

When Big Zuu and Will Poulter
fired up the grill

Old airports provide landing
strips for the future of housing

Our vendor Nick and his
life-affirming new puppy

ISSUE 1627 / 05-11 AUGUST 2024

BIG

£4

THE PLACE THAT WAS WAITING FOR US

An incredible tale of Big Issue city vendors
who walked into the mountains.
And how it utterly changed them

Page 20



A HAND UP, NOT A HANDOUT

NEW EVERY WEEK

ISSUE

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THIS WEEK'S BIG ISSUE

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Here's some blue-sky thinking – old airports could be a solution to our housing crisis.

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INTERVIEW

Big Zuu and Will Poulter's BBQ night for young people facing homelessness.

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Three Big Issue vendors experienced the natural beauty of the Lake District and were transformed. Page 20

LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

The young Steve Cram was always destined for a record-breaking career in athletics, yet going to the gym terrified him. Page 28

SCREEN

My teenage stint as a yellow Power Ranger has an afterlife that I never could have anticipated. Page 34

MY PITCH

Or 'My Pooch' as it should be this week, as vendor Nick Cuthbert tells the story of how the naming of his lovely new puppy Bracken has raised cash for a great cause.

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HOW THE BIG ISSUE WORKS

● Our vendors buy magazines for £2 and sell them for £4, keeping the proceeds and working their way out of poverty. Every vendor has a unique story – they may be homeless, at risk of losing their home, long-term unemployed or dealing with mental health issues.

What they all have in common is they are earning a legitimate income while gaining valuable social and transferable skills.

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If you cannot buy from a vendor, take a subscription via [SUBS.BIGISSUE.COM](https://subs.bigissue.com) or through The Big Issue UK app.

Retailers including the Co-op and Sainsbury's also stock the magazine in many branches.

**EVERY COPY BOUGHT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.
IT'S A HAND UP, NOT A HANDOUT.**



PHOTO: PAUL BROOK, BUTTERFLY CONSERVATION



A wing and a prayer

Summer finally arrived across much of the UK last week, with the warmest days of the year so far, but it's come too late for many butterflies. A cool and wet spring is thought to have hit the population numbers of a wide variety of species.

During the Big Butterfly Count that takes place annually, just over half the number of our fluttering friends were spotted compared to last year.

"Butterflies need some warm and dry conditions to be able to fly around and mate," explains Dr Dan Hoare from the wildlife charity Butterfly Conservation, which organises the count. "If the weather doesn't allow for this there will be fewer opportunities to breed, and the lack of butterflies now is likely the knock-on effect of our very dreary spring and early summer.

"It is a warning sign to us all. Nature is sounding the alarm and we must listen. Butterflies are a key indicator species. When they are in trouble we know the wider environment is in trouble too."

The decline is part of a long-term trend, which has seen 80% of butterfly species in the UK decline since the 1970s due to climate change, habitat loss and pesticides.

Last year, there was one type of butterfly flying high. The count found that red admiral (pictured) numbers had soared by 400%. The reason, however, is that instead of migrating to the UK from north Africa and continental Europe, summer temperatures in the UK have become warm enough for them to stay permanently.

THE DISPATCH

News, views & miscellany

EXCLUSIVE

NHS spending on private mental health beds soars to £1.4bn in five years: 'The deterioration of NHS mental health is brutal'

By **Lottie Elton**
Big Issue Reporter

● NHS England spent more than £1.4 billion of public money on private mental health beds between 2019 and 2024.

The eye-watering figure was uncovered through Freedom of Information requests. EveryDoctor, a grassroots group of British doctors campaigning against NHS privatisation, says it exposes the de-facto privatisation at the heart of our mental health care system.

Between 1988 and 2019, the number of NHS mental health beds in England fell from 67,100 to 18,400. Bed-strapped trusts and integrated care boards (ICBs) have been forced to turn to private providers to fill the gap.

"NHS staff have spoken up repeatedly about the lack of hospital beds and the false economy of outsourcing care to private companies, and have mostly been ignored," said Julia Patterson, CEO of EveryDoctor. "Meanwhile, enormous sums of public money are being funnelled into private companies.

"Private companies have no place in the delivery of public healthcare, because profit creation is often not aligned with the interests of patients, or

the staff who aim to provide excellent care within a sustainable service."

Overall spending on independent sector beds increased by 68% in five years. For some trusts, the figure was much higher. Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust said it was spending 10 times as much on private mental health beds in 2024 as it had in 2019. Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust's spending jumped from £3.8 million in 2019/20 to a staggering £40m in 2023/24.

"There's this kind of ridiculous idea that by cutting beds you're somehow saving money," said Ana, a psychiatrist who has worked in the health service for three decades. She did not want her last name used.

"In actual fact the need is just the same, and you're going to have to use out-of-area beds in the private sector, which is going to cost far, far more."

The highest paid supplier was Cygnet Health Care, owned by US-based Universal Health Services. Cygnet received £382m in NHS England contracts between 2019 and 2024. Between

2019 and 2022, the company reported profits of more than £84m, though it is unclear what proportion of this comes from providing mental health beds.

The profit imperative of outsourcing interferes with patient care, said Benjamin Goodair, Wellcome Trust doctoral scholar at the University of Oxford.

"The promise of outsourcing was that it would provide similar quality care in the private sector, but that it would be more efficient to do so. What we've seen with the available research is that this hasn't been the case.

"It's hard to incentivise private sector providers to deliver the same quality of care. Where possible, private sector providers are cutting costs to try and make larger profits. Quality suffers."

Cygnet has faced controversies over the care it provides. In 2019, staff at one private hospital run by the company were filmed taunting, intimidating and repeatedly restraining patients with learning disabilities and autism.

Earlier this year, Goodair and Oxford colleagues published a study linking privatisation to worse patient care. In 2022, they published research associating outsourcing with 557 'treatable' deaths over five years. Outsourcing also leads to more out-of-area mental health placements, Goodair said.

"Patients are often placed quite a large distance away from home," he said. "This means that they're away from their family and support network, and the care they're going to receive afterwards is fragmented."

Last year, NHS England recorded 280,000 patient days of 'out of area' mental health placements with independent providers.

"The deterioration of NHS mental health is brutal," Goodair said. "This goes beyond a political thing, any ideology of, 'privatisation bad'. Really terrible things are happening to people who need care."

Big Issue's Blueprint for Change has called on the Labour government to invest in the NHS and social care workforce and accelerate spending and availability of mental health care. Labour has promised resources and reform, recruiting "8,500 specially trained mental health staff" and establishing "early intervention hubs in every community".

In the past, Health Secretary Wes Streeting has defended plans to use the private sector to cut the backlog.

"The argument I'll make unapologetically is that those people who say we shouldn't use the private sector to cut waiting lists will have to be honest about the fact that they're telling people who can't afford to go private that their left-wing principles say they should be waiting longer," he wrote for *The Sun* in April.

IN NUMBERS: MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

1 in 4

people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year, roughly 16 million people

40%

of people in England who have overlapping problems, including homelessness and substance misuse, also suffer from mental health problems

949,000

people were referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in 2022-23, but 270,300 are still waiting for support

18,400

the number of NHS mental health beds in England in 2019, down from 67,100 in 1988

THE BIG NUMBER

199,180



● That's how many children and babies needed help from a baby bank to provide basics their families could not afford in 2023. The stats come from the Baby Bank Alliance, a newly formed collective of baby banks. The group said there are more than 300 baby banks across the UK. That could mean tens of thousands more children have been helped.

Sophie Livingstone, the chair of the Baby Bank Alliance, said: "It's heartbreaking because we're in the sixth richest country in the world. It doesn't need to be this way."

babybankalliance.org

LIVE MUSIC



IDLES superfan with Angelman syndrome performs onstage with his favourite band



Our special edition in June for Learning Disabilities Week

● In June, Big Issue put together a special edition of the magazine with all the articles created by people with learning disabilities. One of the contributors was Alastair Smith. The 20-year-old from Hull lives for music. He has Angelman syndrome, a rare genetic condition that causes severe physical and learning disabilities. His favourite band is IDLES, so we arranged for him to interview their lead guitarist, Mark Bowen, using his symbol-based communication device.

And the pair hit it off. So much so that last month, when IDLES played at The Wyldes in Cornwall, Alastair joined them on stage on MPC for *Never Fight a Man with a Perm*.

"He may not calm down for some time," Alastair's mum Jenn said. "It was an incredible experience for Alastair from soundcheck to afterparty."

Head to bigissue.com to read the full interview between Alastair and IDLES

HOMELESSNESS

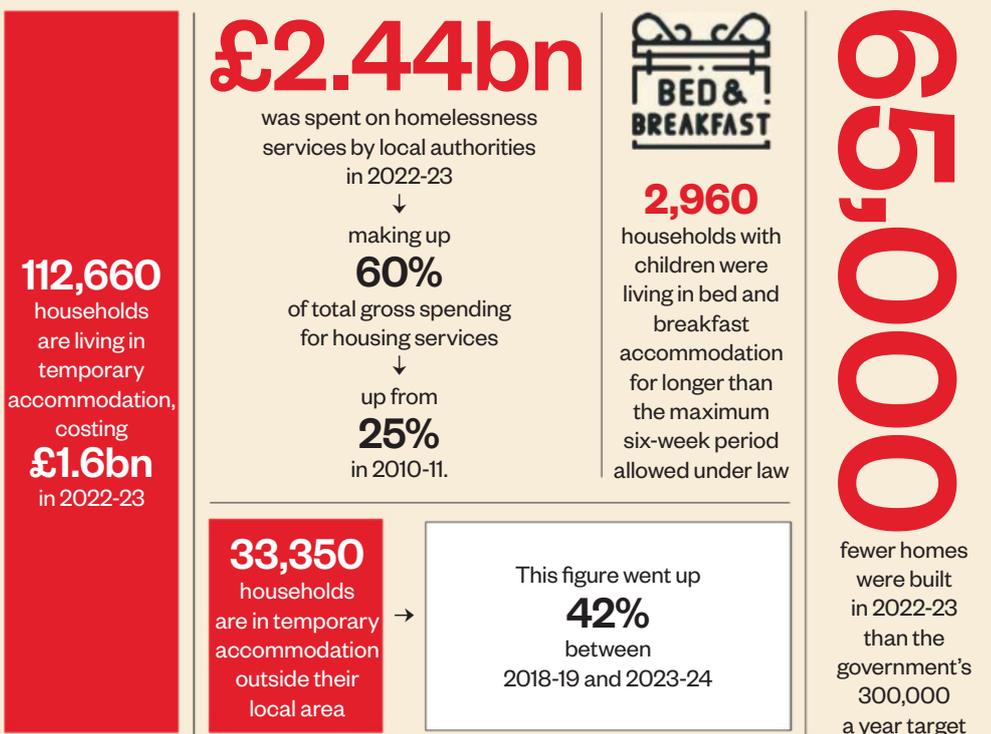
Homelessness at highest level since records began – and it's only going to get worse

● The number of people experiencing homelessness will hit new record highs in England in the next few months, a damning report from the National Audit Office has concluded.

The independent watchdog found the number of people experiencing statutory homelessness is the highest since records began, surging 23% between 2018-19 and 2023-24. It predicts they will rise even further.

A government spokesperson said the NAO's recommendations will be "considered" as ministers "develop a long-term, cross-government strategy to end homelessness, working with mayors and councils".

The report found that...



EMPLOYMENT

Game of Thrones star Emilia Clarke turns brain injury trauma into support for others with Big Issue



● Emilia Clarke said she “struggled physically with the workload” while filming for *Game of Thrones* after suffering two brain injuries – but she felt too “ashamed” to ask for help.

The actor, who played Daenerys Targaryen in the HBO TV juggernaut, spoke in parliament on 24 July to celebrate the partnership between her charity SameYou and Big Issue’s job service Big Issue Recruit, which will work together to support brain injury survivors back into work.

Clarke launched the charity with her mother Jenny in 2019 after suffering two brain injuries in her mid-20s.

Clarke had her first brain haemorrhage a month after *Game of Thrones* season one filming ended and said her “entire world flipped upside down”.

Her second brain injury was worse and took an even greater toll on her mental health.

