a moment, and then plotted my revenge.

Soon after, the hand made its Broadway debut thanks to Carrie's part in the chorus of *Irene*, in which her mother was starring. I snuck into her dressing room and hid it in

a Victorian purse she was to open, on cue, to powder her nose in time with the chorus dancing to *The Riviera Rage*. Wish I could have asked how the show went, but according to our unspoken rule we never mentioned the hand. Somehow Carrie managed to get the bartender at Beefsteak Charlie's, where I worked, to hide it under the romaine at the salad bar during Sangria Night. Carrie now chucking the hand into the shower was beneath both of us, but I decided to let it pass.

While I was working up a lather, I felt fingers touch my belly and slowly move downwards. When I finally wiped the soap from my eyes, I saw Carrie holding the amputated rubber hand that caressed me.

"You freak!" I screamed as she ran from the bathroom, doubled over in hysterics.

"Griffin got turned on by a dead guy," she sang. I looked down at the severed limb at my feet, palm up in *mea culpa* fashion as if to say, "Hey, man, she made me do it."

I came out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel. Carrie was on her bed reading as if nothing had happened, but there was no denying a change had taken place. She looked different to me, or maybe I was just reminded of my impressions of when we first met. I sat beside her on the bed, took the book from her hands, and kissed her.

It all made sense in the moment, and we both understood that everything we were doing under those covers would not alter our friendship one iota.

Not only did my friendship with Carrie remain unfazed, but so did my relationship with Donald after they finally made love. He remained just as needy and insecure about her feelings towards him, and I never turned down his late-night invitations to watch him cry into his beer. He might not have been her first, but he was the first of many of her boyfriends (and girlfriends of mine) to wrongly assume that the rules of a platonic relationship were so black and white.

In the autumn of 1975 I was summoned by Carrie's mother to report to her dressing room at New York's Minskoff Theatre at ►

A werewolf in London

Thomas Griffin Dunne found fame starring in John Landis's 1981 hit *American Werewolf in London* and was the lead in Martin Scorsese's black comedy *After Hours* in 1985.

He was born in New York to the producer and journalist Dominick Dunne and the activist Ellen Griffin Dunne, and is the nephew of the writer Joan Didion. He directed the documentary *Joan Didion: The Center Will Not Hold* in 2017. He also acted in *My Girl* (1991), *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013) and the drama series *This Is Us* (2016). His sister, the actress Dominique Dunne, was murdered by her ex-boyfriend in 1982.

the end of a Saturday matinee of *Irene*. Carrie wouldn't say what the meeting was about except that I was really "going to like it".

Debbie came to regard me, if not as her son, then as her daughter's older brother. She was very protective of Carrie and thought nothing of calling to find out whether I thought a particular guy who was sending her flowers to the theatre was bad news or not. I would sound concerned or reassuring depending on how I felt, but usually I didn't even know whom she was asking about. People had been sending Carrie flowers for as long as I'd known her.

The night of her summons, I pushed my way through Debbie's fans waiting for autographs at the stage door. "She's expecting you," said Edie, the guard who kept the hordes back. Debbie's wardrobe mistress greeted me with a can of beer as I pulled up a chair next to Debbie at her dressing mirror, where she was sitting in a robe and skullcap, taking off her make-up.

Carrie stood reading a filthy but funny telegram from Sir John Gielgud, the English actor, taped to the wall with hundreds of other well-wishes. Debbie got right to it.

"So, Griffin. Carrie tells me you live in a slum downtown."

"I did not put it that way, Mom."

"And that you've been robbed?"

"Only the first few months," I qualified.

"It's tapered off now. My place now is really just more of a workshop for thieves learning the ropes."

"Well, that can't be good. Carrie, as you know, is hoping to move into an apartment of her own."

"I can't in good conscience suggest my neighbourhood, if that is what you're asking."

"I have found a place, or I should say we," she said, nodding towards her daughter, "that is sort of perfect — except for one thing. It is a wonderful building with a doorman, just off Central Park, but the only problem is there are two bedrooms, and Carrie wants to live alone. Which is out of the question."

I looked to Carrie for an explanation, but she was engrossed in a telegram.

"What we want to ask you, dear," Debbie continued, "is if you would consider leaving the glamour of your present home and moving in with Carrie."

"Where is it?"

"It's the Hotel des Artistes, on West 67th. You could pay what you are paying now if it makes you feel better. I know you want to do the whole bongo-playing Marlon Brando thing, but I'll tell you something. Marlon used to have a roommate, a dear man named Wally Cox, and I'll bet if Wally's mother offered to move them to a safer apartment, he would have leapt at the chance."

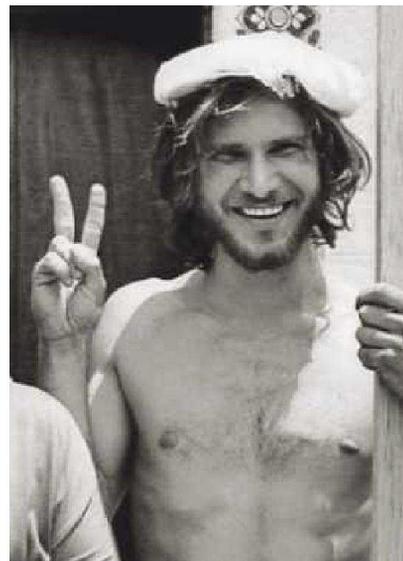
"We have no way of proving that, of course," offered Carrie.

I could see that she was hoping I would go for this and that I wasn't falling in line as quickly as she'd expected.



With her mother, Debbie Reynolds, in 1973; Harrison Ford when he was a carpenter in 1970. Below: with Chewbacca, who was played by Peter Mayhew, in 1983

"I look like I'm wearing two bagels over my ears! And I'm acting with an eight-foot yeti and a four-foot Brit in a rolling trash can"



"This place is amazing, which of course you don't feel you deserve — even I don't think you deserve it — but the only way Mom is going to let me move out is if I get a roommate, and there is no one I want that to be more than you. Come on, it'll be fun."

West 67th Street was two blocks from Beefsteak Charlie's and a short walk to the theatre district should an audition ever occur in my lifetime. Plus, I had recently outrun a mugger on Avenue A, an episode I decided not to bring up just then. I agreed.

At des Artistes everyone always knew who Carrie was, but no one was ever quite sure about me, a pattern soon to haunt me throughout the coming years. The building staff called me Mr Griffin and seemed to assume I was the rightful heir to a vast fortune, enjoying my playboy years.

Our apartment took on the appearance of a warehouse for retired artefacts from a turn-of-the-century theme park. Carrie had an incredible eye for found objects and a hearty allowance from Debbie to support it. I placed my keys on the extended tongue of a demented funhouse clown. I hung my coat on a scale that measured whether children were tall enough for a rollercoaster (which Carrie also would have bought, if it fit in the apartment). I had to pass through countless crafts and props and paintings by serial killers just to get to my bedroom.

It was 1976 and one day Carrie said offhandedly that she had landed a job in some science-fiction movie shooting in England. "Is there a part in it for me?" I asked, oblivious to what a normal person would say, like "Congrats" or "That's great!"

"The only one you would have been right for is being played by Mark somebody. It's a really stupid script and you would have turned it down, I promise."

"If I'd known about it," I said suspiciously, as if she and Mark somebody had conspired to keep their movie a secret from me because now he was her best friend. I was dangerously close to being one of those

out-of-work actors who grasps at delusional reasons for their continued unemployment. Of course Carrie picked up on my mood.

“Don’t be like that. The other lead is some older guy named Harrison Ford. You wouldn’t have heard of him.”

In fact I knew him. He was the carpenter whom my aunt, the writer Joan Didion, had hired to build the deck of her beach house near Malibu when I was 17. Like an eager puppy I’d handed him nails or dug for hardware from his worn canvas toolkit. In return he would slip me one of his Marlboros, the filters of which I clipped off because that’s what he did. Harrison cut me off from his endless relay of joints because his stuff was so strong that after one toke I couldn’t tell the difference between a saw and a tape measure. I simply idolised the dude and hated my envy that Carrie would get to spend so much time with him.

“He was the guy I told you about, who built the deck at Joan’s house.”

“You mean the carpenter you worshipped like he was Jesus?”

“Yeah, he’s the coolest guy I ever met and is almost as funny as you are. You’re going to love him,” I whined in despair. “And you being away that long is not good news at all.” She went to London a week later.

Carrie often returned from shooting and we fell right back into waking each other up with filthy lyrics from made-up musicals. I’d forgotten how much I missed the phone ringing off the hook and the flower deliveries and visits from friends at all hours. But now that our old life came roaring back, I also kind of missed the quiet routine I’d established in her absence. Not in a bad way — I just needed to oil a few squeaky wheels to get us back in alignment like before.

Carrie grew anxious as the release date for *Star Wars* — May 25, 1977 — neared. “You should see what they did to my hair!” she had screamed into the phone on location, usually mornings before going to set for her, four in the morning for me. “I look like I’m wearing two bagels over my ears.”

This wasn’t the first time I’d heard about the bagels, and I knew she was warming to a repeated monologue that might allow me a moment to drift off until a response was required. “And I’m acting with an eight-foot yeti and a four-foot Brit in a rolling trash can! We shoot at shit we can’t see on green screens with ray guns that don’t even have a trigger. This movie is going to be a f***ing disaster.”

The very first screening of *Star Wars* was at the Ziegfeld Theatre, the largest cinema in Manhattan. It was a sneak preview that attracted a mob of rabid sci-fi fans who lined up along West 54th as if summoned by signals from a distant galaxy. They clearly knew something about this movie that Carrie did not. If John and George came back from the dead to play the Garden with Paul and Ringo for one show only, I don’t think they could have worked

Paul Simon and the men who fell for Carrie Fisher



During filming for the first *Star Wars* movie, Fisher had a three-month affair with Harrison Ford. She was 19, Ford was 33 and married with two children. She also kissed Mark Hamill, who played Luke Skywalker.

She met the singer Paul Simon, above, on the set of *Saturday Night Live* in 1978. They married in 1983 but divorced in 1984. “I think ultimately I fell into the heading ‘good anecdote, bad reality’,” Fisher said. They remained in an on-again-off-again relationship until 1988.

SNL was also where Fisher met the Canadian actor and comedian Dan Aykroyd. Aykroyd proposed and she initially accepted before calling it off to reconcile with Simon.

Fisher had a daughter, Billie Lourd, 31, with the Hollywood agent Bryan Lourd. They were together for three years until 1994, when he came out as gay.

The English singer James Blunt became Fisher’s unlikely (and strictly platonic) flatmate in Los Angeles after meeting her through a mutual friend in 2003. Fisher was godmother to Blunt’s son.

up the crowd the way *Star Wars* did that night at the Ziegfeld.

By the last line of the opening crawl, something about “certain doom for the champions of freedom”, I knew Carrie’s life would never be the same. Not to put a “certain doom” on it, but neither would our friendship. It was just different for a long while, but never really the same.

Overnight I became “Carrie Fisher’s roommate”, a delicious karma that my brother Alex might have appreciated, having been called “Griffin’s brother” all his life.

The off-Broadway actors and chorus girls who dropped by at all hours were soon

outnumbered by rock musicians and movie stars I’d grown up idolising. Glenn Frey of the Eagles wooed Carrie with a stadium-quality sound system he had shipped from the Record Plant in LA.

“Which Eagle is he?” she yelled from the shower when I read her the card.

Coming home one evening, I fought my way through a party of coke dealers and hangers-on to find James Taylor crying in my bedroom to Carrie that Carly Simon didn’t love him any more. Richard Dreyfuss could be heard snorting lines while railing about a disastrous review he’d just received for his performance as Iago in an open-air production of *Othello* in Central Park, a part that I would have killed for.

I knew I would have to move on. “You’ve arrived, I haven’t even left,” I said to Carrie when I broke the news. She took it badly but begrudgingly understood. I found a place back downtown, where I belonged, and hung with people whose struggles more resembled my own. It was always tempting to accept invitations to Carrie’s parties or watch her host *Saturday Night Live* from the green room, but I held off until I could tame my insecurities — or at least make enough money from acting to grandly pick up a tab like Carrie had done so many times for me.

In 1982 I thought starring in my first off-Broadway play, *Coming Attractions*, to good reviews was the straw stuffing I needed to fill the holes to make me feel worthy. I knew acceptance from others was a quick fix — hardly unusual to actors and a flaw I would deal with later — but the minor success nonetheless brought the glow back to my friendship with Carrie.

In the years ahead I was there for her family weddings and she for many of mine. She loved to pretend she couldn’t remember which of my exes was which. But of course she knew, and dug for every little nugget about when and where it all went wrong with the same curiosity she’d had about my proclivities when she was a virgin.

I wish I could remember our last conversation before she left for London on the trip from which she never came home in 2016. At the age of 60, after being in the UK to film scenes for the third series of *Catastrophe*, she fell ill on the flight back to Los Angeles and died from sleep apnoea and other complications in hospital four days later, having never regained consciousness. That conversation was probably about Christmas plans or our daughters’ shenanigans, but I know, despite not remembering what exactly was said, that we laughed very, very hard ■

©Griffin Dunne 2024. Extracted from *The Friday Afternoon Club: A Family Memoir* by Griffin Dunne (Atlantic Books £20), to be published on June 13. To order a copy go to timesbookshop.co.uk. Discount available for Times+ members



Police detain a man during clashes between the National Front and antiracist demonstrators in Lewisham, southeast London, 1977

PULLING FOCUS



Ireland's 1-0 victory over England at Euro '88 draws a capacity crowd in west Belfast



Inmates watch TV on the wing at HMP Pentonville, London, 1983

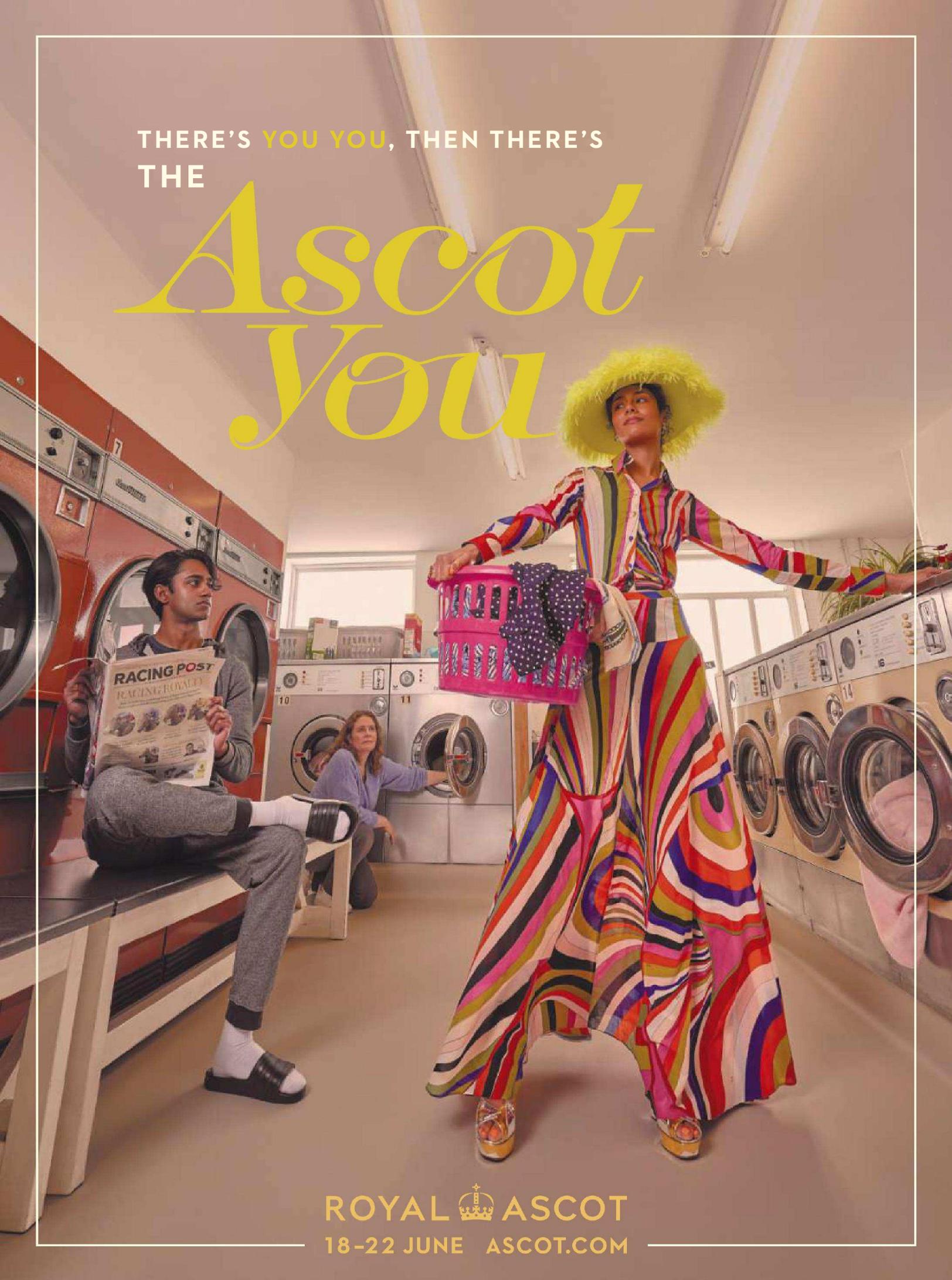
**Arresting portraits of a nation from the 1970s to 1990s
by the documentary photographer *Mike Abrahams***



In the wake of the 1981 Toxteth riots in Liverpool, protesters call for the dismissal of the city's chief constable

THERE'S YOU YOU, THEN THERE'S
THE

Ascot You

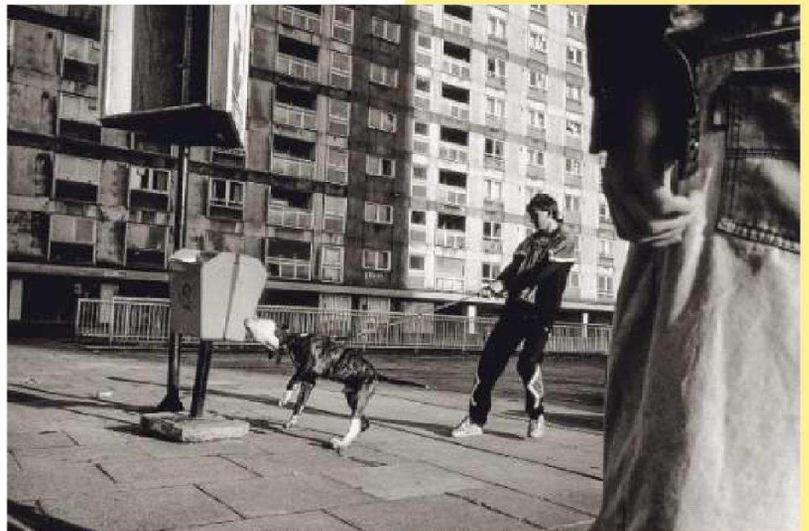


ROYAL  ASCOT
18-22 JUNE ASCOT.COM



Police struggle to control the crowd as racial tension boils over during the "Battle of Lewisham", 1977

A boy's dog takes out its frustrations on a litter bin at the Red Road flats housing scheme in northeast Glasgow, 1990



Children play in Belfast in 1997 beside a bonfire prepared for the annual Battle of the Boyne celebrations in July



Moments in the lives of ordinary people are what interest Mike Abrahams. For the Liverpoolian photographer, 72, these are what capture the bigger story of Britain. His career-spanning book *This Was Then* contains his images from over three decades, including the 1977 Battle of Lewisham and overcrowding at HMP Pentonville. He focuses on "lives that are so often ignored and marginalised". Asked why he shoots in black-and-white, he once explained: "I grew up in Liverpool in the 1950s and 60s, a city in which to my eyes colour was absent." ■

***This Was Then* (Bluecoat £45) is published on June 6. Four Corners Gallery, London E2, has a one-day exhibition on the same date**



THE SUNDAY TIMES Wine Club

PLUS
FREE
DELIVERY

DOUBLE
Gold

93
pts

90
pts

NEW CUSTOMER OFFER

30% OFF OUR RANGE

Gavi is a buzz word among lovers of Italian whites, and the mineral, citrus crispness of Villa Broglia Gavi is exceptionally fine.

Use code: **30off**



ORDER NOW AT: sundaytimeswineclub.co.uk/broglia

New customers only. Free delivery usually £7.99. Ends 31/06/24 or while stocks last. 18+. Order acceptance and the contract between us is formed on despatch of products. See sundaytimeswineclub.co.uk/terms for full terms and conditions, and our privacy policy. The Sunday Times Wine Club is operated by Direct Wines Ltd. Registered in England and Wales. Registered Number 1095091. One Waterside Drive, Arlington Business Park, Theale, Berkshire, RG7 4SW. Unless otherwise stated, all wines contain sulphites. Savings based on individual bottle price.



TABLE TALK

Easy show-off suppers



Clodagh McKenna's
family cheese soufflé

PLUS Ottolenghi branches out to Bicester Village ● Will Lyons's bargain Italian reds ● The best and worst spicy mayo ➔



**C L O D A G H
M c K E N N A**

I'd never seen a soufflé served family style in one large dish until a kitchen supper at a friend's house. It was an incredible sight coming out of the oven. I have made it many times since, preparing the mixture an hour before guests arrive and keeping it in the fridge.

Crab spaghetti is easy to pull together as a quick-fix midweek meal, but also sophisticated enough to be a supper-party main course. The delicate zing from the ginger is so good with the sweetness of the crab and heat of the chilli.

At this time of year I make a tart a week, using fresh vegetables from the garden and puff pastry from the freezer. This week it's asparagus. If you have some homemade pesto (or a good shop-bought one), drizzle it over the top for extra flavour.



Family cheese soufflé

You can use good-quality English cheddar for this dish too. Make sure you grease and line the dish with breadcrumbs: it really helps the soufflé to rise and keep its height.

Ingredients

(Serves 4)

- 60g butter, plus extra for greasing
- 20g stale breadcrumbs
- 60g plain flour
- 560ml whole milk
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 6 eggs, separated
- 80g gruyère or cheddar cheese, grated
- Small bunch of chives, finely chopped

1 Grease a 22cm large ramekin dish with some butter, then

add the breadcrumbs: turning the dish around, coat the sides and base with them, then knock out any excess. Set the dish aside.

2 Melt the 60g of butter in a saucepan over a low heat, add the flour and stir until combined and there are no lumps. Continue to cook for a couple of minutes. Next, slowly whisk in the milk, continuing to whisk until you reach a smooth consistency. Whisk in the mustard and crushed garlic, then carry on cooking over a low heat until the sauce has thickened. Season with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, then remove from the heat and allow to cool for 15 min.

3 Heat the oven to 180C fan/gas 6 and place a large baking tray in it while it warms up.

4 Separate your eggs. Stir the yolks into the cooled sauce and then stir in the cheese.

5 In a separate bowl, whisk the egg whites until they form stiff peaks. Add one large spoonful to the cheese mixture and stir to loosen it. Then add the chives and carefully fold in the rest of the egg whites, making sure not to overmix and knock the air out of the mixture.