“I felt so ashamed at being broken, so desperate at being unreliable, so terrified that everyone could see how



Clarke told her story in our cover feature back in June

SAME YOU
For brain injury recovery

BIG ISSUE RECRUIT

this meant I was in a job that I couldn’t do,” Clarke said. “All the rest of filming, I struggled physically with the workload but I was so determined not to let anyone know I might need help.”

The actor said she was fortunate to have the support of her family and HBO but fears others won’t get the same help.

Around 1.3 million people in the UK are living with the effects of a long-term brain injury but a lack of awareness means employers often fail to provide enough support.

Polling by Big Issue Group and SameYou shows that over a third of survivors felt they returned to work too soon after a brain injury, and nearly as many felt pressure from their employer to do so.

“I fundamentally was not alone,” added Clarke. “So what if someone is? What if someone already on the breadline has a brain injury that takes them out of the workplace? It’s no surprise how quickly that person can find themselves homeless.”

If you or someone you know have been affected by brain injury and are keen to return to work, get in touch at sameyou.org and bigissue.com/big-issue-recruit

EDITOR'S CHOICE
5 PIECES YOU NEED TO READ ON BIGISSUE.COM

1 Olympic champion Laura Kenny: ‘I was told cycling wasn’t a proper job’

2 Jayda G went from environmental toxicology to the Grammys. Now she’s creating ‘science you can dance to’

3 ‘I took out loans and maxed out credit cards to fund my gambling addiction. I ended up homeless’

4 ‘We have the right to live with dignity’: More than 55,000 people march for London Trans+ Pride

5 Meet Jennie – Lib Dem MP Steve Darling’s guide dog who’s changing the face of politics

ANGELA RAYNER

“Today I’m calling on local authorities, housing associations and industry to work with me to deliver a council house revolution... Injecting confidence and certainty into social housing is how we get Britain back to building.”



Labour housing secretary Angela Rayner set out her plans to boost social housing, just as Big Issue’s Blueprint for Change had called on the new government to do. The Deputy Prime Minister is yet to commit to a public social housing target but will set mandatory housebuilding targets of 370,000 homes a year for local authorities in a bid to build 1.5 million while in power. Head to bigissue.com to read our analysis of Labour’s plans.



“Olympic games or the DWP hoops you need to jump through?”

A MODEST PROPOSAL

The Tories planned to spend £10bn on its failed Rwanda scheme. Here's how that money could be better spent



● The Conservatives had planned to spend £10 billion over six years on the failed plans to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, according to Labour home secretary Yvette Cooper.

The costs eclipse the £700 million already spent without a single asylum seeker being sent there.

Keir Starmer's Labour government has now scrapped the scheme, introduced by the Conservative government and designed to send asylum seekers to Rwanda for their claims to be processed.

Cooper said it was the “biggest waste of taxpayer money I have ever seen”, working out at £1.66bn a year. So how about some better ways to spend that?

Make up the HS2 shortfall



The London to Birmingham section of HS2 is estimated to cost between £8bn and £10bn more than initially planned. Figures from 2019 had put the bill for the high-speed rail project at a total of £56.6bn, but by January 2024 that had been updated to £66bn.

While Rishi Sunak scrapped the line north of Birmingham over costs, money taken away from the Rwanda costs could plug the gap for the portion set to go ahead.

Nationalise British Gas



The market cap – or combined value of all the shares – of Centrica, the parent company of British Gas, is £7.39bn. For £10bn, the state could buy these shares at a premium. Just like that, we could nationalise British Gas.

The firm made £2.8bn in profit in 2023. Room to reduce bills, then – or put some money back in the public coffers.

Get halfway to lifting the two-child benefit cap



According to Chancellor Rachel Reeves, lifting the controversial two-child benefit cap would cost more than £3bn a year. Reeves said she wouldn't lift the cap without knowing where that money will come from. Here's £1.6bn of that, enough to get halfway.

Run a whole US election for laughs



Presidential elections are big business. Total spending in the 2020 showdown between Joe Biden and Donald Trump hit an estimated \$11bn, or £8.5bn. That includes advertising, salaries, rallies and conventions.

Money talks – and with that kitty we could put up our own two candidates. Being born in the US makes you eligible to run for president. Would an Andrew Garfield (born in LA) vs Boris Johnson (born in New York) contest be a better use of taxpayer money than the Rwanda scheme?

ARCHITECTURE PRIZE



Social housing, Elizabeth Line and a dairy farm shortlisted for prestigious prize

● The revival of a brutalist landmark in Sheffield is going head-to-head with the Elizabeth Line and a social housing project in London to scoop the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)'s prestigious Stirling Prize.

Park Hill, the former social housing scheme built by Sheffield City Council in the 1950s, is being transformed to create 195 flats and 2,000 sqm of commercial space. It is being led by Urban Splash and Mikhail Riches, the architect behind the first social housing

project to win the award back in 2019 with Norwich's Goldsmith Street.

The Elizabeth Line has already been named RIBA's London Building of the Year and is now up for the Stirling Prize after opening in 2022.

Another social housing project in Hackney, East London, is shortlisted for the award. Chowdhury Walk is led by Al-Jawad Pike architects and comprises 11 homes, seven of which are for social rent. The site was previously used for parking and garages.

(Above, left to right) Chowdhury Walk in Hackney; the Elizabeth Line; Sheffield's Park Hill Phase 2

Other projects on the 2024 shortlist include the renovation of the National Portrait Gallery and Wraxall Yard, an old dairy farm in Dorset that has been transformed into a holiday retreat.

RIBA president Muyiwa Oki, said: “These projects demonstrate the ingenuity and diversity of architecture today... These varied schemes are united in making sensitive contributions to elevating everyday life.”

See the full list at [architecture.com](https://www.architecture.com)

Air fix: how redundant airports could help the UK's housing crisis

The idea of transforming the old Robin Hood Airport into a housing estate came second in an architectural award earlier this summer. Liam Geraghty checks in with the minds behind it to see if the idea can take off, or if there is too much baggage

Doncaster Sheffield Robin Hood Airport closed its doors in 2022 when its owners said it was no longer commercially viable. It is on track to reopen after a 125-year lease was signed in March. But perhaps some blue-sky thinking could see the space and buildings utilised in a different way: what if the shuttered airport could be used to alleviate the housing crisis instead? That's the challenge a group of architects, academics, gardeners, structural and aerospace engineers have set themselves.

Their solution involves transforming Robin Hood Airport into a co-living space with room for 15,000 homes – a housing estate with 'streets' inside a former terminal building, homes utilising old aeroplanes, a climbing frame made out of a cockpit and rewilded runways. The proposal was entered for The Davidson Prize architectural award earlier this year to tie into a theme focused on adapting and reusing existing materials.

While the idea is still taxiing, there are hopes it could take off in the future, offering a solution to the climate and housing crises as well as the uncertain future of the UK's regional airports.

Big Issue spoke to Almanac architects Chris Bryant and Rachel Foreman about the plans to see if they can get the idea off the ground.

The pair worked with structural engineer Brian Constant, University of Westminster gardener/architect Eric Guibert and aerospace engineer Mark Blackwell to create a transformative vision for the three-sq-km site of the former airport in Sheffield.

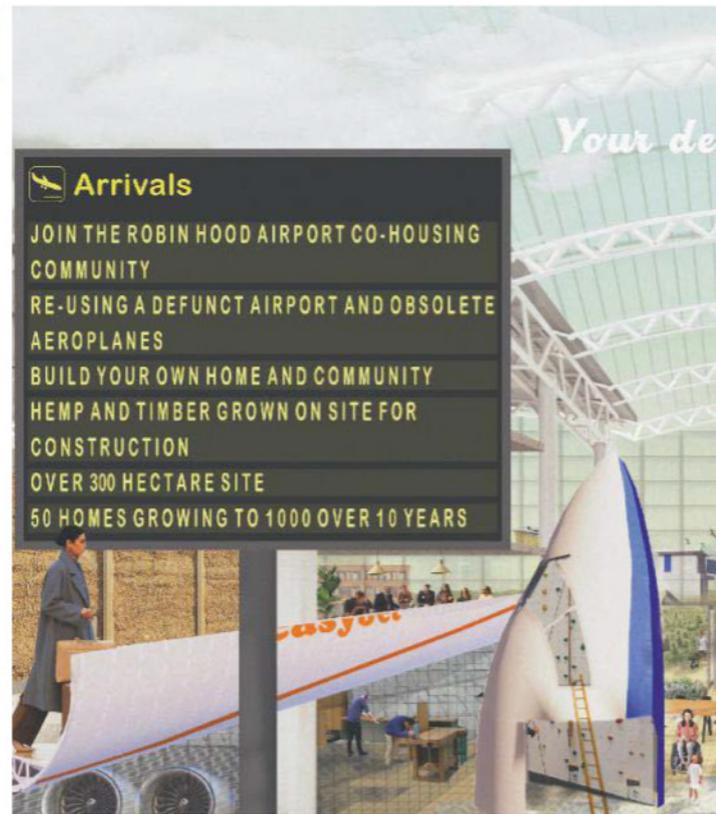
Bryant says the combination of big buildings, lots of space and strong transport links made airports an excellent choice for housing estates.

"Airports are soulless places, but there are also huge amounts of land," he says. "The infrastructure we have now will not be the infrastructure that we need in 25 years. So we are going to be left with airports and airfields. Commercial airports tend to be very well connected to city centres, have large areas of flat land and big sheds, which are brilliant to use either to create really interesting housing or to create community spaces or a space to build new housing."

Bryant believes advances in aviation technology could mean shorter runways are needed for drones and fixed-wing aircrafts and self-driving cars could make the infrastructure around airports more efficient over the next 25 years.

That means some much-needed space could be opened up without using the green belt or the grey belt, as Labour is targeting.

(Clockwise from above) a vision of the future for Robin Hood Airport; the architect's blueprints; an artist's impression of plans for Downsview Airport, Toronto



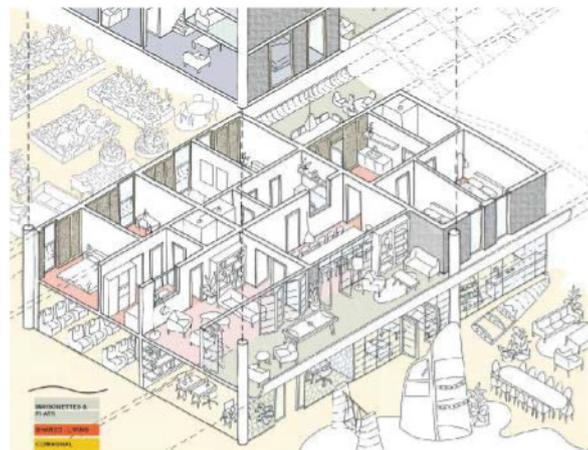
But it is not as simple as just building as many homes as possible. The proposal also calls for a shift in how people live, growing materials sustainably on site and repurposing redundant aircraft. Insulation from planes could be recycled and incorporated into homes, parts could be used to create balconies to transform the terminal building into a community space.

"We're suggesting self-build communities," says Bryant. "You've got all these great big air hangars, you could grow hemp and native timber species in the land, you could build your own home over generations."

It's not for everyone, Bryant and Foreman admit, but they are working to make it a cost-effective way of living for people who are locked out of the housing market.

"As a younger person I think it's really hard to buy a house now," says Foreman. "Even just getting on the property ladder at all, I don't see how it is getting better without a sort of shift in either the way that we live and the way that we share and the way that we invest together."

The housing crisis facing Gen Z is one of the criteria in mind for Davidson Prize judges. Alice Finney, a journalist on the judging panel, tells Big Issue that the radical nature of the proposal impressed judges.



The idea eventually finished second in the award, behind a plan to transform a redundant art deco department store in Taunton, Devon, to explore how vacant retail space in the UK's towns and cities could be reinvented.

"We were looking for really robust, radical approaches, perhaps using spaces that we haven't considered before," says Finney. "It's a topic that, I think, aligns really nicely with the focus that we had on Generation Z and their housing crisis and is tied really nicely to the climate crisis."

The climate crisis means the tide is turning against airports in the future too. France has already banned short-haul domestic flights under 2.5 hours and Spain looks likely to follow suit.