6 Pour the mixture into the prepared ramekin and then carefully run a knife around the top edge to ensure the soufflé gets a good rise in the oven.

7 Place the soufflé on the hot baking tray and close the door quickly. Bake for 30 min, until it is well risen but still with a little wobble in the middle. Serve immediately with a green salad.

Crab spaghetti with chilli and ginger

If you have a jar of preserved lemons in your cupboard, finely chop two of them, add with the ginger and then leave out the lime. This recipe would work for prawns instead of crab too.

Ingredients

(Serves 4)

- 600g spaghetti
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 spring onions, finely sliced
- 1 red chilli, finely chopped
- 2in fresh ginger, grated
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 300g cooked crab meat
- 50ml crème fraîche
- Grated zest and juice of 1 lime
- 1 tbsp flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

1 Place the spaghetti in a large pan of salted boiling water. Stir for a minute, leave to cook for a further 3 min, then drain.



2 Meanwhile, place a frying pan over a medium heat and add the olive oil. Stir in the spring onions, chilli, ginger and garlic, then leave to simmer for 2 min.

3 Tip the cooked crab into the pan with the spring onions, followed by the crème fraîche, and stir. Add the lime juice and zest, then stir and cook for 2-3 min. Fold in the spaghetti.

4 Season with sea salt and pepper and transfer to a serving dish. Sprinkle the parsley over before serving.

Asparagus and whipped minted ricotta tart

My freezer is stacked with frozen sheets of puff pastry as they're such a great shortcut to an easy supper. Roll them out, add simple toppings, pop in the oven and the job is done.

Ingredients

(Serves 6)

- 320g ready-rolled puff pastry sheet
- 300g ricotta
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 50g parmesan, finely grated
- 1 tbsp fresh mint, finely chopped
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 200g asparagus
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 20g pine nuts
- 1 egg, beaten

1 Heat the oven to 200C/gas 6. Unroll the puff pastry onto a lined baking sheet.

2 Using a sharp knife, score a 2cm border around the edge of the tart, being careful not to cut all the way through the pastry. Prick the pastry that is inside the border with a fork all over — this will help

to stop it puffing up while it's in the oven.

3 In a medium-sized bowl whisk together the ricotta, crushed garlic, parmesan, chopped mint and lemon zest, then season liberally with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper.

4 Spread the ricotta mixture over the tart, making sure you keep inside the border. Place the asparagus spears over the top and press them down gently so they sink slightly into the ricotta mix, then brush lightly with the olive oil. Sprinkle the pine nuts over the top.

5 Brush the pastry border with the beaten egg, then place the tart in the oven and bake for 20 min, until the pastry is golden and cooked through ■

Tasted! The best supermarket SPICY MAYO



OUR PICK

Sauce Shop Chipotle and Lime Aioli

Sainsbury's, 260g, £2.80 Smoky and sweet, then comes the spice and lime. Thumbs up **5/5**

Heinz x Morley's Fried Chicken Sauce

Tesco, 420g, £3 A mayo-based sauce by the fried chicken shop Morley's, this is at the higher end of the spice scale (a good thing) **3/5**

M&S Peri Peri

Ocado, 280ml, £1.80 Creamy, with just a hint of tongue-tingling **3/5**

Nando's Mild Perinaise

Sainsbury's, 265g, £2.25 I'm not sure I'd have this all over my chips, but it has a complex, slightly sweet flavour **3/5**

Sainsbury's Peri Peri

280ml, £1.10 For people who just want the taste of "spice" in a creamy, squirry format **2/5**

Bramwells Peri Peri

Aldi, 250ml, 89p Can I taste... gherkins? This is burger sauce masquerading as spicy mayo **2/5**

Heinz Mayoracha

Tesco, 400g, £2.50 This would go down a storm in a cheap diner, but you won't find it in my kitchen **1/5**

Hannah Evans

A shopping trip to forget with the godfather of aubergines



OTTOLENGHI BICESTER VILLAGE



Pomegranate. Za'atar. Dukkah. Sumac. Stop me if you've heard this before. You have, of course. Probably at every dinner party you've been to in ten years. "Pop some more harissa in the shakshuka, darling, and drizzle the black garlic yoghurt on the aubergine." What did we all eat before Yotam Ottolenghi came along? Meat and two veg, I suppose. Animals.

We eat better today because of him. His brand of modern Middle Eastern cooking has permeated nearly every kitchen, every salad bar in the land.

Sometimes our work canteen serves his stuff. I just read that he has signed a deal with Waitrose. Of course he has. There's a price to this success — real, culture-changing success. If everyone starts doing what you're doing, you stop being special.

So what do you do next? Well, you innovate. Do something else new. Change the world again. Or you think, you know what, I've given enough to you people. I'm cashing in and opening a place in Bicester Village.

So here we are. In a 350,000 sq ft outlet shopping centre in Oxfordshire. A surreal simulacrum of a real village. An unholy liminal space, haunted by cut-price designer bags and teenagers dressed in a month's salary (ours, not theirs) of Balenciaga. Worth the trip alone



to watch them sloping round with that look of pure, terminal boredom unique to children of the mega-wealthy.

Into the Ottolenghi outpost: high ceilings, terracotta earth tones, gold light fittings, stone-washed walls. As if someone has been along to the section of Ikea labelled "Furniture to sell European small plates by".

Tables crammed together so you can't get up from the banquette without plonking your bum in next door's labneh. Memories of an airport departures lounge.

Carrot and ginger juice: £5.95. Selection of bread: £5.80. Sourdough, dry focaccia and a drier cornbread with feta and sweetcorn baked in. Cloyingly sweet. I have "Turmeric"

written in my notes. If it were a dictionary entry it would read "Turmeric (derogatory)". I think it refers to the cornbread, but I'm not quite sure. Everything here tastes of turmeric.

Next, chargrilled broccoli with chilli and garlic: basically raw with a tiny hint of charring, suggesting it may have shaken hands with a grill at some point. Is it meant to be like this? No. The bad news for Ottolenghi is you can check to see what his recipes are meant to look like. This place is playing his classics and it's a bad cover version. Our waiter is friendly, and I fret that I'm going to be mean about the place. "They deserve it for trying to make us eat raw broccoli," the friend I've dragged along says.

THE DAMAGE

Selection of breads	£5.80
Butter bean hummus with flatbread	£7.50
Chargrilled broccoli	£9.80
Aubergine with saffron yoghurt and pine nuts	£11
Mac and cheese with za'atar pesto	£16.50
2 x carrot and ginger ofresco	£11.90
Diet Coke	£4.20
Subtotal	£66.70
Service (12.5%)	£8.30
Total	£75

The butter bean mash with roasted squash and olive salsa somehow finds its way from fork to stomach without registering at all. I find myself scoffing the chillies from the broccoli just to give my taste buds something to do. "I want drama in the mouth," is how Ottolenghi famously set out his mission statement in 2011. I'd settle for a hint of plot.

Similarly listless: aubergine with pomegranate seeds, saffron yoghurt and pine nuts. Ottolenghi practically invented aubergines in Britain, turning them from a sloppy ratatouille event to the core of middle-class cooking. These ones are roasted, but barely so. And this is not a vegetable that forgives undercooking. That's why we needed Ottolenghi in the first place: to show us how to do it. I wish he'd shown the team here.

Mac and cheese with za'atar pesto. Congealed. Sweet. Turmeric (derogatory). It tastes like pasta made by adding boiling water to a bag of supermarket dust. The pasta in the online photos is a nice cream colour. Here, electric yellow. The crispy onions in the pics are lovely thin brown furls. Here they are like anaemic fish'n'chip shop scraps. "Ottolenghi has reinvented mac and cheese" says a Bloomberg headline as I google the 2021 recipe. Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair.

Fittingly, given Bicester sits at the intersection of two Roman roads, it feels as if we are eating at the soggy outpost of a dying empire. Everything now tastes like Ottolenghi, but other places are doing it better — try Carmel in Queen's Park, or the branch they've just opened off Oxford Circus. Those guys are showing proper respect to the aubergine.

I come to praise Ottolenghi, not to bury him. You can still eat well at his other restaurants, especially Nopi and Rovi. Or buy his dukkah (£6.90) and za'atar (£4.80), and cook the recipes for your next dinner party. As you do, say thank you to the man who reinvented British cooking, then tuck smugly into your pomegranate seeds, happy that you're eating better than any of those bored, rich teenagers at Bicester Village ■



ILLUSTRATION BY ALEX GREEN / FOLIO ART FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES MAGAZINE. JASON ALDEN, SAME SEVEN

W I N E • Will Lyons

Six virtuoso reds from northern Italy

It was the gourmand Waverley Root who observed that it was pointless trying to name the "best" wine or vinicultural region, and I entirely agree. France, for example, persists in its ancient rivalry between Bordeaux and Burgundy, but who is to say one region is better than the other? It's perfectly possible to enjoy the wines of both. Similarly, Europe's other powerhouse, Italy, has such an embarrassment of riches and such a wide variety of styles that it's virtually impossible to pick one over another.

What we can say, though, is that northern Italy produces some of the best reds in the world. In the hills around Alba in Piedmont barolo and barbaresco reign supreme. Made from the nebbiolo grape, the wines here are high in acidity and offer intense aromas including wild flowers and red fruit, plus satisfying concentration on the palate.

Barbaresco is a little more approachable when young, and good examples such as the 2019 Produttori del Barbaresco (The Wine Society, £34) combine floral notes with a gorgeous silky texture. Towards the sweeping shores of Lake Garda you'll find the light, easy-drinking bardolino and wonderfully fruity valpolicella. Try the dark and spicy 2020 Taste the Difference Valpolicella Ripasso (Sainsbury's, £10).

Tuscany is driven by Chianti, the region straddling the ordered landscape between Florence and Siena. Here the sangiovese grape thrives, with its marriage of sour cherries and tangy acidity. It's also home to Montalcino, one of Italy's most beautiful hill towns, which has its own take on sangiovese, brunello di Montalcino, a bold red with dark fruit, exemplified in the plummy, savoury 2018 Badia al Colle Brunello di Montalcino Piccini (Sainsbury's, £24).

All these examples will be enhanced by food, preferably inspired by the region where the wine is produced ■

2022 Alta Veduta Chianti (13%) Tesco, £6 Here's a great little bargain from Tuscany with a vibrant burst of cherry and a moreish juicy texture, finishing with rustic tanginess.

2022 Specially Selected Toscana Rosso (14%) Aldi, £7.99 The grand label belies a good-value Tuscan red made primarily from sangiovese, with sour cherry, plum and spice.

2020 Taste the Difference Maremma Toscana (13.5%) Sainsbury's, £9 (down from £10.50) A herbaceous blend of sangiovese and cabernet sauvignon steeped in dark fruit.

2023 Cantina del Garda Bardolino (12%) Majestic, £9.99 This light red from Lake Garda could be served slightly chilled. It's packed with bright floral aromas and hints of violet.

2019 Chianti Classico by Badia a Coltibuono (13.5%) Berry Bros & Rudd, £18.50 A richly flavoured chianti with abundant plummy dark fruit and a sappy lift on the finish.

2020 Barbera d'Asti La Luna e i Falò (14%) Valvona & Crolla, £18.75 This succulent Piedmont barbera has notes of liquorice and vanilla, with a lovely focused mouthfeel.