While there is no indication that those measures will be replicated in the UK any time soon, the race to limit carbon emissions to reach net zero is likely to see fewer flights in the skies.

"There are quite a few airports in England currently that fly to Scotland, for example – we believe that shouldn't be a thing in the future," says Foreman.

The Travel Foundation, a group advocating for positive tourism, found only one scenario for the tourism sector to achieve net zero by 2050 while also allowing for growth.

It called for less of a focus on off-setting carbon emissions and instead

focusing on decarbonisation and capping the number of long-haul flights at 2019 levels – about 120 million return trips. Long-distance trips make up just 2% of the total journeys but contribute the most pollution. If they continued at this pace, they would account for 41% of the tourism sector's total emissions by 2050 compared to 19% in 2019.

Meanwhile, regional airports have been facing an uncertain future since Covid hit the travel sector hard. One former regional airport that shut its doors in 2011 could even see homes built on the site in the near future. Sutton Harbour Group – the owner of the former Plymouth City Airport site – is reportedly eyeing the possibility of building after a protection order from the government's planning inspector against development lapsed this year.

The idea is also lifting off abroad. Former Canadian Air Force base Downsview Airport has been given the go-ahead by Toronto City Council to be transformed into a 370-acre mixed-use community to house 100,000 people alongside schools, businesses, parks and creative spaces.

The old airport hosted a 2003 concert to raise cash for people affected by the SARS virus, starring AC/DC and The Rolling Stones, as well as a testing and manufacturing centre for jet producer Bombardier.



It's really hard to buy a house now. I don't see how it is getting better without a shift in the way that we live and the way that we invest together

RACHEL FOREMAN

If this is a sign of the way of travel for the future, the Robin Hood Airport proposal is looking to spark conversation on how the opportunity can be harnessed to tackle the housing crisis. Beyond The Davidson Prize, Alma-nac plans to convince the government and other organisations to back them to explore the idea.

"We understand the short-term economic gains and if there's a job shortage, it will generate jobs. We understand that mayors are there, elected every four or five years, to do that. But it's not a long-term solution and we do need to have long-term thinking about what we're going to do with this infrastructure," says Bryant.

"We understand that people will reopen airports but we also need to have visions about what we are going to do in 15, 20, 25 years and we need to have these conversations now because it takes that time to have huge strategic change. Investing time and effort now in these ideas means that, as it changes – and it will change – we can implement these ideas and aren't just left with all this land and it becomes a race to build whatever we can."

If the idea takes off, perhaps it could play a role in landing the homes Britain desperately needs.

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EDITOR'S LETTER



Living with the weight of memory

Over lunch, my friend Mark asked the question. It's an old saw and one many will have played over the years. If you could be born with one superpower, which would it be?

Mark works, very successfully, in the world of comic books and film and rich imagination. This question is, I suppose, foundational for him.

Normally, I say flight. I don't know if it qualifies as a superpower. It doesn't help you move time, or harness fire or crash through walls, but could there be anything more freeing? Also, it'd really save temper flares at airport security.

But I've been reading about Solomon Shereshevsky. This is in William Egginton's *The Rigor Of Angels*. It is an exceptional, remarkable, mind-boggling book. Seek it out.

Shereshevsky was a journalist in post-revolutionary Moscow. One day, he revealed to his boss that he had perfect memory. Whatever came to him, he'd retain then be able to repeat back verbatim. Tests were undertaken. It was found that his memory had "no distinct limits". His boss, wisely, suggested he find a new career. He joined the circus, more or less, touring the country as a memory man.

And so, I thought, what if everybody everywhere forever had complete memory. In an age of untruths and alternative truths and the convenient mangling of truths to suit the specious arguments of demagogues and snakeoil suppliers, what if we'd all been only ever surrounded by truth, learned, passed down and then presented. These objective realities couldn't be poisoned because if we were all Shereshevskys we'd know the facts that had poured into us.

I was very pleased with myself, for a moment. With all that retained knowledge, we'd finally really get to the bottom of things. We'd know what caused the Late Bronze Age collapse, we'd have what Socrates really thought, rather than second-hand passages coming through Plato. We'd know EXACTLY how the Great Pyramids were built, what Stonehenge was for, why the

Vikings went a bit agrarian rather than raging, what the first man who invented the wheel REALLY thought. We'd have all the learned knowledge to look at and prevent atrocities rising again because the previous atrocities would still be hardwired and accessible memories.

It's a way to see if we really could learn from history.

But it's ludicrous, of course. That mass of information on its own won't help. Not just because sometimes the information passed down is wrong. Knowledge is not immutable. It is there to be challenged and built upon. Otherwise we'd still believe humans were governed by Galen's four humours, and not look at the circulation of blood or how diseases rise and become treatable. Galileo would never have finally fought through. Insert your favourite piece of human progress here.

And independently, for each of us, that retention of information would be crippling. That first broken heart would remain forever raw, that feeling of darkness at losing a loved one, or a beloved pet, would forever gnaw. Time would have no impact except to increase its weight.

The talent eventually did for Shereshevsky. It was too much. He began to drink heavily to deaden the ability and sank away to his death.

It is not the memory of everything that will lift and sustain us, but what we do with the knowledge that matters. At the very core, only empathy and decency and an attempt to find a shared place buoys us.

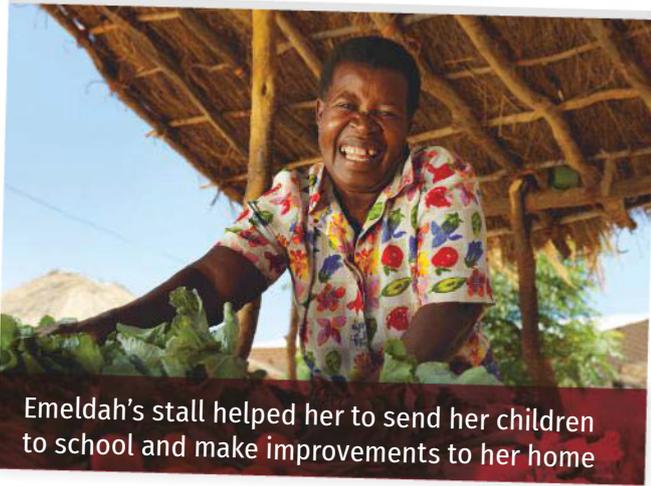
In the aftermath of the horror of the killings and maiming of the children in Southport, the abiding representation of how we can carry on is not the booze-fuelled vengeful jobs, burning and rampaging and threatening, safe in their hate mob. It is the moving images that came the next morning when local people assembled and swept and cleaned and then, literally, rebuilt what had been destroyed.

The memories were with them and they chose not to let that weight crush. This is how we live.

It is what we do with knowledge that matters. At the very core, only empathy and decency and an attempt to find a shared place buoys us

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Emeldah's stall helped her to send her children to school and make improvements to her home

© Peter Caton/CARE/2019



Maria's honey business helps her to support her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren!

© Ana Caroline de Lima/CARE/2018



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ACCESSIBILITY

I was granted Freedom of the City, but not the freedom of the room

Anna Landre

International disability policy researcher and activist

Last week I proudly rolled my wheelchair through the gilded halls of Mansion House, set to be awarded the Freedom of the City of London for my work in disability campaigning. But the honour soon soured into indignity when I could not access the ceremony stage because it didn't have a ramp.

I suppose I was worthy of being granted the Freedom of the City, but not the freedom of the room.

The stage itself was not a historic feature and sat barely half a metre off the floor. The organisers knew I was coming and had assured me of wheelchair access.

So why did this happen?

We'd be better off asking why it's such a regularity. Twenty-nine years after the passage of the Disability Discrimination Act and 15 years after the Equality Act which replaced it, disabled people like me still experience regular, avoidable access fails every day.

I call this phenomenon 'access roulette'. Spin the wheel and hold your breath – maybe you'll be allowed onto the bus today, rather than the driver speeding off without putting the ramp down.

Perhaps train staff will meet you with the ramp you booked, rather than you being denied boarding or whisked past your destination when no one shows and the doors close.

Around 15% of booked assistance is not delivered or is delivered unsatisfactorily – that's more than once per week if you commute to work each

day. It's possible, certainly, that this time the hotel really did book you an accessible room, rather than you being forced to sleep in the lobby or thrown out because of your guide dog. And sure, maybe that restaurant you want to try down the block did fulfill their obligation to buy a ramp for the small step out front.

As a researcher and activist, I work within what I've termed the disability law implementation gap: the space between our beautiful (or at least passable) access laws and our reality on the ground. The gap is wide, and we have no choice but to mind it every day.

I quietly accepted my Freedom of the City from the floor beneath the stage, knowing that despite the legal

Anna Landre with her Freedom of the City of London award – and the inaccessible stage behind her



obligation for disabled people to be granted "reasonable adjustments" like a ramp to ensure access, if I made a scene it would be me who was branded "unreasonable".

As disabled people, we're forced to make rapid, calculated decisions during emotionally intense situations of discrimination in desperate attempts to assert our rights in the "correct" way, remaining palatable and polite.

We manage the comfort and emotions of those committing acts of discrimination against us and learn the personal cost of asserting our rights; forfeiting time, energy, peace, career achievements and dignity to the hungry gap where the law should be.

But this is far from inevitable. We could, for instance, enforce the law. The greatest weakness of access laws globally, including in the UK, is their lack of enforcement mechanisms; there's no police force or government department one can call to report a violation.

Instead, the only way to force compliance is for disabled people ourselves to start a civil lawsuit – an action far outside the means of most of us.

This needs to change. We'll never see full implementation of the Equality Act if the burden for enforcing it continues to fall to disabled people ourselves. Instead, this government must show leadership on one of the greatest issues facing the 2.96 million Britons who have a mobility disability. (Disabled people more broadly make up 24% of the UK's population.)

Our options for pulling the levers of policy are many: create an Ombudsman to which violations can be reported, move the minister for disabled people out of the DWP once and for all and into equalities so they can work on more than benefits, give local councils the resources and responsibility to do random access inspections, and much more.

Others have made the case for encouraging access as a matter of courtesy or a smart business decision – but after decades of facing the failure of laws which are older than I am, I find myself tired of gentle persuading and ready for the law to fend for itself.

For decades the UK government has claimed to be a global leader on disability rights, while disabled people across the country lack basic access to elements of daily life.

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BIRD'S WORDS



No more sticking plasters when it comes to ending poverty

The government is going to create a new department to ensure that when it spends money it gets good value. A defence of the public purse is essential if you want to rid society of poverty. But in a sense the persistence of poverty is a clear indicator that government spend from the public purse is not being directed wisely. Or is being spent simply on 'sticking plasters'.

Sticking-plaster politics and its social spend is rotting government and stripping it of its ability to be useful. If all the money you spend on social need simply skims the surface, never changing the underlying circumstances of poverty, then it is wasteful. So much of the social fabric of the UK today demonstrates that we are allowing poverty to run our lives.

Our schools and police, our hospitals and surgeries are dominated by the misapplied investments of the past that never addressed the issue of why we continue to produce generation after generation of people in poverty. We maintain people in poverty, creating a culture of poverty. Crime and violence are the products, the fruits of poverty; if we want to get rid of the tragedy of street deaths through violence we must dismantle poverty. And not keep putting sticking plasters over it.

If the government is going to create a new department to look carefully at value for money, then it should address how we spend money on those whose only inheritance is poverty. Who inherit poverty from their parents and will if, things are left as they are, pass poverty on to their own children.

But the only loud sounds being made by those who express concern, the self-appointed defenders of the poor, seem to be their requests for more for the poor – and not the ending of the tyranny of poverty. Giving the poor more only means that you postpone the day that you declare war

on the root causes of poverty. And that is why we have to underline the ineptness of most government spend around poverty: because it deals with the effects of poverty and never the cause.

So a defence of the public purse, the government's supposed plan, if held to would need to ask for instance how we can continue to lock people up for crime and then possibly, £100,000 later, put them back where they come from, unprepared and still with poverty in their lives. Unprepared because when they were locked up they were not given the support to change and be transformed into a useful member of society. A defence of the public purse should be a defence of common sense. It should ask how we can stop producing crime by the time the next generation comes along.