Bargain of the week

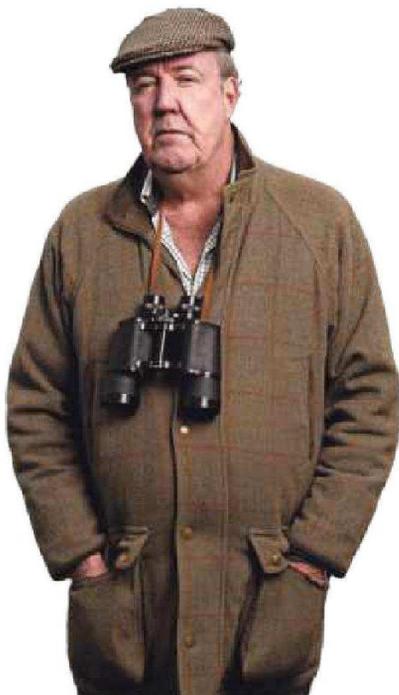
2023 AA Badenhorst The Curator Blend South Africa (13%) Waitrose, £9.99 Mostly chenin blanc and chardonnay, this elegant white is peachy and silky.





F A R M I N G • Jeremy Clarkson

Ready your chainsaws! British farms could soon become like chain stores



Quite rightly there's been a lot of brouhaha and gnashing of teeth about the Welsh government's weed-friendly farming policy. But the problem isn't confined to Wales. Almost every government in the civilised world seems determined to ethnically cleanse farmers from the countryside. And it's hard to see why.

Oh sure, they all say that farming makes a lot of carbon dioxides and that they have net zero targets to meet, but obviously that's not the reason. Because what's the point of keeping the global temperature down if there's nothing to eat?

So if climate change isn't the driver, why, all across Europe

and America and Australia, is life being made so wilfully and unnecessarily hard for the people who feed us? And why in England did the number of farms fall from 132,400 in 2005 to just 104,000 in 2015? Well, bear with me on this one, but it's necessary at this point to talk about my recent weekend city break in Copenhagen.

I've always said that if I were forced for some reason to leave the UK and I needed to live and work somewhere else, I'd go to Copenhagen. You eat dinner at a sensible time, not four in the morning, you're never distracted by the beach, and you can have conversations with a van driver about how the krone is controlled by the European Central Bank. I know because I did. Here I spend most of my

van-based conversations trying to explain what "fragile" means.

Everywhere you go in Copenhagen there are attractive people having lunch in attractive restaurants before going back to the office to design some more attractive chairs. They put their solar farms between the motorway and the railway line, and all around the canals and docks there are no unsightly railings. If you fall in, you just get out again. And if you can't swim, well, that's your own silly fault.

And then there's the business of getting about, which is done on a bicycle. Unlike here, though, no one wears a helmet or that idiotic Stasi stormtrooper combination of black tights and black shorts. Cycling is not some BLT+,



pro-Hamas, kick-out-the-Tories political movement. It's just something you do to get about, because even the crappiest little car is about a million pounds. And there are no hills.

I love pootling about on a bicycle there, stopping for a cup of coffee and a pastry, or to look in a little shop that sells nothing but lampshades made from thinly sliced ash. If Carlsberg did cities, they'd look like this.

But even here, amid all the loveliness, we find the awful Lawrence Stroll plague of Tommy Hilfiger, Prada, Chanel, Bulgari, Gucci and all those other multinational emporiums for the terminally dreadful, which now dominate every city centre, high-end Caribbean resort and airport terminal in the world. Terry Wogan once said he'd like to machinegun everyone on Henman Hill. I feel the same way when I'm presented with a branch of Boss.

I'm told that these fashion, luggage and sunglasses shops are everywhere because they are the only ones that can afford city centre rents and I'm sure that's true. So that's good for the city, the landlords and stupid people in white trousers who think it's OK to spend £850 on a pair of shoes because

it says Prada on the instep.

It's not what we want, of course. We want interesting shops full of interesting things and interesting people, and we think it's silly to spend £850 on a pair of shoes. But lots of little shops all selling different things? That's too difficult to organise. It's much easier to call some twat on a yacht and ask him to send over a light dusting of Hilfiger and a spot of Saint Laurent.

Which brings me back to farming. I'm sitting here now on top of a hill in the Cotswolds and I can see four other farms, all run by farmers who do things their own way. There's a chap not too far away who produces eggs in mobile hen houses. There's a lady who's passionate about organic produce. Then there's my neighbour who seems to be persevering with oil-seed rape, and down in the valley there's a brother and sister rearing pigs. It's all small and higgledy-piggledy and

it would be in Dorset sprinkling some nitrogen on the barley.

It would all be a model of just-in-time efficiency and hydroponic tomatoes, and soon all of Europe's farmland would be in the hands of four or five multinationals who could use freebies and dodgy handshakes to get government ministers to pass whatever legislation the shareholders wanted.

Under the present system farmers can't really get governments to do anything as there are too many of us and we all have different needs. It'd be like asking a classroom of kids what they want for Christmas and expecting them all to say the same thing. There's always going to be one that wants peace and love and another who wants a subscription to Pornhub. And a Ferrari.

If the multinationals move in that would all be solved. Plus, it would be good for the global economy, good for investors and

You may like the idea of cheaper food, but do you want our countryside to be run by a US private equity outfit?

charming. And it's comforting to know that 90 per cent of Britain's remaining farms are family owned. But if you stand back and look at the land as a business, you'd have to say, "Er, hang on a minute. This makes no sense at all."

So I find myself wondering. Is this really what's going on behind the scenes? Has the agricultural equivalent of Lawrence Stroll had a quiet word with the government: "Look, if you can get these pesky family farmers to sod off, I'll buy the countryside, put in a bit of rewilding to keep the nutters happy and then use economies of scale to make all the food we need at a nice price."

Think about it. My tractor is currently sitting in the yard because there's nothing for it to do. But if I owned all the land from the south coast to the Wash it'd be working 24/7. Tomorrow I could send it to Hertfordshire to uproot hedges and pull down copses to make bigger, more economically viable fields, and the day after

food prices will probably fall. And to make it all even more palatable fields will be full of signs saying "Monsanto Inc. Growing sustainably for hard-working families in the community". I think for certain the world's governments have this utopian vision in their heads. Which is why their policies are so skewed against farmers and the present system. They'd much rather have five guys who speak their language and have pit passes at the Monaco Grand Prix every year than five thousand who come into town once a blue moon to spray government buildings with their disgusting manure.

You may think they have a point. You may like the idea of cheaper food, but do you want to wave goodbye to the hedgerows and the copses? And do you want the British countryside to be owned and run by a private equity outfit in Chicago? Or let me put it to you another way: do you want a hydroponic Tommy Hilfiger tomato? Because I don't ■



FITNESS

On the trail of the Strava cheats

When amateur athletes' times are too good to be true. By *Duncan Craig*

When Laura Green headed off on her honeymoon she had only one vigorous activity in mind.

Green and her husband, Connor, were celebrating in Mammoth Lakes, California

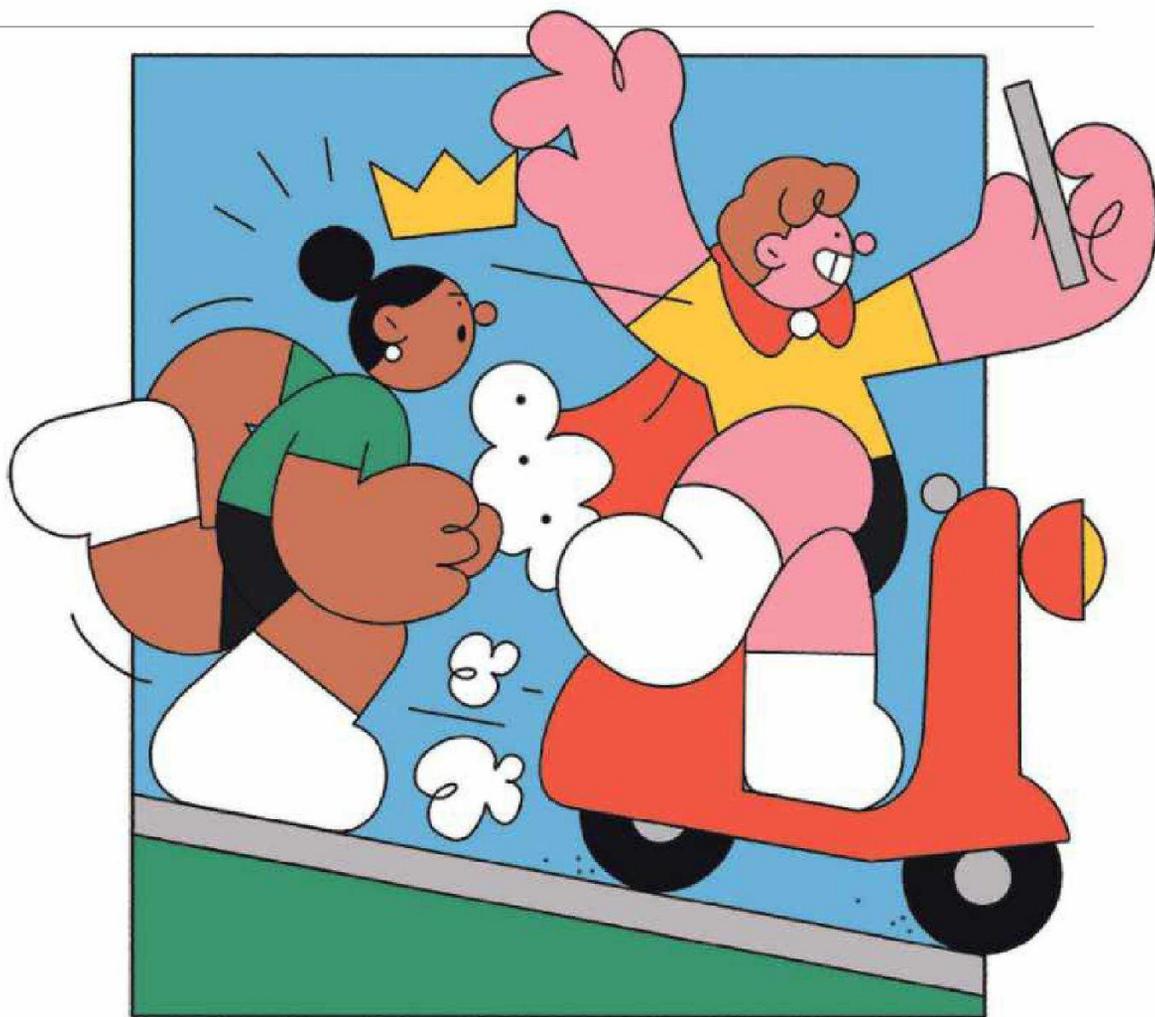
— where, as Green knew, a friend held the record on the tracker app Strava for running a particular downhill stretch of a mountain trail the quickest. So, with Connor in tow, she spent the best part of a day seeking out this friend's route, attempting to beat their time — and then wrestling with wi-fi and data-transfer issues in her hotel room to upload the successful run from her watch to the app.

"It's still so embarrassing to admit," the 38-year-old says. "That was my honeymoon!"

The actions of Green — a Boston-based running influencer with more than 200,000 Instagram followers, who gently sends up herself and her sport — is a vivid example of how the world's best-known activity-tracking platform can feed obsessive tendencies. But while Green won't let her obsession twist into outright deception, plenty of other users are crossing the line, and in ever more elaborate ways.

"If it's not on Strava, it didn't happen" is the motto of the hardcore Stravites. Seemingly, if it's on Strava it also potentially didn't happen. Or, as Gary House, a Wrexham-based running coach puts it: "There are two types of runners. Ones that cheat on Strava, and liars."