I realise that I am a voice in the wilderness right now because we have a new government. And new governments renew all the sticking-plaster thinking they inherited, not just from the last government but from all previous governments. That, supposedly, is their job, because government is often simply sticking-plaster social philosophy. It is 'holding the hands of the poor' thinking. And that alas is not just government thinking, but the thinking of most members of the public.

That is why this voice in the wilderness is asking the question of

THIS WEEK JOHN WILL BE

Reading:

An extract of the *Poor Laws Royal Commission Report*, published in 1834

Watching:

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels (1988)

Listening:

Petite Fleur by Sidney Bechet

Doing:

Camping in Devon

government: when are you going to coordinate attempts at ending poverty into one government department? And because government spend on poverty doesn't get people out of poverty, when are you going to invest in poverty prevention? Preventing poverty in the lives of people will cut the NHS costs in half, as half the people using the health service are people suffering from poverty. It means prisons will empty because people won't fall into poverty-related crime. End poverty and you end the terrible waste of human life that causes obesity and all of the health problems that come with a poor, inherited diet.

So as the government gets its ducks in line it is haunted by the practices of the past, and the structures of the individual government departments. These structures and inherited thinking ensure – unintentionally – that poverty continues to be inherited by another generation. And the whirligig of poverty continues because the serious work of dismantling it never kicks off.

Every government when it leaves office claims it has reduced child poverty. It has to because it is, apparently, a good measure of a government's success. But they leave in place the mechanisms for a continuation of child poverty. Because they have not built the mind-enhancing, the body-enhancing programmes that will turn people who inherit poverty into the socially mobile who move away from poverty.

If, as I have been recommending, the government set up a Ministry of Poverty Prevention, if nothing else it would collect together all of the wonderful things that have historically been achieved in getting people out of poverty. Through education and skill-enhancing work, through the power of music, the arts, the sciences, people can be lifted out of poverty.

I know from my own life that the one thing that got me out of poverty was the desire to paint and draw; it changed me because it skilled me away from poverty by widening my appetite for self-improvement.

The government has to create the wherewithal not just for some individuals to escape poverty, but for a whole class of people caught in the dungeon of poverty to do the same.

An enormous ask and an enormous task. But it has to be achieved. There is no alternative. And the public purse will benefit no end.

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LETTERS

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Oxford united

John Bird's article [Issue 1624, 15-21 July] charges Oxford with a "shrivelling of intellect". I went to Oxford in 1970 from a direct grant school, and friends of mine taught history there until they retired two years ago. My niece, who came from a single-parent family, has just graduated, having had the chance to learn Greek and Latin which she wasn't taught at school, and to get the best degree awarded to students who started Classics with no languages.

Your attack is unfair to most students there – and to a side of Oxford which doesn't get into the newspapers, but is as important as your own work. Oxford has tried very hard to attract students with very different backgrounds from Johnson and Cameron and Blair, and the absurdly intense tutorial system does expand intellect.

You could legitimately attack government policy towards universities, or the anti-intellectualism which is a feature of English life (in contrast to Scotland). But just to target Oxford is far too easy; it smacks of the populism which has done so much damage in the UK and the USA, and everywhere. Slogans do not change anything. I urge you not to descend to using them.

David Ganz

Fuel to the fire

So instead of reinstating the winter fuel payment for the disabled, the new Labour government has just taken it off some pensioners. Like, I get some pensioners who have super-high pensions shouldn't be getting it, but I feel there are a lot who are going to be missed who need it because they are just out of the threshold.

Also, Labour needs to reintroduce it for we disabled folk because the Tories decided we didn't need the winter fuel payment, yet many are just as vulnerable, if not more so in winter, and don't get any help in heating their homes which they already struggle

to do. It costs us more in utility bills already. I feel like that's not going to happen though.

@avani.tasma, Instagram

Em's a gem

Emilia Clarke's work with SameYou and Big Issue Recruit is absolutely incredible for all of us with acquired brain injuries! It's amazing so much more is being done on the matter, compared to 15 years ago! Fingers crossed for employers' ears hearing the right stories at the right time.

@progress.by.reflection

Gull and void

With regard to John Bird's column [Issue 1625, 22-28 July], seagulls – actually herring gulls – first became noticeable inland after the Clean Air Act of 1956, passed in record time after what turned out to be the last very damaging UK-wide smog (there were other more localised ones until the early 1960s), killing thousands of people with less-than robust respiratory systems.

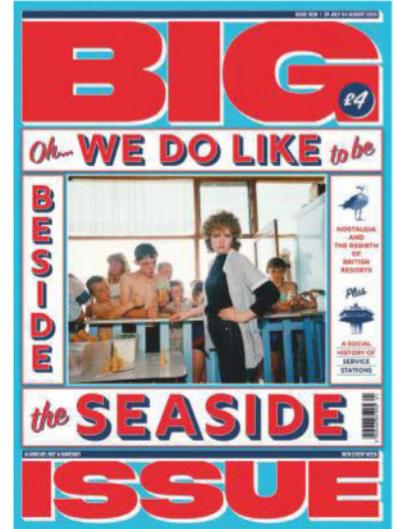
One of the parts of the act was that local authorities were no longer allowed to burn rubbish, hence the great expansion of landfills and the availability of food waste attracted a whole host of birds including the formidable herring gull. While we still use landfill, the gulls will no doubt be our neighbours.

Christopher, Bristol

ISSUE 1626

Good to get my @BigIssue from a vendor in central Manchester today. What a vital magazine it is!

@IMcMillan, X



Anti-ageing

I regularly buy your magazine every week and I salute all your hard work, so it was disappointing to read the article in issue 1625 by James Rose on the concerns with how the older population in the UK will get their needs met and the stigmatising language that this article used.

Those of us who are part of this demographic are not a crisis or a challenge, so please stop labelling us as such. Ageism is now the highest form of discrimination in the workplace. If there was a baby boom in the Sixties, you do not have to be a high-level mathematician to know that in 60 years' time you will have a number of older people.

My age begins with a 6 but I am still working in mental health in the NHS and still pay tax and national insurance. In fact, I received notification a while ago I have paid so much NI my state pension will not increase any further, but I am happy to do my bit so please stop driving a wedge between my generation and younger people.

When I was a teenager, I found myself living homeless in London for two years. My parents died and living homeless felt like the safer option than the care home I was dumped in. I beat the odds. I have had what I think is a productive life and I do what I can to help others. So please support those of us in the later years of life when our age makes us vulnerable, especially now things like the Assisted Dying Bill are likely to be passed in England in the next couple of years.

A regular subscriber

Seagulls are moving increasingly inland, as John Bird recently observed, but the catalyst may have come a while back



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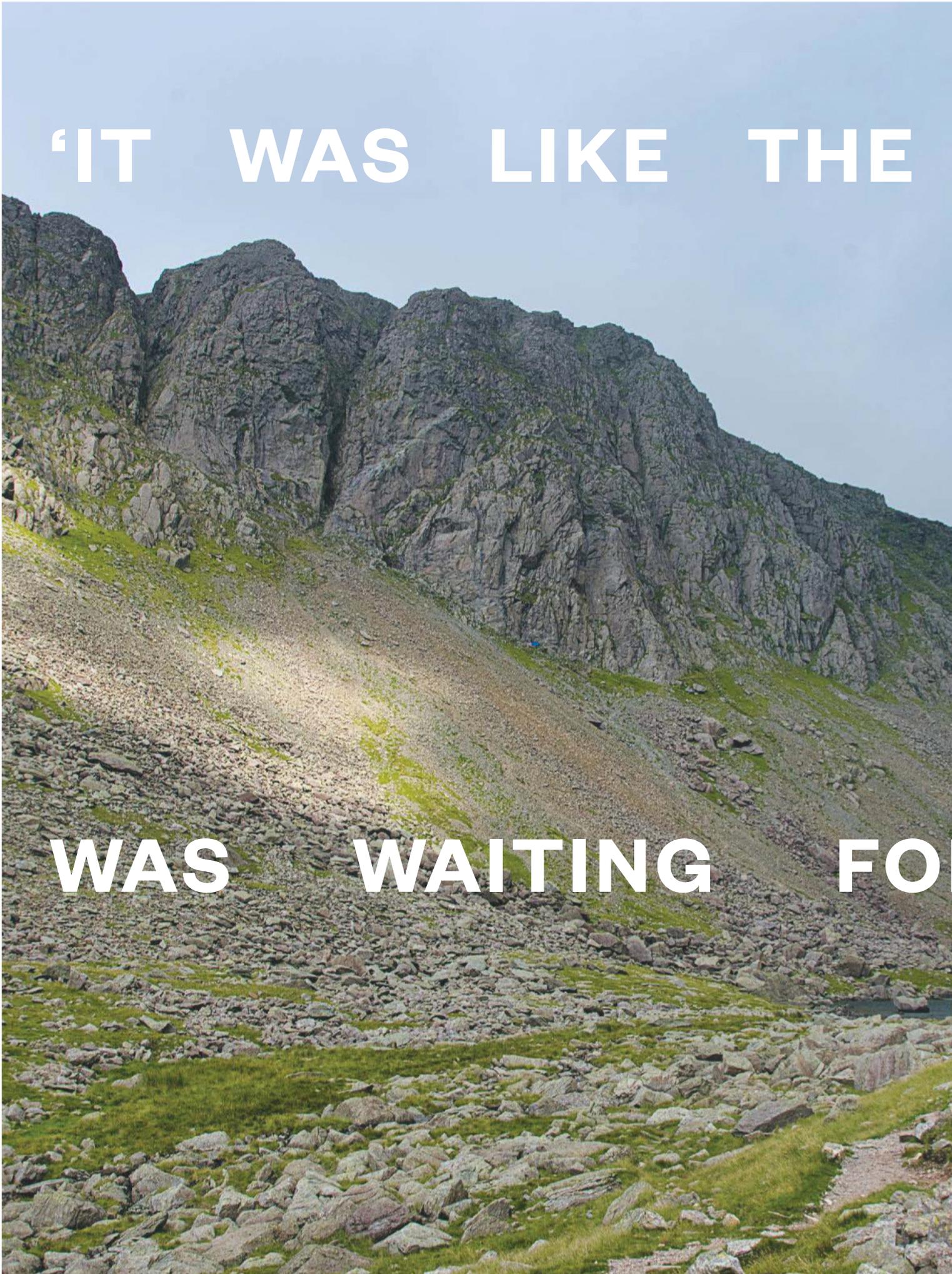


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'IT WAS LIKE THE

WAS WAITING FOR



PLACE

R ME'



Three Big Issue vendors were offered the chance to step out of their urban comfort zone on a countryside retreat. Here's how Mark, André and Easton harnessed nature to see themselves in a new light

Words: Liam Geraghty / Photographs: John Fleetwood

For most of us, summer is a chance to get away from it all, to jet off to the beach or to get ready to ramble in the countryside.

That's often not a luxury afforded to Big Issue vendors, working hard all year round in villages, towns and cities to sell the magazine and change their life through enterprise.

So when three Big Issue vendors – London sellers Easton Christian and André Rostant, and Bristol's Mark Ramsey – were given the opportunity to visit a retreat in the Lake District, it was a rare chance for them to escape the hustle and bustle of the city and experience the breathtaking sights, contemplative solitude and humbling natural beauty of the Lakes.

Taking in the view from the summit of The Old Man of Coniston, or watching the sunrise over the Cumbrian peaks, the two-day retreat offered a profound sense of perspective and a space to reflect on their own lives.

And it had a transformative effect.

“Walking, hiking up them hills, nothing around me, just the wild, it was just something else. It's somewhere I'm meant to belong,” as Mark put it.

Beyond The View (BTV), is an organisation running ‘pilgrimages’ in the Lake District. It invited the vendors on the trip, with the help of funding from the Diocese of Carlisle.

The operation's strapline is Connect, Reflect and Act, focusing on the power of connecting to nature on a more profound level than just admiring the scenery. Its Lakeland Pilgrimage takes participants to the beauty spot's seven mountains – or ‘natural cathedrals’ as BTV calls it.

“What we're looking to do through Beyond The View is really connect people more deeply with nature on a

spiritual level,” said BTV's John Fleetwood. “Looking at the Big Issue vendors, obviously they're in an urban environment and probably not the first people you'd think of for something like this.