Subterfuge ranges from the brazen — cycled runs, doctored



GPS data, device swapping with a quicker partner to pass their activities off as your own — to the "lower-end stuff, which I see as a bit of fun", House says. This might include waiting for a freakishly strong tailwind to attempt a prized segment, cropping a slower start or end of a run to make it look more impressive, or corralling friends into "drafting" you — a technique used in running or cycling in which you conserve energy by sitting in someone else's slipstream — to smash

your personal best and stockpile "kudos" (Strava's currency — similar to likes on Instagram).

Strava is a juggernaut. It was launched in 2009, initially as a running and cycling tracker, although you can now log more than 30 activities on the platform, including swimming, skiing and in-line skating. In 2023 it was estimated to have as many as 120 million users.

Cycling, the second most popular activity on the platform behind running, offers even more scope for duplicity.

Recording your ride in a car. Using an ebike. Accidentally on purpose failing to turn your GPS watch off before the post-ride drive home. Strava, helpfully, provides a few more ideas via its guidelines. "Keep rides with a mixed-gender tandem bike off leaderboards," it urges. "Hide motor-paced rides (cycling behind a vehicle) from leaderboards."

Topping these online lists is Strava's ultimate prize: winners get a (virtual) crown and a "CR" (course record) next to their

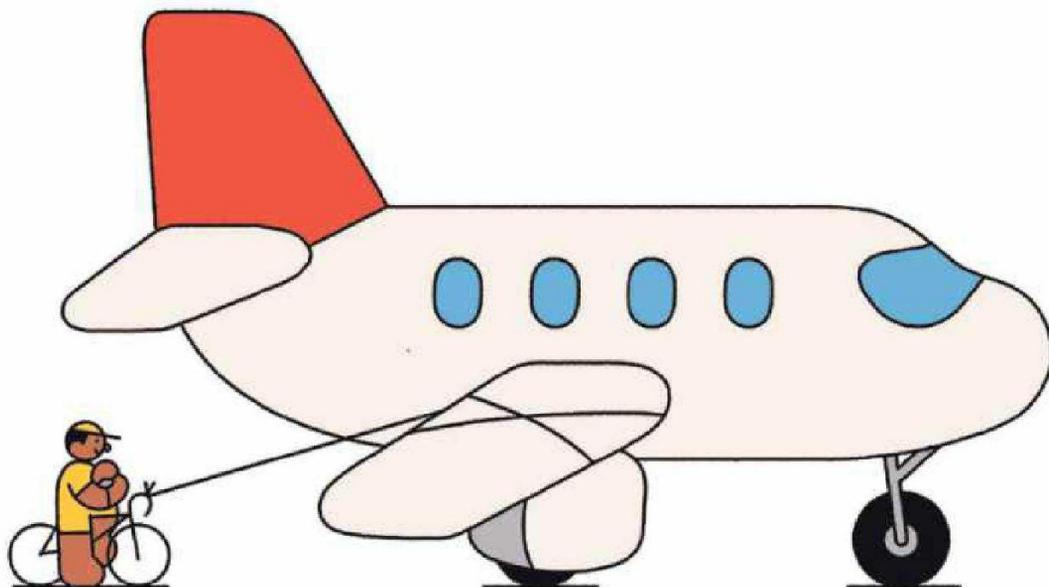
name — also known as KOM or QOM (king/queen of the mountain). Make a top ten and there are further virtual trophies.

Why else do they do it? In rare examples, cheating can lead to financial gain. Over lockdown, House caught out a Strava user who was posting super-quick treadmill marathon times as the basis to pull in backers for an attempt on a coast-to-coast running record. “The numbers just didn’t add up,” he says. “The make and model of treadmill on which he was doing these times didn’t actually go that fast. From there we figured out that there was an app that lets you input your own data and upload it.”

The runner was challenged, pulled out of the attempt and “disappeared”.

Manipulation of Strava data was also at the heart of a case involving Kate Carter, an editor at Runner’s World, this year. She missed a mid-race timing mat and posted another runner’s GPS-tracked route map for the London Landmarks Half Marathon last year (noting that it wasn’t hers), and was found to have manually created another Strava entry, for the 2023 London Marathon, based on a course map from a previous year.

Carter, 47, denied cheating but admitted making some “stupid mistakes in how I recorded my times”, saying her actions were partly ego driven. “Even in the amateur running world there is pressure to maintain form and times,” she said. An investigation by England Athletics found “there was no intention to deceive and no attempt to benefit from the results”.



The Westminster Bridge cycling record is 350m in 5 seconds. That’s a tad over 250km/h

Carter’s case was reported by the self-styled “marathon investigator” Derek Murphy. The 53-year-old data analyst has outed scores of cheats since setting up his blog in 2015 from his home in Ohio. He pores over race and self-tracked data looking for inconsistencies, such as missed split times in races or heart rates out of sync with pace. Strava, with its 10 billion logged activities, is a near-infinite treasure trove.

Murphy is as calmly forensic as the running community is animatedly incensed about cheating. “I simply present the facts,” he’s fond of saying.

Targeting wrongdoing in big races is one thing. But how much does common or garden cheating matter?

Green is more than happy to poke fun at the Stravasphere — in a recent Instagram post, she showed herself “dethroning” Olympians on there by targeting tiny segments of their long training runs and flat-out sprinting them, “so they get a notification saying Laura Green is faster than them!” But she reviles genuine cheating. “It’s heinous,” she says. “For me, the whole point of Strava is to see how I match up to others. So if you’re cheating, then it takes all the fun away.”

House believes the degree to which you care depends on your proximity to any shenanigans. “As I tell the runners I coach, you shouldn’t be bothered what others are up to,” he says. “But at the same time, if someone comes up my road on an ebike and steals my running crown, I’m flagging it to Strava in minutes.”

Flagging is the bedrock of the self-regulation system that Strava has no option but to rely on, given the volume of activities. Does it work? Not always, according to various threads on online forums such as LetsRun.com and Reddit, and a cursory look at the leaderboards for some of London’s most famous stretches supports these misgivings.

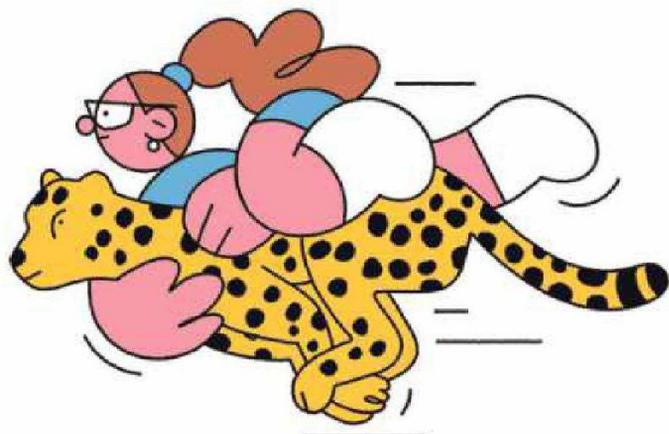
Take the Strava record — at the time of going to press — for the Westminster Bridge cycling segment: 350m on one of the city’s busiest thoroughfares, in 5 seconds? That’s a tad over 250km/h. It was set by a “Derek Lawrie” in 2020. Let’s hope he warmed up.

It’s not the blatantly fraudulent, sometimes inadvertent cases we need to worry about, says RunnerBoi, a 26-year-old running YouTuber with almost 22,000 subscribers. It’s the stealthier attempts — and the evolution of these. “Most cheating methods are pretty catchable these days but, as with everything, the next big thing is usually something we don’t know yet,” he says.

The need for speed can be dangerous. This week, Strava has urged cyclists to delete the Regent’s Park segment from the app after the death of a pedestrian in a collision in 2022.

One of the most eye-catching forms of cheating on Strava has nothing to do with performance, at least in a conventional sense. A Reddit thread from 2021 pondering whether anyone had caught their partner being unfaithful via the platform drew this reply: “I know someone that got busted: the [activity] time was much shorter than the time he was gone and so she found him having a lot of idle time with another rider on Strava at interesting locations.”

One only hopes they remembered to turn their heart-rate monitors off ■



Luxury lodges on the South Devon coast

coastview
SHALDON



**HALF PRICE
PITCH FEES**
FIXED FOR LIFE!

Immerse yourself in spectacular, **uninterrupted views** of the Jurassic Coast and discover the rare opportunity to own your own second home in one of Devon's most sought-after destinations; the beautiful seaside village of Shaldon.



*Own one of the UK's ultimate lodges for only £450,000**



FIND OUT MORE TODAY
SCAN HERE FOR MORE INFO



CALL US ON
01626 650 238

TORQUAY ROAD, SHALDON,
SOUTH DEVON TQ14 0BG

*Terms and conditions apply. Available on selected lodges. Please contact us for further details and to arrange a personal viewing appointment.



HEALTH

Protein anxiety: are you getting enough?

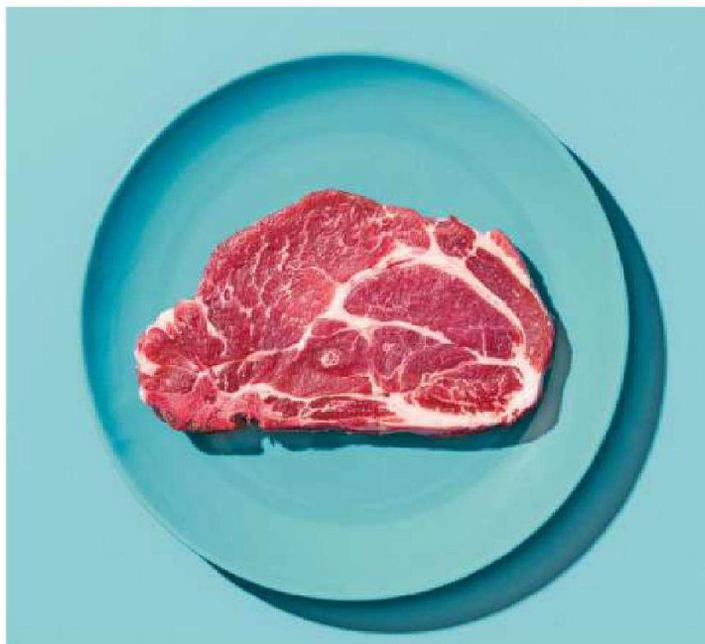
A growing industry is selling us a nutrient we may not need more of, says *Simon Usborne*

If a question on *Family Fortunes* asked contestants which things we worry about getting enough of, the survey might say... sex, followed closely by protein. Protein anxiety is real, and once drove me to point out to a concerned older relative that my young children had typically consumed the daily recommended amount very shortly after breakfast.

In fact the real protein anxiety should be whether we are having too much. Britain is in the grip of a craze as supermarkets and food manufacturers invest billions in flogging us an ever-growing range of protein-rich products. At the time of writing there are 328 results for “protein” at Sainsbury’s online, from Weetabix Protein to high-protein granola, and more bars, yoghurts and powders than you could shake a stick at.

“Protein has been the golden child of the macronutrients for a while now, and something we need for muscle growth and tissue repair,” says Emily Leeming, a dietician at King’s College London. “But most people were already getting plenty of it. It’s an expensive waste to be overconsuming it and it’s potentially doing us harm if these products displace the other healthy foods that we could be eating.”

So how much protein should we be getting? In the UK the reference nutrient intake (RNI) is set at 0.75g of protein per kilogram of weight for an adult. An 85kg man (the average) and a 72kg woman should therefore be consuming 64g or 54g of protein a day.



“We have this obsession with protein but it’s an expensive waste to be overconsuming it”

Going by food packaging labels, the following amounts of common foods contain about 50g of protein: two and a half pints of semi-skimmed milk, half a block of mature cheddar, one chicken breast, a small bag of peanuts, five boiled eggs, a pack and a bit of tofu, a tin and a half of chickpeas.

You wouldn’t want to get all your protein from one source, not least if that meant eating half a block of cheese a day, but it’s clear that without trying too hard — and whether or not you eat meat — you’re probably going to get enough. Bear

in mind also that there’s protein in almost everything else we eat: sweet potatoes, blackberries and sun-dried tomatoes are all good sources, for example.

There are variations on the 0.75g rule. Pregnant and breastfeeding women should add about 10g to their daily intake, while the RNI for young children is on a sliding scale, from 12.5g a day at birth to 28g for 7 to 10-year-olds. As appetites

shrink and veer towards sweeter foods as we get older — a time when ageing muscles need more protein — people are also advised to watch their intakes.

People over 65 should be getting up to 1.4g per kilogram per day, almost twice the RNI.

I’m also told that 0.75g per kg of weight should be considered a minimum amount. “A newer technique for assessing protein intake shows that the minimum should be more like 1 to 1.2 grams per day,” says Linia Patel, a registered dietitian and a spokeswoman for the British Dietetic Association. Adult men and women could get this by eating a few boiled eggs. If you want to gain muscle mass, the recommendation is a daily intake of 1.6g per kg.

Patel advises obtaining protein from core foods rather than the processed ones that have become mainstream. “Whole foods first is my mantra,” she says. “In chicken or an egg or Greek yoghurt you’re not just getting protein, you’re getting the minerals and vitamins too. When you isolate protein to, say, whey powder, yes, you’re getting protein, but you’re missing out on everything else.”

Leeming worries that the focus on protein, which “has good PR”, as she puts it, can leave less sexy vital nutrients on the shelf. “We have this obsession with protein, yet most of us aren’t meeting the recommendations for a five-year-old for fibre, which is missing from the conversation.”

On which note, adults should get about 30g of fibre a day to reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and bowel cancer. Weetabix is one solid source of fibre, but maybe hold on the protein-rich version — it costs an extra 30p for a box of 24 at Sainsbury’s ■





DRIVING • Richard Porter

New seats, sensible touchscreen... is this VW's return to form?



REVIEW VOLKSWAGEN ID.7

The roof is on fire!" Thomas Schäfer, the boss of Volkswagen, told a meeting of his managers last year, as he complained of the difficulties in trying to transform the company into a leading electric carmaker against strong competition from Chinese rivals. Urging staff to curtail spending, Schäfer declared: "We are

letting the costs run too high in many areas," and warned that the coming weeks and months would be "very tough" as the company tried to economise.

A big part of the problem is VW's standalone electric range, sold under the ID badge rather than friendly and familiar names such as Golf and Polo. With the exception of the retro-flavoured ID Buzz van, the vehicles don't look especially nice and the interiors smack of cost-cutting from a company that used to woo buyers with solid fixtures designed to resist years of wear and tear. The ID family seems blighted by VW's insistence on lumping everyday functions onto sluggish, illogical touchscreens that feel like a sociological experiment created to trigger rage in confined spaces. Where once

the carmaker mounted stereos at the top of the dash so you could change tapes without taking your eyes off the road, it now seems keen for you to drive on the wrong side of the road as you search in vain for the virtual button that turns on the air recirculation. Also, many of the ID cars come with a white steering wheel and, yes, I know people these days don't routinely mine coal and read newspapers every morning, but can you imagine what that will look like after 50,000 miles?

Volkswagen realises it has to try harder and the result is the ID.7, a medium-sized electric hatchback that looks like a saloon. If one of the problems with the ID range has been the styling I'm not sure the 7 has entirely solved it, but at least it looks smarter than IDs 3, 4 and 5.

It is inside, however, that the car takes a proper run at addressing some ID ills. There's masses of room in the back and the seats, created in consultation with the German awareness group Aktion Gesunder Rücken (Healthy Back Action), are terrific. The front ones have heating, cooling, electric adjustment and a flesh-prodding massage function, all of which come as standard in a simple range that has just one technical spec, rear-wheel drive with an 82kWh battery, and one trim level, the strangely named Pro Match. A twin-motor GTX trim will join it soon.

The really good news about the ID.7, however, isn't its ability to knead your buttocks as you drive down the A34; it's that the infuriating central touchscreen from other IDs has been

The central screen has been rethought so you no longer want to massage it with a rock



rethought so that it no longer causes you to think about massaging it repeatedly with a rock. The menus are more logical and things happen when you want them to rather than seconds later. In fact Volkswagen is so eager to please that it has introduced various ways in which you can set up the screens to your liking, dropping shortcuts into a top bar and creating swipeable subscreens of the stuff you deem useful.

It's not a perfect system, no car touchscreen is, but it's a darn sight less annoying than the recent efforts in its other cars. Plus, the touch-sensitive

heater controls light up at night, unlike the cack-fisted cost-saving measures in other ID cars, removing the need to pat vaguely at the dash if you want to make yourself warmer after sundown.

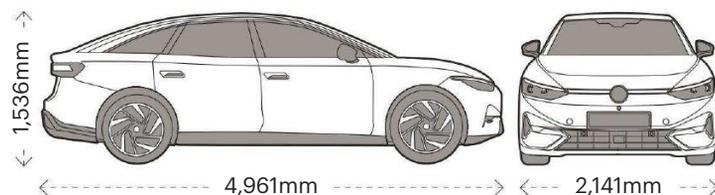
If the ID.7 feels sturdy and expensive inside, the same is true of the way it drives. It's not especially dynamic or exciting, but, like many generations of Passat or Golf, there's something reassuring and dependable about it. It rides nicely, it tracks confidently on a motorway and it manages to be very quiet, even by electric car standards. Its superior dynamics help explain its better-than-average

range of 383 miles. Even in the real world this should be well north of 300 miles and brief experience suggests the car's range-o-meter is reliably honest. And on a dank night when you just want to get home, it's the kind of car that's going to soothe you on your way rather than stress you out. It just gets on with the job, and you get a warm feeling that it would blend into your life doing that again and again for a long time.

I wouldn't say the ID.7 is a return to the dour but rigidly reliable Volkswagens of three decades ago, and I'm not sure anyone would buy a car like that now, but it has a certain indefinable sense of sober dependability in its construction and the way it drives that will seem familiar to anyone who enjoyed what VWs used to be like. It's as if the company has realised that one of its selling points was cars that were easy to live with and not, as happened with the ID range, cars that were casually and constantly irritating.

If Volkswagen continues in this direction, perhaps it can put out that fire on its roof. Just as long as the fire extinguisher controls aren't hidden on one of its old touchscreens ■

The Portometer Volkswagen ID.7 Pro Match

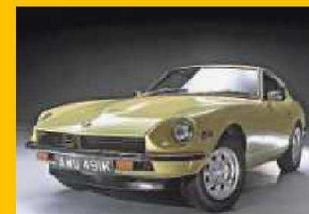


Engine Electric motor, 82kWh battery **Power** 282bhp
Torque 402 lb ft **Acceleration** 0-62mph: 6.5sec **Top speed** 112mph
Range Up to 383 miles **CO₂** 0g/km **Weight** 2,172kg
Price £51,550 **Release date** On sale now

Richard's rating ★★★★★☆

COLLECTORS' CLASSICS

Datsun 240Z



When a wave of Japanese cars threatened American jobs in the early 1980s, Ford workers took sledgehammers to old Toyotas and Datsuns. Of course it was never a Datsun 240Z because that would have been, well, desecration.

Beautiful and sturdy, with a six-cylinder engine, the 240Z was one of the most popular sports cars of the era. It cost £2,288 in Britain in 1970 and spawned a long line of successors, later sold under the Nissan brand with the suffix Z — hence "Z cars" (not to be confused with the TV police drama).

The latest model, the Nissan Z Nismo, boasts 420bhp compared with the 150bhp of its ancestor, but one glance will tell you it's a direct descendent of the 240Z, which is remarkable considering the design is more than half a century old.

None of this would have happened without "Mr K": Yutaka Katayama, the first president of Nissan Motor Corporation USA. Facing resistance to imports from unions and politicians who claimed Japanese cars were cheap copies of British and American originals, he needed a car that was too good to turn away. The 240Z was his secret weapon.

You can buy a 240Z today for £15,000 or £50,000 fully restored. We love the series 1 in Nissan's racing green — colour code 907. Come to think of it, it bears a striking resemblance to British racing green. Who says the Japanese didn't copy? ■

By Nick Rufford

Why choose Kreativ Dental, Budapest?



Our prices are typically **70% less expensive** than UK prices

KREATIV DENTAL HAS OFFERED UNRIVALLED WORLD CLASS DENTAL TREATMENT IN BUDAPEST SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ITS FIRST CLINIC IN 1996

- ✓ Our focus is always on quality and customer satisfaction
- ✓ We invest constantly in the latest technologies
- ✓ We offer the most extensive guarantee available from any dental clinic in Europe
- ✓ Highly advanced dental surgery and on-site laboratory
- ✓ Our **Free Consultation Package** offers amazing value to our patients

FREE CONSULTATION PACKAGE INCLUDES CONSULTATION, FLIGHTS AND ACCOMMODATION

DENTAL CLINIC OF THE YEAR

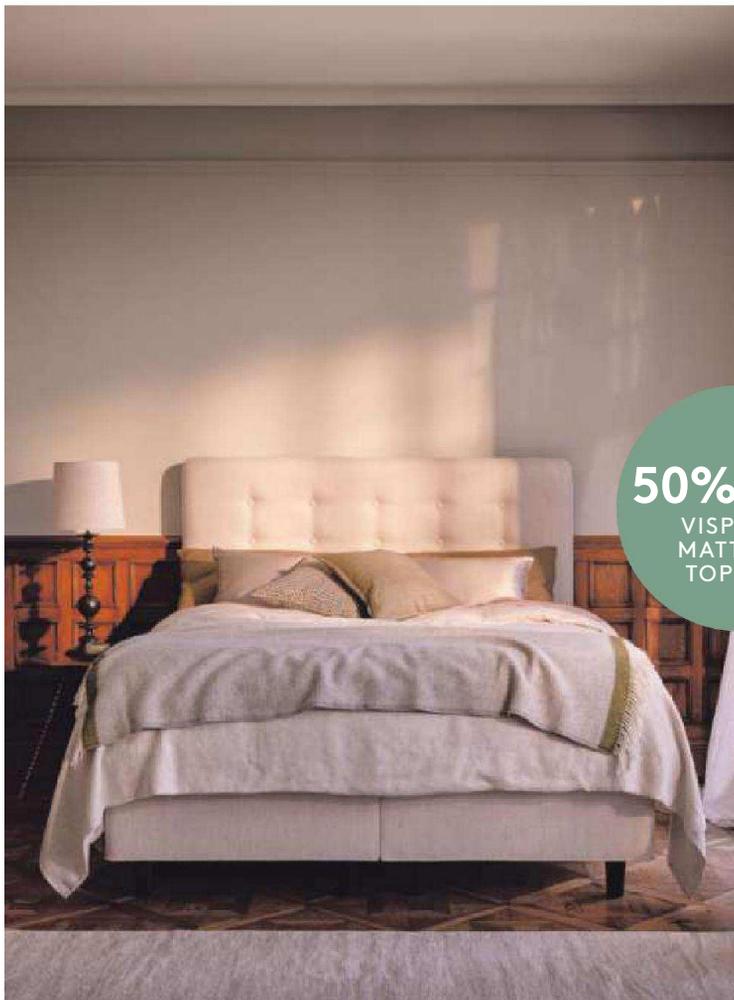
*See website for details

20 YEARS TREATING UK AND INTERNATIONAL PATIENTS
Holder of two 'BEST IN EUROPE' awards
80,000 plus satisfied patients



KREATIV DENTAL

T. 0203 6530 331
www.kreativdentalclinic.eu



50% OFF
VISPRING
MATTRESS
TOPPERS

AND SO TO BED
LONDON

SPRING
SALE
ENDS TOMORROW

BEST PRICES ON

AIRELOOM
COLLECTOR'S EDITION

VISPRING
Luxury Beds - London 1987

TEMPUR

ANDSOTOBED.CO.UK | 0808 144 4343

HOTTER®

A casual sunny day favourite

Rose Gold Leather

Denim Navy Leather

Bright Pink Nubuck

Sage Nubuck

SAVE
£20

LAKE

A sandal inspired shoe, with covered toe and padded heel. All finished with soft leathers and an adjustable touch close strap.