“I wanted to work with a disadvantaged group to demonstrate that this can work for everybody.”

Access to the countryside has been under the spotlight in recent years.

A row between a landowner in Dartmoor and countryside lovers saw a ban on wild camping that was later overturned with the row escalating to the Supreme Court.

The retreat underlines the universal benefits of the great outdoors and shines a light on the need for access to be for everyone. Big Issue support and outreach worker Ben Reynolds, who also attended the retreat, said: “What we did was a very privileged thing that more middle-class people do.

“So for people who have been disaffected by society, it allowed them to get that insight.

“For some people, that's a holiday. But for these gentlemen, it was a thought process. It allowed them to think about life.”

The Big Issue group was joined by filmmakers from Land & Sky Media who plan to make a short documentary on the retreat to enter into the Kendal Mountain Festival. And it will certainly live long in the memory for vendors too. At least one of them yearns to return to the great outdoors.

Mark said: “I've got the bug for it but obviously I can't get back because it's money, money, money to do that. I just want to go over the next hill and see what that bit is.”

This is their story of the trip, told in their own words: ▶

(Above, from left) Mark, André (seated), Easton, Jon Kissell, founder of fellow outdoor group Men in the Mountains, Big Issue's Ben Reynolds, Paul Rose from Beyond The View; (left) the group on a hike



MARK
‘I’M STILL THERE
IN MY HEAD’

● The Big Issue trio’s two-day retreat saw them conquer The Old Man of Coniston fell and waking up at 4.30am to sample the sunrise (a rare treat in itself in a wet and gloomy summer).

It was a world away from the everyday – and that proved to be a challenge for Bristol seller Mark.

The 50-year-old initially wanted to go home after finding the rural location to be too far outside his comfort zone.

But by the time he came home, he wanted to go back.

“I’m still there in my head,” he said. “It’s like a place that has always been there, but was just seeking me out for me to go there. I was in my element. I can’t get it out of my head at the moment.”

The turning point for Mark came when he was asked to remove his shoes and socks and step into a stream to ponder the connection between the flora and fauna in the natural world,

while listening to blessings read out by the organisers.

“That obviously really connected with him because he probably stayed another five minutes after everybody else had got out and you could see from the expression on his face that he was loving it and getting something out of the experience,” said Fleetwood.

For Mark, who has battled alcoholism, the trip started as two days without the prospect of a drink, but the transformative impact of nature gave him the space to think about how to tackle the issue. More urbanites could benefit from an escape from the city to rethink their lives, he concluded.

“When you’re in the AA meetings there is pressure. You’re in a group and you sit down together.

“On this retreat, you can just do your own thing and there’s the wild and everything else that goes with it. You’re just connected to nature and the healing power of it. That beats any drug to me. Stuff like that is hard to get funded but it should be.”



ANDRÉ
‘I’VE NEVER SEEN ANYONE
SO HAPPY GOING UPHILL’

● None of the three vendors on the trip had met before, and the retreat offered a rare opportunity for them to build a bond.

Soho seller André was immediately impressed with his two companions’ climbing prowess.

“Mark went up that mountain like a jackrabbit. He was at the top of one when we were halfway up,” he said.

“I’ve never seen anyone so happy going uphill, apart from Easton. He’s quite relaxed. He strolled up that mountain as if he was walking down Clapham High Street, it was nothing to him.

“If it had been twice as high he’d still have just strolled up it. The company was fantastic.”

For André, it was the view of the early-morning sun rising over the hills that really captured the imagination.

A prolific creative, André released his song, *Big Issue Ballad*, last year and earlier this year he published his novel, *The Muffin Man*. The pilgrimage experience also unlocked his inner poet and



↑ Here comes the sun

André: “We got up at 4.30 in the morning and usually if I’m up at that time in the morning I’m going to bed rather than on the way to doing something else. That being said, it was invigorating. When you get up at 4am in silence and lovely twilight and up a not-very-arduous hill, you look up at the sunrise and you hear the sheep bleating, it’s a fabulous experience. I’m a raving atheist but it is kind of a spiritual experience. It didn’t shake my atheism but certainly makes you reflect.”



↑ Cake news

The vendors were treated to a cake baked by Abbi Bramble, as seen in last year’s *Great British Bake Off*. Bramble is a friend of John Fleetwood and her strawberry cake was a hit. André: “It was absolutely delicious. It was worth going just for the cake. It wasn’t too sweet, it was just perfect.”



↑ Stick with it

André: “It was straightforward getting to the summit. I got a bit breathless because I’m a bit podgy but I survived it. What was terrifying was I’m not so keen on heights. Coming up, you’re looking at the bit of hill in front of you, but coming down, you can see the whole world and it’s all underneath you and it’s just terrifying. Somebody very kindly lent me those Nordic walking sticks. One of the people there literally held my hand going down. Otherwise, it would have taken about three times as long to get down as it did up.”

he penned this poem, *Tranearth*, on his way home:

*All across these copper sunrise-burnished
Hills of Coniston ewes call their young.
The constant hours pass.
There is no other sound
Besides the rushing stream,
Breeze-bothered trees,
Until at last grey mist
Draws down curtain night.
Still the ewes call.
Their voices – those of council estate mums
Summoning their children to tea –
Bookend the days.*

Like Mark, returning home put the trip into perspective for André.

“In London, you can see the air and taste it. There I wasn’t even sure I was breathing at times, it was very fresh,” he said.

“There’s the opportunity to think nothing for a short while – you don’t really get the opportunity to think nothing. There was nothing else to do but go up the hill. It’s very hard to set aside time to do that sort of thing. You just don’t find yourself doing it habitually. Consequently, you don’t get an opportunity to rest your mind.”



EASTON
‘IT BROUGHT BACK ALL THESE MEMORIES’

● For Easton, walking through the hills brought back memories of growing up in Jamaica

The 70-year-old, who became homeless after his father died and still sells the magazine in London’s White

City, said: “I’ve not been out into the countryside really – in Jamaica I used to but not since I moved to Coventry in 1972.

“It brought back all these memories of going into the countryside with my grandmother and going through the bushes.

“Going up the hills, the grass around it was wet, and then when you came back down and the sun was shining it brought it all back.”

In fact, Easton was so taken with the experience that he even bought a book that explores blessings and the history of the Lake District from Fleetwood, who later admitted that it “blew him away”.

That’s how spiritual the experience was for Easton.

For him, it brought to mind psalms 18:2-12 from the Bible, which says: “The lord is my Rock, my fortress, my place of safety. He is my God, the Rock I run to for protection. He is my shield; by his power I am saved. He is my hiding place high in the hills”.

“That’s what went through my mind when they were telling me about the rock and its history,” he told us.



VIEWPOINT

Beyond The View describes itself as a “movement that seeks to facilitate deeper, transcendent experiences of nature, helping people to find purpose, meaning, wholeness and delight”. The organisation, which is applying to be a charity, runs pilgrimages to the Lake District to give people a chance to connect with nature, reflect on their lives and take lessons from the wilderness. Find out more at beyondtheview.org.uk

→ **On song**

Mark: “All the people who were there, it was like I’d seen them before. It was like the place was waiting for me. When I stepped out of the cabin at the back, it was nice to have the tranquillity of it, the clean air of it.”



↑ **Shout to the top**

Easton: “I was relieved when I got to the top! Some parts of it were hard but you just get on with it I suppose. It just felt like if I went near the edge I would tip over, it just had that feeling about the place.”



↑ **Dream boat**

Easton: “We took the boat to go to the train station. The luggage we had was in a different car and we had to go to meet them to take us to the train station. It was nice to be on the boat and it was quicker than walking!”

Grilling in the name of

● A July evening. You're hungrily waiting for food to be barbecued to perfection – by actor Will Poulter and TV chef Big Zuu. They might seem an unlikely pair, but they've known each other for years. And they also know great food, and how to use it for good.

Prior to his appearance on *The Bear*, in which he served up philosophy with his pastry, Poulter's acting roles include *Guardians of the Galaxy 3*, *The Revenant* and *Black Mirror*. He's also an ambassador for charity Turn2Us, which he spoke about on a Big Issue podcast in 2022. Big Zuu may have begun as a rapper, but is now perhaps best known for presenting *Big Zuu's Big Eats*, which spawned a recipe book and earned him two Baftas.

Together, they are cooking for young people facing homelessness at New Horizons Youth Centre in London, which runs monthly supper clubs. It's a well-loved event attended by up to 80 young people, and it helps combat the loneliness homelessness can bring. On the menu for this summer barbecue are burgers, veggie skewers – and supermalt beef short ribs from Zuu's cookbook.

By Isabella McRae, Big Issue Senior Reporter



BIG ISSUE: Tell us about the barbecue. Why is it something you wanted to get involved with?

WILL POULTER: We all know what it is to be a young person. We all have varying experiences, but something I don't have any experience of is financial insecurity and home insecurity that, unfortunately, a growing number of young people are facing. The numbers needing support are on the rise and so, if you're in the position to help at all, you jump at the chance. What NYHC is doing is special. **BIG ZUU:** I second what Will's saying. Especially over Covid, young people faced a lot of hardship with youth centres closing and losing funding. It's really important that people like me and Will connect with organisations and spread a little joy.

WP: And we both have strong relationships to food through our work. Zuu is a chef, and there's my involvement with *The Bear*. One of the things that NYHC does is they feed young people. They currently feed 80 people a day.

What does food mean to you both?

BZ: Food is my life. Food is what I was taught was important when I was young, coming from a West African background. I grew up in a house where it was just me and my mum and my brother. She would cook for like 10 people, always offering food to neighbours or friends when they came over. Now that I've grown up, I'm fortunate enough to do it as a career. Food has let me do so many incredible things.

WP: As a kid, growing up, the moments I felt most connected to other people was when I was eating with them. That is a privilege. I never really had those community moments taken away from me because I didn't know food insecurity. In a country as wealthy as this, no young person should be experiencing that.

BZ: Today is a beautiful day, and the first thing that comes into your head is a barbecue. Growing up, I never had a garden. So when I got old enough to have my own, it's a joy to barbecue. The energy's different. Normally, I'm the chef that people are staring at waiting for the food to be done. Barbecues are a way to come together and create new conversation. You're relaxed and look at things in a different way.

How do you rate your BBQ skills?

WP: Outdoor cooking is not my strong suit. I'm more comfortable indoors. I might be leaning on you there, Zuu.

BZ: I'm good on the barbecue. I'm all right. The more you cook, the more your chef hands develop. I used to work for Nando's on the grill.

WP: The heat of the commercial kitchen hits different.

BZ: That Nando's grill will make you melt like a candle.

Will, will you be channelling the skills you learnt in *The Bear*?

WP: I worked in a restaurant in California and they had me there for a week. I can speak to what Zuu's talking about a little bit. That grill is way hotter than any burner I've seen in a home. They are no joke. I'm excited to get over an open flame with Zuu.

How does it make you feel that good food is such a privilege?

WP: Gutting, especially when statistics will tell you that there is more than enough food to go around, and the country is in a position to be able to feed every young person.

BZ: Growing up, good food was the language of having wealth. The older I've got, the more I've understood that it's about educating people to empower themselves to be able to cook good food. In these times of ultra-gentrification, you have areas where it's low socioeconomic background, but they've got this mad bakery on their road and this mad fancy restaurant. That is not accessible. Independent kitchens and restaurants are your unsung heroes.

You're doing this in Camden, in Keir Starmer's constituency. Polly [from NYHC], feel free to jump in here.

What would you like to see the new government change?

POLLY STEPHENS: There were 136,000 young people who approached the council as homeless last year. That's probably half the real scale. Over 50% of young people we work with have never been to their council or haven't got through the door. They've been told to go home, even if that's not safe. They don't get taken seriously. There's this assumption that they're somehow more resilient, which is fundamentally untrue. We solve youth homelessness. We do it every single day – it's the most powerful way to solve homelessness – 54% of people who sleep rough in later life were first homeless as a young person. Save yourself half the trauma further down the line for these people who just deserve better.