NOW £49



HALF SIZES

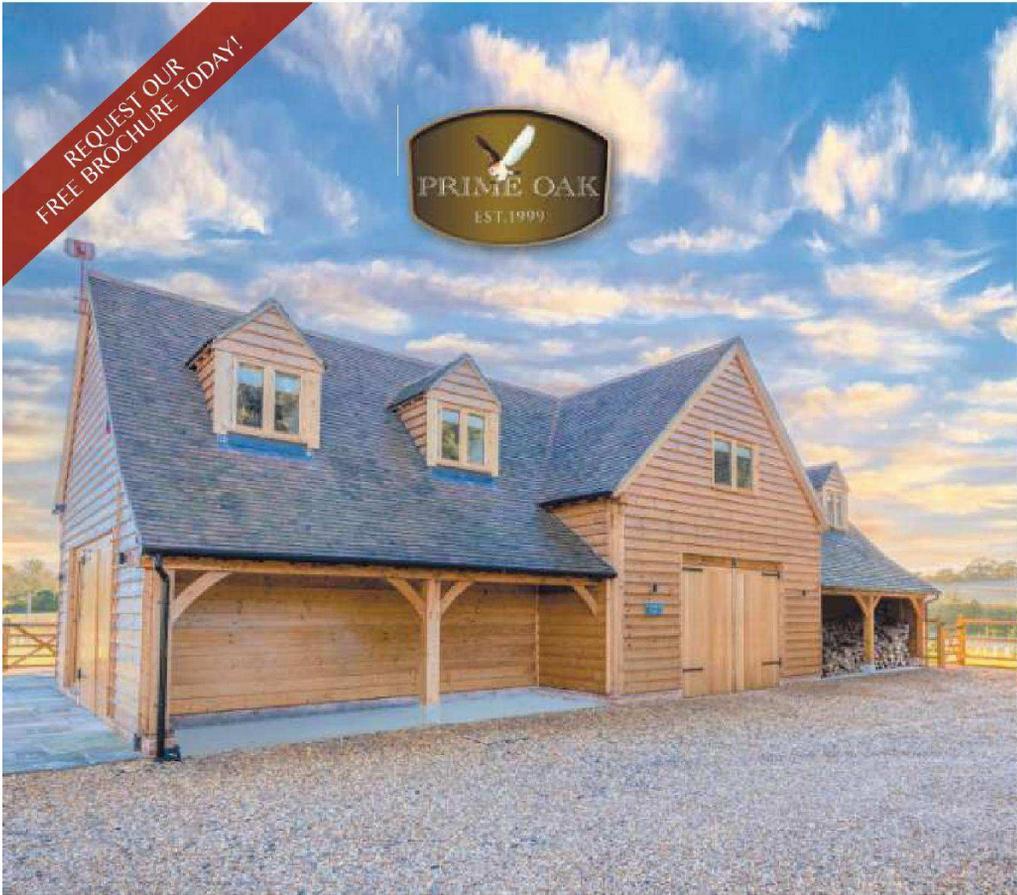


LEATHER

ORDER TODAY AND SAVE £20 with code **LK20G**

Call 01695 79 79 79 Mon - Sun (24hrs) or visit hotter.com

This offer entitles the customer to purchase Lake at £49 when code LK20G is applied at checkout. This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer or promotion, and is subject to availability. A minimum spend of £30 is required to qualify for this promotion. Offer valid until 25th June 2024. We reserve the right to amend or withdraw this offer without notice or liability. For full T&C's, visit hotter.com/terms



**REQUEST OUR
FREE BROCHURE TODAY!**



PRIMEOAK.CO.UK THE FINEST OAK FRAMED BUILDINGS 01384 296611

ORANGERIES | GARDEN ROOMS | GARAGES | ANNEXES | HOME OFFICES & GYMS | CONSERVATORIES | STABLES



10% OFF
Use code: **GARDEN10**

Maintenance Free Garden Furniture

Specialists in beautiful sand cast aluminium garden furniture. Each hand crafted piece is powder coated to produce a lasting and durable finish which will not rust.

Product shown: Catherine Table

Lazy Susan

Designed to last a lifetime

01243 684 884 | lazysusan.co.uk | Offer ends 30/06/24

NEED A LADDER? THEN YOU NEED A

HENCHMAN®

WITH OUR REENGINEERED LADDERS, THE BEST JUST GOT BETTER.

FULLY ADJUSTABLE TRIPOD LADDER

Available in heights 5ft - 12ft / Prices start from just £299

Designed to keep you safe on uneven ground, the Fully Adjustable includes even more features than our original models:

- Secured with new pins for fast and ergonomic adjustment.
- Increased guardrail height allowing you to tuck in to work hands free.
- Extra strength due to the reengineered legs which are 15% stronger.
- Now up to 80% more adjustable.

INCLUDES FREE DELIVERY*

4.9 Based on over 3,500 reviews

To order or for more information visit www.henchman.co.uk or call today on 03333 444 229

SEE FOR YOURSELF! Scan here to learn more about our full range

Free Rubber Feet

SPECIAL OFFER

FREE set of Gardening Gloves (WORTH £25)
Simply add to order and apply promo code **ST624** in basket



Platform rung reduces risk of slipping



NEW hedge-proof locking pin

Model shown: 10ft Fully Adjustable Tripod Ladder

3 adjustable legs to tackle uneven ground



Wide clawed feet for grip on soft ground

*UK Mainland only

LIMITED TIME READERS OFFER

COTTON CANVAS SUMMER BLAZER

only
£125 buy 2 for £240
SAVE £10

MJ94
Sand

“Exceeded my expectations. The jacket is great quality and looks fabulous.”

Noel



PETER CHRISTIAN

Gentlemen's Outfitters

Summer offers us many an opportunity to get dressed up; whether it's a wedding, Mediterranean cruise or a smart al-fresco dinner. Now you can be well turned out, and comfortable at the same time, thanks to cool cotton canvas with the helpful addition of a little stretch.

- 99% cotton canvas/ 1% spandex
- Peter Christian hares lining
- Double vented
- 2 button front & working cuff
- 2 patch & 2 inside pockets
- No Quibble Money Back Guarantee**

Chest: 36 38 40 42 44 46 48 50 52 54 56"

Length: Short, Regular & Long

Colours: Sand, NEW Blue, Sage

Long not available in 36"

**FREE
DELIVERY*
& RETURNS****
Use promo code
17G21

**NEW
Colour**

Blue



Sage



Order Canvas Blazer (MJ94)

Use code **17G21** for **FREE P&P**

peterchristian.co.uk

Call us **01273 493 393** Mon-Sun
9am-8pm

Order by post – Cheques payable to Peter Christian.
Quote **17G21** and send to: Freepost PETER CHRISTIAN

Go Online or Call for a Free Catalogue

*Free UK delivery (normally £5). Offer ends midnight 26/07/24. £50 Minimum spend applies. This offer may not be used in conjunction with any other offer. **Free returns within the UK only and subject to items being in perfect condition, in their original packaging and returned within 30 days. A Division of Hills of Bramley Ltd. Co Reg No 04767802

Best of Arts, Antiques & Collectables

Objects of beauty around the home or office, whether for form or elegant function, add a richness to daily life. For inspiration, this range of ideas revolves around the desire for the aesthetic

Richard Bawden at Bircham Gallery, Norfolk

Richard Bawden is a true artist and craftsman. He is a painter, printmaker and designer with an accomplished career spanning over 60 years.

Richard was born in 1936, the son of well-known artist Edward Bawden, and studied at St Martin's and the Royal College of Art. Richard has exhibited at Bircham Gallery since its opening in 1988, including an 80th birthday exhibition alongside his friend and



contemporary – the late Richard Batterham.

The gallery presents an exhibition of Richard's work this summer, including watercolours, linocuts, etchings and a cast-iron Dodo Seat.

**Bircham
Gallery**

Visit birchamgallery.co.uk to find out more.

Discover unique one-of-a-kind treasures at a world-famous auction house



Since 1979, Lots Road Auctions has been a firm favourite for interior stylists and private collectors around the globe. The carefully curated mix of antiques and contemporary items includes fine works of art, mid-century furniture, modern designer pieces, designer handbags and luxury goods, ensuring there is something for everyone to get excited about.

Now housed in the iconic Piper Building in Fulham, Lots Road Auctions is one of the largest single-space auction houses in the country. Auctions are held every Sunday from 11am. Please send an email to valuations@lotsroad.com to consign an item.



Visit Lots Road Auctions at Unit 9 Piper Centre, Carnwath Road, Fulham SW6 3JX, online at lotsroad.com or call 020 7376 6800 for more information.

Ivar Arosenius – A Serious Jester

For the first time ever in the UK, there is an exhibition dedicated to the work of Ivar Arosenius – 1878 to 1909.

From 15 June to 5 July, Clase Fine Art – located at First Floor, 40-41 Pall Mall, London – will be hosting the exhibition *A Serious Jester*. In a display comprising 32 works – some available for purchase – visitors can explore Arosenius' marvellous blend of fantasy and sharp humour, innocence and decadence. His works are in the collections of the National Museums of Sweden, Denmark and Norway.



Visit clasefineart.com to find out more or scan the QR code.



Join the circular fashion movement

A favourite among fashion aficionados, designers, stylists and celebrities, Clerkenwell Vintage Fashion Fair returns to the Royal National Hotel, London on 1 June. Over 60 leading exhibitors will be offering a treasure trove of antique and vintage fashion, designer labels, jewellery and accessories dating from the 1800s to 1990s. Discover timeless pieces while protecting the planet.

Visit clerkenwellvintagefashionfair.co.uk for tickets.



Explore two remarkable pieces



album cover, her work offers a compelling, gendered perspective.

Colle valle d'Elsa, 1991 to 92 by Bryan Ingham – 57.5cm by 81cm – is an oil and pencil wood relief that shows influences from mentors Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth, capturing the serene beauty of the Tuscan landscape. His distinguished career included a solo exhibition at the Francis Graham Dixon Gallery with work now shown in a number of distinguished UK collections.

Visit *Ottocento* to explore these remarkable pieces and more from old masters to late 20th-century fine art.



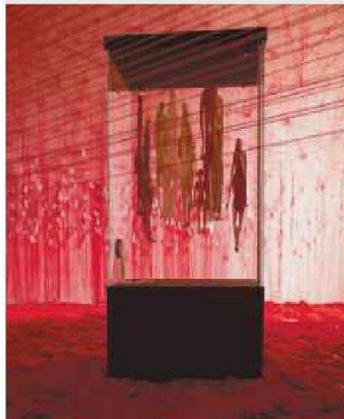
Ottocento in Petworth, West Sussex is offering two fascinating works by Jann Haworth and Bryan Ingham.