(Opposite) the NYHC barbecue had a great turnout; (above) Poulter flexes his skills in *The Bear*; (below) Big Zuu's supermalt beef short ribs were a hit on the night

Labour's only had a fortnight in. I've been ringing them non-stop and I understand why they're not ringing me back. They have committed to a strategy to end homelessness, but we're like: "And young people? Are you going to have young people in the room? Or is it going to be decisions made in Whitehall by a group of white people in suits in their 40s and 50s?"

WP: That's the nail on the head. The strategy is laid out for them. It's just pressing the button on it. All too often, young people are misunderstood. They need a seat at the table.

Will, you've spoken before about the benefits system as an ambassador for charity Turn2Us. Is that something you'd like to see changed too?

WP: People who are facing financial insecurity are often dehumanised. They're reliant on a system that's under-delivering, and then they are mislabelled as people who are benefitting from something. I think it requires us to reframe it.

BZ: I think more organisations should have incentives to hire young people from situations where [they] are going through certain hardships, whether it's coming out of jail, being homeless...

I work with a bakery called The Dusty Knuckle. They hire a lot of their workforce from people coming out of jail. If you give opportunities to people who are pushed to the side you end up empowering them. These issues are not something that can be fixed with kindness. It has to come from a place of authority and a level where people are realising: "Yo, this is what's happening, and this is how we can make a change."



New Horizon Youth Centre supports 16- to 24-year-olds who are homeless or unsafe in London nhyouthcentre.org.uk @IsabellaMcrae

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MORE THAN ONE STORY

5/9

The Surviving Room



A new series of short films exploring why people become homeless has been made by Cardboard Citizens, a charity that uses drama and performance to transform the lives of those who have lived experienced of homelessness, in collaboration with Black Apron Entertainment. Each film is written and performed by people who have experienced homelessness, poverty or inequity and can be watched at bigissue.com



By Neetu Singh

Overcrowding is a crucial reminder that we are expected not to take up space in this country. We are constantly expected to accept and adjust to unacceptable living situations. Under the last government, rent and the cost of living have skyrocketed and there is more housing – but not for people like us. Overcrowding is becoming the natural outcome.

When Chris Sonnex, the artistic director of Cardboard Citizens, commissioned me for this short film I had



no idea that overcrowding is a form of homelessness. I suddenly realised the reality of my entire life and the first thing I felt was shame, quickly followed by rage.

For the majority of my childhood, I lived in an overcrowded home, and nobody did anything about it.

I live in an East London borough that has been drastically gentrified and I couldn't help but start the film with this. How could my living situation persist in a borough that has become oversaturated with new homes and luxury living? How have I spent my entire life living in an overcrowded home in a borough that is one of the most sought-after places to live? This irony struck me.

I wrote a protagonist based on my experience. Kali, having just had an argument with her dad who is leaving for work, becomes an estate agent trying to capitalise off her living situation. With a national housing crisis in a borough where everything has become sellable, profitable and inaccessible – I thought even her living situation could become a real estate agent's fantasy. I began by misleading the viewer, describing the allure of her living situation, rebranding a living room that doubles as a bedroom for multiple people as the 'Surviving Room'.

Many lives are intertwined by Kali's living situation – there is More Than One Story in Kali's household alone and given the local council and Middle England's complicity, there is also more than one perpetrator too.

Overcrowding is a big issue because of how common and unaddressed it

Sonia Singh

Sonia Singh stars in *The Surviving Room*. Singh is an actress, model and trained Indian cinematic dancer. She has featured in various short films and commercials for brands including Coca-Cola, EasyJet and WhatsApp and is delighted to have collaborated with her sister on *The Surviving Room*. She says: "People haven't always taken it seriously that an Indian girl like me can have a career in the arts. But labels mean nothing. Anything you put your mind and your heart to unconditionally really can happen."

is. More than 3.5 million people in England live in overcrowded homes. Despite the fact that overcrowding exacerbates a young person's challenges – affecting their quality of life, health, education and access to stability and opportunity, it is not treated as urgent. It is not treated as homelessness.

People who come to the UK for a better, safer life are offered social housing that is unsafe, uncomfortable, inaccessible and ultimately unliveable. Young people are born into persistently unliveable situations. We spend entire childhoods on waiting lists for better social housing only to be offered housing alternatives that isolate, distance and sometimes endanger already vulnerable people into areas and communities far away from everything and everyone we know.

Today, I can call my living situation what it was. I lived in an overcrowded home. I was homeless.

But what are you, what is our new government, going to do about it?

Neetu Singh is a director and writer from Hackney, East London. Recently, she assistant directed *The Cherry Orchard* at the Donmar Warehouse in Central London



To watch this film **scan this QR code or visit:**
[bigissue.com/news/housing/cardboard-](http://bigissue.com/news/housing/cardboard-citizens-more-than-one-story-surviving-room)

citizens-more-than-one-story-surviving-room

The Surviving Room will be live from Thursday afternoon. Others are available to watch now

STEVE CRAM

When he broke the world mile record he achieved his dream, but losing his brother was the thing that changed his life forever



By 16, I was already doing well with athletics. It was O levels year, and I'd done quite well, but I was going to the athletics club every night. I was becoming aware that there might be an alternative future. My friends were thinking A levels, university and try to get a job. And so was I. But I was also realising running could take me on a different path. It was a funny time, the 1970s, and an exciting time for music. I'd gone through a Marc Bolan phase, was a bit of a Bowie fan and punk was rearing its head. I got attracted to that – but more the music than the fashion.

I was becoming quite politically aware. There were strikes and power cuts, so our lives had been affected by politics. My grandfather was a miner, my coach was working in the shipyards, my mum worked at three or four factories – that's what people did. It was a proper working-class upbringing. And I was shaped by where I grew up and the people around me.

My mother was German and my dad was a policeman – both of those things made you stand out in Jarrow.

All my life, we'd lived in a police house. Most estates had a few, which was nice but meant everyone knew where you lived. And we'd go to Germany every year, which was unusual. None of my mates had been abroad. I was more aware of what was going on at home through this lens of having parentage from a different country – and theoretically a country we hated. I became aware of racism, because my mum suffered quite badly. This was the time of *Till Death Us Do Part* and *Love Thy Neighbour*. So my friends would come around, say things they'd heard at home, and my mum would go ballistic. Any prejudice was frowned upon. And being a policeman's son meant you had to behave. If my mates were going to do something even slightly dodgy, my first thought was, what if my dad finds out?

One of my uncles [Bobby Cram] was a professional footballer. He was a hero to me, he played for West Brom, he was in the same team as Bobby Robson and Jeff Astle, and then had a moment of fame. He was captain of Colchester in 1972 when they knocked Leeds United out of the FA Cup live on television. I used to visit my grandmother on Sundays and look through scrapbooks on my uncle. I was not good enough to follow in his footsteps. By 15 I'd given up football to take running more seriously.

My careers teacher said you will not earn any money by running and that I needed a proper career. Years later, Mr Harrison was working for the Northumberland Tourist Board and he'd be on the stand at Newcastle

1976 THE YEAR STEVE TURNS 16

Harold Wilson resigns as UK prime minister and is replaced by James Callaghan

The Body Shop opens its first branch in Brighton

Trinidad and Tobago becomes a republic

Airport. He was a lovely man, but every time I flew to Oslo or Zurich, I reminded him about it!

I went to the Commonwealth Games when I was 17 and suddenly my name was on the back pages of the newspapers. And we had Seb Coe and Steve Ovett, who were capturing the public imagination. I broke the world mile record for 17-year-olds and started getting attention and sponsorship. My life changed quickly. All of a sudden, A levels didn't feel so important. You're thinking calculus – what am I going to do with this?

I was dedicated to running but didn't miss out on teenage life. I went to parties and had a drink now and then. At 16 or 17, that is the time most kids stop doing sport. You socialise more and are thinking about girls or boys. By 16, everyone knew which bar you could get served in, so that was hard to resist. And I did enough to not feel like I was missing out. As great a career as I had, boring stuff like getting more sleep and looking at my diet would have helped. Injury prevention is big in our sport now. So I would tell my 16-year-old self to get in the gym. But the first time I went I was scared stiff – it was all sweaty blokes with weights who were probably taking drugs. Brendan Foster was a huge hero and I had access to him. He was an athlete in the 1970s and lived down the road. Seeing someone who looked like me, talked like me was so important.

My younger self would have been most excited to know that he would break the world mile record. Roger Bannister was an incredible hero. I'd seen grainy footage of him breaking the four-minute mile as a kid. So if you'd told me that one day I'd break the world mile record that would have got me really excited. I'm very proud of being in that small club – I only lost the British record a few weeks ago.

Nobody tells you that if you get really good at athletics you're going to become famous. Suddenly, everywhere we went, everyone knew who we were. After I won the World Championships in 1983 and went to the Olympics in 1984, I couldn't walk down the street anywhere. When I broke the 1,500m world record in Nice in 1985, it was live on BBC and ITV. About 20 million people watched it on a Tuesday night. So the impact of what we were doing was huge. I started getting letters from all around the world. It was incredible to be part of and I would never have it any other way, but I did find it overwhelming.

My manager looked after Brendan Foster, Des Lynam, John Motson, Jim Rosenthal and Alan Parry. So even as an athlete, I understood broadcasting

because I hung around with these guys. But if you'd told me I would end up on TV, I would never have believed you. I stumbled into broadcasting. I started with Eurosport and was crap at first. But it was a way to go back to the World Championships and the Olympics. That was my motivation.

To reach the top level in sport you can become quite selfish. So I'd tell my younger self to make sure you're aware of what's happening in other people's lives. It's not all about you. Know who your real friends are and don't be so self-obsessed.

My brother's death made me make some big changes. He tripped when he was out running, fractured his skull and died on the spot. He was 40. There was a big feeling of guilt – why him? But it was also a jolt for me and I thank him to this day. You realise there might only be tomorrow, so why not be doing what you want to do and living as you want to live? The next couple of years I got divorced, and it was all part of that period of reassessing my life.

There was an option for me to become an MP. I'm political in the sense that I want to do things, and in the mid-1990s I was very frustrated with what was happening in sport. Seb Coe had become an MP. I told him I wanted to do it because sport in schools was terrible. But he said influential sports people can sit in front of a politician and talk about issues more than a backbench MP. And he was right. I sat on the Lottery panel for 15 years – that process ended with us having the Olympics in 2012. So Seb was shrewd and stopped me going down a path that may have been a dead end. But I love talking politics.

The scariest thing of my life was when someone said I was going to replace David Coleman. It's like the feeling Prince Charles might have had before he became king. How do I follow that? He was the greatest sports broadcaster and was everywhere in my house when I was a kid.

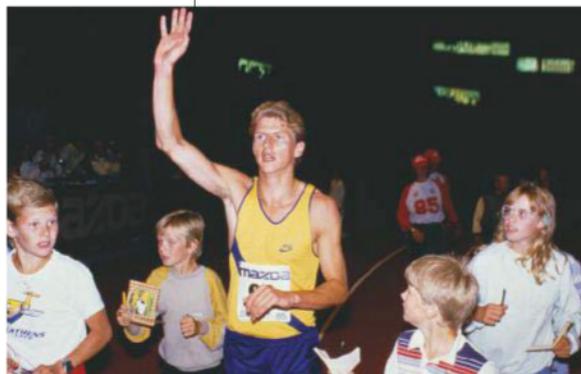
We're in another running boom and I love it. The first London Marathon in 1981 was on the BBC and convinced a lot of people to take up running. A woman called Madge Sharples, who was 64, was on and people at home were going, if she can do it, so can I. When I was a kid, you'd get laughed at running around the streets of South Tyneside. There were estates you didn't dare run through because you'd get shouted at or stones thrown at you. Now you can't move for runners. I think that's brilliant.

Steve Cram is commentating for the BBC at the Olympics in Paris
Interview: Adrian Lobb @adey70

THE SCARIEST THING OF MY LIFE WAS WHEN SOMEONE SAID I WAS GOING TO REPLACE DAVID COLEMAN. HOW DO I FOLLOW THAT?

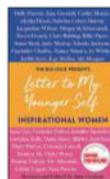


► 1982 Parents Bill and Maria (above) and Steve (right) show off some of his trophies



▲ 1985 Surrounded by autograph hunters in Oslo after setting a new world record of 3 mins 46.32 secs

► 2016 With Daley Thompson for an event at Royal Garden Hotel in aid of children's charity Cocco



Put our book of conversations with inspirational women on your reading pile. Bringing together some of the most insightful, revealing and entertaining interviews to have appeared in The Big Issue over the last 15 years, *Letter to My Younger Self: Inspirational Women* is edited by Jane Graham and out now.

ADVERTISING

THE BIG ISSUE GUIDE TO...

ART EXHIBITIONS

A selection of current and forthcoming exhibitions and installations at art galleries across the UK this summer

NICOLA BEALING: SEA AND DEAD-MAN'S FINGERS

4 May–02 November 2024

Newlyn Art Gallery, New Road, Newlyn, TR18 5PZ

Sea is a series of figurative paintings developed over 10 years from 2013 and shown together for the first time. The series started with the premise of a single figure largely submerged in the sea,



and the contrast between what is visible, and what might be going on under the surface. Dead-man's Fingers is a series of paintings and suspended sculptural works that take their title from the common name of a coral – *Alcyonium digitatum*. Apart from a few teeth and finger-bones, there is little human presence in the paintings.

newlynartgallery.co.uk

STEPHEN: A NEW FEATURE FILM BY MELANIE MANCHOT

4 May–02 November 2024

The Exchange, Princes Street, Penzance, TR18 2NL



A hybrid narrative fiction/documentary structured as a film-within-a-film, *Stephen* is presented in galleries as a multi-channel video installation. The film and installation bring together a small cast of

professional actors with 20 participants from a Liverpool addiction recovery centre, including the lead actor Stephen Giddings. The gallery presentations include an installation of multiple CRT televisions introducing the characters, and the people who play them, through a series of monologues and auditions, before viewers enter the cinematic screening of *Stephen*, with a 78-minute running time.

newlynartgallery.co.uk

TERENCE COVENTRY: FARMER – SCULPTOR

29 June–07 September 2024

Gallery Pangolin, 9 Chalford Ind. Estate, Chalford, GL6 8NT



An Insider's View. Exploring both fields of the artist's world and how it defined him. It includes sculpture in fabricated steel, sterling silver and bronze, showing alongside the artist's drawings and prints.

gallery-pangolin.com

ADÉBAYO BOLAJI : IN PRAISE OF BEAUTY

29 June–29 September 2024

Arnolfini, 16 Narrow Quay, Bristol BS1 4QA



For summer 2024 Arnolfini welcomes audiences into the kaleidoscopic and multidisciplinary world of Adébayo Bolaji with his solo exhibition, *In Praise of Beauty*.

First originating at New Art Exchange, Nottingham, and reimagined for Arnolfini, *In Praise of Beauty*, takes over the first-floor galleries and is accompanied by a programme of live events and workshops.

arnolfini.org.uk

NINGI OMUKU : THE DANCE OF PEOPLE AND THE NATURAL WORLD

29 June–29 September 2024

Arnolfini, 16 Narrow Quay, Bristol BS1 4QA

Arnolfini invites audiences to journey into the lush landscapes of Nigerian artist Nengi Omuku's exhibition *The Dance of People and the Natural World*. Her work immerses human figures within nature, highlighting the relationship between both individual and collective thought and ideas of belonging.



arnolfini.org.uk

To advertise on this page contact: alex.hobbis@canopymedia.co.uk

BOOKS

Our Indigenous community wants respect, but don't try to save us
Nemonte Nenquimo

SCREEN

My brief stint as a Power Ranger has had an unexpected afterlife
Nic Sampson

INTERVIEW

Playing Veruca Salt in *Willy Wonka* led to a lot of sweet moments
Julie Dawn Cole

ON HOLIDAY

A family trip to France brings about rainy ruminations over parenting
Sam Delaney

CULTURE

**ART****FAUN***By Assad*

"My brain's not working properly, or feels that way, so I make things, distract it, keep it occupied," explains Assad, who submits his artworks via London homeless charity the 240Project. "I work with whatever's at hand: found objects, clay, plaster, wood, forcing them together, making them into a single cohesive entity. I'm not trained, just determined.

"I am inspired equally by Somalia, where I was born, and London, where I live now. The figures I make can be quite ugly, brutal. It's not intentional, but does reflect my past. Maybe they'll get prettier over time."

240project.org.uk

Books

By Paul Whitelaw

REVIEWS

Going underground

The esteemed music journalist Simon Reynolds once said, “Indie music as we know it was invented in Scotland.” He wasn’t wrong, and here’s the hefty oral history to prove it. **Postcards from Scotland**, curated by filmmaker Grant McPhee, director of the essential Scottish music documentaries *Big Gold Dream* and *Teenage Superstars*, is the definitive account of a seminal period in pop history.

This is the story of a hugely creative and incestuous scene nominally led by the likes of The Jesus and Mary Chain, Teenage Fanclub, BMX Bandits, The Pastels, Primal Scream and The Shop Assistants. But to McPhee’s credit, there are no footnotes or also-rans here – practically every Scottish indie act who released a record during this fertile epoch receives their due. The circle wouldn’t be complete without contributions from The Jasmine Minks or Meat Whiplash, or even Nocturnal Vermin and their bizarrely prescient ‘tribute’ to budding MSP classmate John Swinney.

It’s a Byzantine saga involving hundreds of musicians and ever-changing line-ups, so much so it sometimes resembles Monty Python’s *Rock Notes* sketch. McPhee – who provides context via clear-eyed chapter intros and outros – is aware of this, drily noting at one point that the sprawling rock family tree he’s dealing with “would send shivers down Pete Frame’s spine”.

Nevertheless, he makes compelling sense of it all. A labour of love, it’s a sometimes funny, sometimes bittersweet tribute to a gawky generation of like-minded dreamers who fully embraced the post-punk DIY ethos. They all left something indelible behind.

A resonant ode to the gay pop revolutionaries who ruled the UK charts

during a particularly bleak era for marginalised sectors of society, **1984: The Year Pop Went Queer** by music journalist Ian Wade does what all the best pop books do – it celebrates the music and the artists who made it while doubling up as an acute piece of social history. Wade argues that 1984 was a pivotal year in terms of gay visibility within the mainstream. This, of course, was the year of Frankie Goes to Hollywood, co-architects with producer Trevor Horn of punk-disco behemoth *Relax* – in Wade’s words, “possibly the most homosexual record ever made”.

Frankie revelled in uncompromising provocation via their tough underground gay club scene aesthetic. The Village People’s leatherman looked positively quaint by comparison.

It’s a recurring theme throughout the book – in 1984, many queer artists finally felt able to express themselves openly while selling loads of amazing, accessible pop records to gay and straight audiences alike.

Lest we forget, this remarkable feat, this bold, subversive political statement, took place against a hostile backdrop of virulent homophobia drummed up by Thatcher’s government and its right-wing tabloid media lackeys. The tragedy and injustice of the Aids epidemic informs every single page of this saga. It also explicitly foreshadows the bigotry directed towards the trans community in this supposedly enlightened day and age. Frankie aside, Wade devotes comprehensive chapters to key zeitgeist-defining heroes such as Wham!, Pet Shop Boys and Bronski Beat, as well as LGBT+ allies Cyndi Lauper and Madonna. He also writes sensitively about the gay pop stars who worried – for various, entirely understandable reasons – about the repercussions of coming out publicly.

A warm, perceptive, frank and funny writer, Wade states his case persuasively in this rather marvellous book. Pop, as he so rightly declares, is important.

Paul Whitelaw is a TV and music critic
@paulwhitelaw

Practically every Scottish indie act who released a record during this fertile epoch receives their due



Postcards from Scotland: *Scottish Independent Music 1983-1995* by Grant McPhee is out now (Omnibus Press, £25)



1984: *The Year Pop Went Queer* by Ian Wade is out now (Bonnier Books, £22)

TOP 5

Revelatory children’s books

Selected by Oksana Lushchevska
Ukrainian children’s author, translator and poet

1 **The Adventures of Tom Sawyer**

by Mark Twain

Reading this book in the 1990s in Ukraine, when all childhood was still commanded by the strict discipline dogma, meant I could see the unusual and authentic nature of children.

2 **Скільки / How Many?**

by Halyna Kyrypa, illustrated by Olha Havrylova

Growing up in Post-Soviet times, I felt ashamed to ask questions. But when I read this, I thought: “This is the book I will always read aloud to children.”

3 **The Turnip** retold by Ivan Franko

This is a Ukrainian folk tale about the ripe turnip and how one family tries to pull it out of the ground. It was powerful to me because it showed me that even the smallest acts can sometimes be the most important.

4 **James and the Giant Peach**

by Roald Dahl

The major object of the book is a representation of an unusual threat. I re-read this book when Russia started the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the US media started to show instructions on what to do in the case of a nuclear threat.

5 **Everything Goes by Two**

by Rose Lagercrantz

This is about the survival of Lagercrantz’s Jewish ancestors. It raises the question of hardship through the lens of a childish stance.

Silent Night, My Astronaut: The First Days (and Nights) of the War in Ukraine by



Oksana Lushchevska, illustrated by Kateryna Stepanishcheva is out on 15 August (Andersen Press, £12.99)

ESSAY

We don't want you to save us. Just hear us

By Nemonte Nenquimo

As a child, I often heard the elders in my community say that the less you know about something, the easier it is to destroy it. I wondered what it was that I didn't understand, and what was in danger because of what I didn't know. It would take me years to realise that they were talking about us, our forest, our way of life, that we are the ones constantly on the verge of being destroyed by those who don't understand us.

I am a Waorani Indigenous woman from the Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest. My life, my language, my culture and people and the territory that gives us life are all under threat.

Illegal miners want to poison our rivers and blow up our hillsides to leach gold dust from rocks. Illegal loggers want to build roads into our forests and cut down the trees. The Ecuadorian government and multinational oil companies want to drill deep into our lands and pump out every last drop of oil, the blood of our ancestors, killing the land and the

rivers and everything that depends on them, including us, in the process.

And the urban, industrialised world wants to continue buying and selling their comforts and conveniences, pumping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, heating up the planet, and pushing the entire Amazon – as well as other vulnerable regions – to a point of no return.

I see these dangers everywhere and recall the words of my elders. The miners, loggers, oil barons and beneficiaries of hyper consumerism must be completely ignorant of what life is like in the Amazon rainforest – the most biodiverse place on Earth and the world's largest terrestrial carbon sink – and of what people like me and the hundreds of other Indigenous cultures in the Amazon are like. That must be why it is so easy for them to destroy what gives us life.

Over the past decade I and many others like me have tried to bridge this gap in understanding. We have participated in interviews with anthropologists, journalists and documentary filmmakers. We have travelled and spoken in all kinds of international panels and conferences.

We created an Indigenous mapping project to show the government and the oil companies that our territory is not some vast empty green space on their map. In our cartography, the forest is full of life: it is where we find our grocery stores and hardware stores, our pharmacies and temples, our burial grounds and old villages, our beauty salons, cultural centres and art



We Will Not Be Saved: A Memoir of Hope and Resistance in the Amazon Rainforest by Nemonte Nenquimo with Mitch Anderson, is out now (Headline, £20)

supply shops, our living history. Our stories and memories all reside there.

We had to take the Ecuadorian government to court to make them listen to us, look at our maps and ensure that our rights to decide what happens in our territories are respected. We won in the courts against the interests of the big oil companies, and protected hundreds of thousands of hectares of Indigenous territory and pristine rainforest. And yet the dangers and threats persist.

The book I wrote with my husband Mitch took us a few years because our stories take time. I come from an oral storytelling culture: we talk in the mornings, we talk late into the night, we talk as we walk through the forest, while we work and as we share meals. I told Mitch my stories over many years and then, after a time, Mitch began taking notes, recording some conversations.

He didn't listen like an anthropologist does. He listened differently; he listened with love and respect and so I decided to trust him with my story.

After more than a year of taking notes and making recordings, Mitch began to write. Sometimes he would excitedly read me his latest pages at night. Often, he would tell them back to me. An editor recently described Mitch as my translator. In a sense, he does do some cultural translation between the Waorani world and the English-speaking world. But he did not translate my book: we wrote my book together. In that sense, our book is itself an embodied offering from the desire to understand and communicate, the desire to respect and not do harm.