Sundance by Jann Haworth – 91.5cm by 81.3cm – is a mixed-media collage that showcases Haworth's innovative use of fabric to explore feminist themes and personal identity. As a pioneering female voice in Pop Art and co-creator of The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper*

Head to ottocento.co.uk to find out more.

OTTOCENTO

Me and my ugliness



contemporary art's narrative background to engage intertextuality.

This series of works is the story of her grandmother, as part of Chinese female identity. She draws strength from everyday examples of women's indomitable desire for equality and liberation. She uses extremely complicated filigree-making to produce stunning work and creations in mediums such as jewellery, battling against 'stereotyping', 'overruling', 'verbal abuse', injuries and restraints from the outside world. In this series of works, she aims to alter what people have become accustomed to in their perception of 'ugliness', and explore it from a new perspective by changing roles.

Yingqi Guan is an artist and contemporary jewellery curator based in London who graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2022. Her creations explore themes of love, self and identity as a carrier of expression.

Exploring the utmost potential of traditional craftsmanship is the foundation of her work while combining

Visit guanyingqi.com or follow @[@yingqi_guanguan](https://www.instagram.com/yingqi_guanguan) to find out more about Yingqi's work.

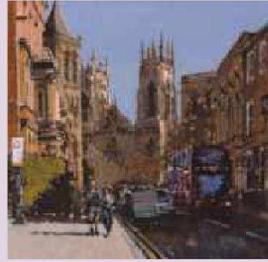


Buy original art, paintings and sculpture from a leading fine art gallery

For over 40 years, York Fine Arts has been a family-run, established art gallery. Over the decades, they have gained an international reputation for sourcing high-quality traditional and contemporary fine art from some of the very best artists practising today.

Each piece they acquire resonates with the traditional craftsmanship of the arts. Perhaps through style or technique, even their contemporary pieces demonstrate a commitment to the time-honoured heritage of traditional fine art.

York Fine Arts' carefully selected collection of artwork is tailored for a diverse range of styles and tastes. They specialise in a variety of work by established British and international artists, ranging from original oil paintings and watercolours to bronze sculptures and



signed limited-edition prints. They also offer a number of services, including framing, valuations, restoration and art sourcing.

At York Fine Arts, they remain welcoming and approachable. Their clients return year after year, confident in not only the high calibre of the artwork, but also in the high standard of personalised service they are guaranteed to receive.

YORK FINE ARTS

Visit the York Fine Arts gallery at 83 Low Petergate, York – Monday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm. Call 01904 634221, visit yorkfinearts.co.uk or email info@yorkfinearts.co.uk to find out more.

Win a collector's edition book, plus two tickets to Farleys House and Gallery Worth £125!



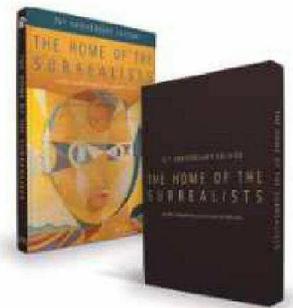
Step into the world of Lee Miller – photographer and war correspondent – at Farleys! As the UK eagerly anticipates the September release of *Lee* starring Kate Winslet, Josh O'Connor and Alexander Skarsgard, dive into Lee's real East Sussex home. Explore the house's outstanding collection of surrealist art, galleries and gardens, workshops and events. Plus, don't miss out on the nationwide exhibitions,

Visit checklists.co.uk/win/farleys to enter.

video series and exclusive events marking 75 years of Lee's legacy at Farleys – where art, history and surrealism intertwine.

To celebrate this anniversary, enter the competition for a chance to win a rare, collector's edition of the book *The Home of the Surrealists*, signed and editioned. It's limited to just 75 copies and features brand-new photography and insights.

Visit farleyshouseandgallery.co.uk for more information.



Explore the works of Mildred Bendall



Whitford Fine Art waited 10 years to host another comprehensive show. It was equally well received, but buyers still questioned the 'return on investment' principle of female artists. Recently, with attitudes changed, Bendall's works are in high demand. Today, she is praised for her technical skill and her unflinching eye for composition and colour.



WHITFORD FINE ART

French-British Post-Impressionist painter Mildred Bendall – 1891 to 1977 – was taught by Henri Matisse in 1927 to compose her paintings with blocks of colour to suggest space. Her work came to the attention of Whitford Fine Art in 1986. A first retrospective show in 1987 was well received as a novelty discovery. However, the art market at the time was permeated with prejudice against the talent of women artists.

Mildred Bendall's works are showing at the Eye Of The Collector Fair, 26 to 29 June. Visit whitfordfineart.com or email info@whitfordfineart.com to find out more.

Return of the prestigious Antiques and Fine Art Fairs



Classic Antique Fairs are bringing back the much-missed Antiques and Fine Arts Fairs to the NEC Birmingham with a superb three-day

event in the summer and another in time for Christmas. They have also added an exciting new venue for the autumn – Farnborough International Exhibition and Conference Centre.

Their fairs offer the chance of seeing first-hand precious and sought-after pieces and talking to the specialists selling them. That's why Classic Antique Fairs are bringing together many of the UK's most respected dealers, who will be showcasing some of the best-known names in the antiques and art worlds.

Enjoy the friendly atmosphere of these trusted, high-quality events, where lovers of fine things mingle to buy and sell their treasures. Whether you are an experienced collector, antiques enthusiast or just beginning your collector journey, there will be something of interest for you. Exhibitors cover a wide range of fields including glass, furniture, silver, porcelain, pottery, jewellery, sculpture, Art Nouveau, Art Deco and 20th-century art.

Join Classic Antique Fairs at Birmingham NEC, Exhibition Hall 10, from 12 to 14 July; Farnborough International Exhibition & Conference Centre, Hall 5, from 20 to 22 September; and Birmingham NEC, Exhibition Hall 10, from 29 November to 1 December.



Email classicantiquefairs@btinternet.com or visit classicantiquefairs.co.uk for more information and tickets.

Win one year's Benslow Music Membership Worth £36!

Benslow Music is a charity that has inspired musicians for over 90 years. Benslow's Instrument Loan Scheme provides quality instruments to young musicians.

To enter, visit checklists.co.uk/win/benslow05

Founded in 1929 as the first rural music school in the UK, Benslow Music has beautiful grounds and offers day, residential and online courses for all music tastes and levels.

Visit benslowmusic.org or email info@benslowmusic.org to learn more.



Registered charity number 313663.



A LIFE IN THE DAY

Stephen Mulhern

Presenter and magician, 47

Mulhern was born in Stratford, east London. He learnt his first magic tricks aged 11 and became the youngest member of the Magic Circle at 17. He worked as a redcoat at Butlin's Minehead before moving into children's TV, hosting *Ministry of Mayhem* (later *Saturday Showdown*) with Holly Willoughby from 2004 to 2006. He now presents *Deal or No Deal*, *Catchphrase* and *Dancing on Ice*. The third in his *Max Magic* series of children's books has just been published. He lives near Chiswick, west London.

I can't stand doing nothing. Even if I'm awake at five, I'll be out of bed and in the kitchen: two poached eggs, bacon, sausage, two slices of bread and butter, mug of tea. Bit of LBC on the radio, have a listen to what people are talking about.

It must be something to do with the market-trader background. My dad was a flypitcher on Petticoat Lane in east London. If you're not sure what a flypitcher is, my dad was Del Boy from *Only Fools and Horses* and I was Rodney. Crack of dawn, Dad was out there selling novelty toys or them slice-and-dice vegetable choppers, me and my brothers looking out for the police.

Dad would let me have a go on the stall, and that's where I learnt how to perform in front of the hardest kind of audience: real people. If you were to ask me who I'd like as a guest on my show, either Adele or Anne from Colchester, it's Anne every time. I'm sure Adele's lovely, but Anne will deliver.



My bathroom routine is shave, teeth, then put the shampoo on your hair before you get in the shower. It's supposed to leave your hair much cleaner. And it works!

I swim a few times a week, but that's it for exercise. Have you seen Andi Peters? He's a beefcake. I gave it a go, but my mate said, "Does your audience really want to see Mr Universe present *Deal or No Deal*?" He's right. So, professionally, I make it my goal to avoid the gym.

I do like a nice suit when I'm working, and if there's a decent budget I'll go somewhere like Thom Sweeney, but I'm just as happy in River Island. Fellas, here's my top tip: buy the suit two sizes too big, then go

to a tailor and get it fitted. I guarantee the first time you wear it, someone will ask you where you got your suit.

I grew up in east London and my parents now live near Benfleet in Essex. I love going to see 'em — pie and mash for lunch or down the cockle sheds in Leigh-on-Sea. Like me, Dad is funny with his food. We're a plain-eating family. He finds what he likes and that's all he'll have for the next six months. To me, it makes perfect sense.

Magic is still a huge part of my life. I do a season at Butlin's every summer, honing my magic skills. Even if I'm going shopping, I'll have a pack of cards in my pocket. And if someone stops for a chat or a selfie I'll try out a new trick.

What with your David Blaines and your Dynamos, magic has acquired a certain amount of... cool. But I didn't get into magic to be cool, I did it because I loved it. Other kids watched *Match of the Day* and got into football, I watched Paul Daniels and decided to learn magic. And it was the magic that led me to be a redcoat at Butlin's. It gave me a career.

I don't splash out on much these days — maybe a nice holiday for my mum and dad — but I have bought a few bits of magic memorabilia. I've got Tommy Cooper's wallet, one of David Nixon's original tricks, one of Ali Bongo's wands.

London is an exciting city, but I'm not one for going out on the razzle. My ideal Friday night is cheese on toast and a bit of telly. I start with old episodes of *Judge Judy*. I'm in bed by 10.30, listening to vintage Steve Penk wind-ups on my headphones.

Does it sound boring? I prefer to see it as making sure I do a good job. That's how I was brought up. If Dad wasn't at the top of his game on the market, he didn't sell anything and the bills didn't get paid. If I'm not at the top of my game, there's a thousand people out there ready to take my place ■

Interview by Danny Scott.
Max Magic: The Incredible Holiday Hideout by Stephen Mulhern is out now (Piccadilly Press £7.99)

WORDS OF WISDOM

Best advice I was given

Keep pushing that door. One day, it will open

Advice I'd give

Make a showreel on your phone and send it to the producers of all your favourite shows

What I wish I'd known

Don't worry about what everyone else is doing. Concentrate on yourself



Win a once in a lifetime trip to Antarctica

Experience a unforgettable expedition cruise that's all about the frozen continent. As a Times+ member, you have the chance to discover Antarctica's wildlife with an incredible 12-day Highlights of Antarctica HX expedition cruise, for two people including flights from London.

Visit mytimesplus.co.uk

T **TIMES+**
OFFERS | COMPETITIONS | EVENTS

HX **HURTIGRUTEN
EXPEDITIONS**

T&Cs apply.

CHANCE TO

WIN

Virgin

EXPERIENCE
DAYS VOUCHER

PLUS
20% OFF
VIRGIN EXPERIENCE
DAYS
ONLY 1 PER PERSON*



Add some
Krunch
to your Summer

Promotion open to UK, CI & IOM only. 18+ only. Purchase a promotional pack for a chance to win one of 672 £100 Virgin Experience Days prize vouchers (only 1 prize voucher per person). 1 winner every hour 8am-8pm daily from 15 April 2024 to 9 June 2024 20% off Virgin Experience Days for each entrant (only 1 discount voucher per person). Proof of purchase required. Internet required. Registration & personal details required. Visit www.winwithkettle.co.uk for full details and T&Cs