Which leads me to the book's title: **We Will Not Be Saved**. For centuries, the people who have done the most harm to my people and the forests where we live, are the very people who have claimed to save us. They said they brought us salvation and the word of God. But they brought disease, slavery, murder, dispossession and racism.

Later they came back, with bulldozers and drills instead of horses and bibles, saying they would save us from "poverty", a condition we never knew before their arrival.

People must not understand what they destroy so easily. We don't want to be saved – which has always been code for conquered or eliminated – we want to be respected. And we hope that our book can play some role, even a small one, in strengthening understanding and respect, and protecting our lives and the rainforest we call home.

@nemonte.nenquimo

Nemonte Nenquimo, Waorani leader from the Ecuadorian Amazon, alongside other members of the Indigenous-led Ceibo Alliance



Screen

NIC SAMPSON

My life as a yellow Power Ranger



When I was a little kid in New Zealand, one of my absolute favourite shows was *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. I would sit in front of the TV after school enthralled by the colours, the karate and the deafening '90s guitars. It was a weird show frankly; a bunch of American teens used magical coins to transform into spandex-clad Deliveroo drivers and fight rubber monsters sent down from the moon. I adored it. I wanted to be a Power Ranger more than anything. And then a few years later I got my wish.

When I was 18 I was cast as the Yellow Ranger in the 14th season of *Power Rangers*. It was a big surprise, partly because I had no idea the show was even still going, let alone that it was being filmed in my own backyard. *Power Rangers* was banned from our TVs during the '90s for being 'too violent', then ironically production moved to New Zealand in the early 2000s to make more. Take that, concerned parents!

But it was also unexpected because the Power Rangers I remembered were all muscled Americans with granite jawlines and sick martial arts skills. I was a scrawny ginger boy who had spent high school studying improv and still had one of my baby teeth. Surely I wasn't Ranger material? It was then explained to me that in this season, one of the Power Rangers was going to be a little nerdy guy who was obsessed with fantasy and magic. Turns out I was born to play the role!

Power Rangers Mystic Force (the 14th season was basically *Power Rangers* meets Harry Potter) filmed in Auckland during 2005. As far as I was concerned I had hit the big time. I lived in a hotel and got chauffeured around the city, just like Macauley Culkin in *Home Alone 2!*

On set I had a chair with my name on it and someone would bring me hot chocolates whenever I asked, just like Macauley Culkin on the set of *Home Alone 2*, probably!



(Left) Sampson relives the experience in his *Yellow Power Ranger* comedy show; (below on the left) with his *Mystic Force Power Rangers* gang in 2008

Filming the show was a blur. One day we would be flying on a green screen dragon, the next we would be fighting a venus flytrap DJ that turned people into vampires

Filming the show was a blur. One day we would be flying on a green screen dragon, the next we would be fighting a venus flytrap DJ that turned people into vampires, the next we would be trying to reverse an evil wish that had drained all the colour out of the world. *Power Rangers* is filmed at a fast pace, and all the footage of robots fighting is just bought from the Japanese version of the show. As a result a lot of the time we honestly had no idea what was going on. I don't know how good a performance I gave, but I did get really good at jumping in the air in slow motion while an enormous fireball exploded behind me.

Then after six months of work, filming was done. Production started preparing for the 15th season of the show, which would have an all-new cast, and nobody in New Zealand even knew *Power Rangers Mystic Force* existed. It felt like I had just taken a weird summer job and now it was time to get back to normal life. I moved into a normal flatshare, got a job at a bakery (turns out if you live at a hotel for six months Culkin-style, it will eat into your TV star money in a big way) and got on with my life. *Power Rangers* became something I felt a bit silly about.

Years later, in 2019, I moved to the UK – perfect timing to do so! – and out of the blue I got an invite to appear at the Coventry Comic Con as one of their celebrity guests. I thought celebrity was a bit of a stretch, but I was always curious to go to a Comic Con and supposedly *Power Rangers* had this amazing fanbase all over the world. Plus, who could pass up a free trip to Coventry. I got a lift from the train station by one of the volunteers, who asked me to film a video for his daughter. “Is she a fan of *Power Rangers*?” I asked. “I dunno!” he replied cheerfully, “Maybe!”

The experience of the Coventry Comic Con was very surreal. It was held in a convention centre that was also booked that day for a wedding, so you'd be wandering the corridors

passing people dressed as Pikachu or Mario, and then turn a corner to see the bride waiting nervously to walk down the aisle. The big drawcards for the convention were a woman who had played one of the little girls in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and Hunter from *Gladiators*, but as I took my seat next to a stack of printed-out pictures of me as an 18-year-old in spandex, a man stepped up to me. “Hey I recognise you,” I braced myself for the onslaught of praise and admiration. “Were you eating alone at the TGI Fridays last night?”

In the end I met a few lovely *Power Rangers* fans, signed a few photos, and shared a taxi ride with the guy who voiced the robot dog in *Doctor Who*. All in all a good time at my first convention, even if I was pretty sure I didn't want to make a career out of it, no matter how viable the robot dog made it sound.

Then a few months later I was invited to another convention, this time slightly further than Coventry. It was the annual Rangerstop Convention in Orlando, Florida, held specifically for *Power Rangers* fans and *Power Rangers* stars.

It was a three-day event held in a big hotel, and I remember the first morning walking through the lobby and people were staring at me. It was like I had murdered someone and was covered in blood. But no, this is what it feels like to be a real celebrity, I guess? Someone yelled out my character's name, “Chip! It's you!” And a



teenage girl suddenly crash-tackled me with a hug, her parents trailing behind, phones out and filming.

That weekend I got to meet hundreds of *Power Rangers* fans, old and young, many who had travelled half-way across the country to be there. There were lots of *Power Rangers* actors there too, including some of my old pals from *Mystic Force*, but I quickly realised the convention wasn't really about us. It was a place for friends to catch up, to connect and share their love of the show and all things nerdy. I saw a lot of *Power Rangers* tattoos. I listened to one guy's *Power Rangers*-themed death metal band. Another gave me a handmade replica of my character's helmet. One fan got the Red Ranger from my season to help propose to his girlfriend in front of our tables.

One boy would come by our table every hour or so to breathlessly tell us facts about *Power Rangers Mystic Force*. We literally couldn't get a word in. At the end of the weekend, a lady came over and told me she was the boy's grandmother, and they'd driven for two days to get to the convention. “He's very chatty,” I said. She got emotional, and told me that this was the most she'd ever seen him talk.

“He never talks,” she said, “Never. Not even to his family. But he loves *Power Rangers*. I watch it with him and that's how we spend time together.” I was floored.

I knew *Power Rangers* was popular, but until that convention I never grasped quite how much it means to some people.

After that weekend I felt very lucky to be a small part of it, even if it was just a weird summer job I did when I was 18. It also felt great to be back in a hotel for a few days. I just really feel at home in them, ya know?

Nic Sampson will be performing *Yellow Power Ranger* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe until 25 August at Assembly Roxy, Outside (17.45pm)
@NicSampson

INTERVIEW

Julie Dawn Cole



WILLY WONKA AND THE FEAR OF AI

By Steven MacKenzie

Julie Dawn Cole was given a golden ticket when she starred in the 1971 classic *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. She played spoiled brat Veruca Salt (pictured above in red), judged a bad egg after making it very clear that she wants a golden goose that lays golden eggs – and wants one NOW.

Last year, *Willy Wonka* shot back into public consciousness after a severely underwhelming live

experience in Glasgow went viral around the world. A musical based on the debacle opens at the Edinburgh Fringe, featuring original ‘Sad Oompa Loompa’ Kirsty Paterson, whose forlorn expression and cheap costume turned her into an instant meme, and with Cole, now 66, as narrator. “Here was me, planning my retirement, enjoying my garden and my grandchildren, and this has happened,” she says.

BIG ISSUE: What did you think when you heard about the disastrous *Willy’s Chocolate Experience* in Glasgow?

JULIE DAWN COLE: I think at the time I was at a chocolate expo in America.

Where else would you be?

JDC: That’s where I live my life, of course. People were saying, ‘Oh my god, have you seen it? Oh, these poor people. Are you anything to do with it?’ No, no... nothing to do with me. People were ripped off, the police were called, it was horrible.

How does it go from that to a show at the Fringe?

JDC: The producer Richard Kraft who I have known for years said, I’m going to write a show about this. They were recording tracks and he shared them with me. And I was thinking, Oh, they’re rather good. Then he asked me to record a publicity video because he wanted to take the show to Edinburgh. I said, I’ll try and get up there to see you. And he said, well, could you come along and narrate? I like the music. It’s very witty. It’s not about *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, it’s about your 15 minutes of fame and being involved in jobs that turn out to be disasters.

What job was that for you?

JDC: It was a terrible pantomime. It was the worst job I ever did.

Oh no it wasn’t.

JDC: Oh yes it was. I was playing Cinderella and it was suggested that we should cut the part where Cinderella meets Prince Charming in the forest. Well, then we have no plot, do we? The opening matinee ran for four hours and the evening’s audience were coming in before we’d finished the first performance. It was terrible.

Does the Glasgow fiasco represent what happens if you rely on AI and cease to value pure imagination?

JDC: Absolutely. There is a serious point. I have conversations with my friends about the fear of creativity being stifled by AI and ChatGPT. How do we know what to believe any more? The AI-generated script for *Willy’s* fiasco shows that maybe we’re not ready for AI just yet. It is a warning. This nonsense is what can happen if you give it free rein. So it gives me heart that actually there is no substitute for creativity and art.

Is it true your big number in the film, *I Want It Now*, was shot on your 13th birthday?

JDC: It was shot over five days I think. But the final bit going down the chute was my 13th birthday.

It seems symbolic of what happens to some kids when they become teens.

JDC: You have an adorable child, they go into their bedroom and the next morning come out a troll.

Do you think we see more Verucas now?

JDC: I do think, because of media and reality TV, there is a generation that is more entitled. I go to Comic Cons and people come up and say, “My husband calls me Veruca because I want this and I want that.” It’s tongue in cheek, but we do live in a world where everybody wants everything instantly. I’ve got three grandchildren now. They will not be allowed to behave like Veruca.

Are they fans of the film?

JDC: The eldest two – they’re almost five and almost three – have watched bits because I thought I need to educate them. When their mummy was little, she told her teacher at school that her mummy was very spoiled and got everything she wanted, which is not what you want your kid’s teacher to believe about you.

In June, you posted pictures of you with Peter Ostrum who played Charlie Bucket and Paris Themmen who was Mike Teavee at the White House. How did you get that ticket?

JDC: We were invited to be guests at the National Press Club in Washington and they said, “Would you like to go around the White House?” So we did. It was wonderful, seeing secret service men behaving like kids when they’re talking into their sleeves going, “Hey guys, the Wonka kids are coming through!” It was very funny. What a great privilege. This is the joy that Wonka has brought to my life. It’s opened a lot of crazy opportunities.

It’s been a bit of a golden goose?

JDC: If there was one movie to be in, this was a good one.

Willy’s Candy Spectacular: A Musical Parody plays at the Pleasance Dome as part of the Edinburgh Fringe, 9–26 August @stevenmackenzie



Over 50 years later, Julie Dawn Cole (left) is going back to the chocolate factory; (opposite) the cast of the original 1971 film

SAM DELANEY IS ON HOLIDAY



It was cloudy all week. I’d shelled out the dough for a villa in Brittany months ago. I’d packed up the car, checked the tyre pressure, caught the overnight ferry from Portsmouth and driven for hours to get to our Airbnb. And yet, for seven grey days, we barely got a glimpse of the sun.

Still, we played cards and watched TV and read our books and enjoyed a few nice meals. We managed to have a laugh and relax which are very much my priorities when it comes to holidays. Sunshine and heat are pleasant in small doses but seriously overrated components of a vacation. High temperatures make me boring, lazy and irritable. At least grey skies feel familiar, offsetting the otherwise alienating business of being abroad.

My daughter didn’t seem happy. “Morning!” I would beam at her every day across the breakfast table. She would roll her eyes and point at the skies accusingly, as if it was all my fault. In the car, she commandeered the playlist and imposed back-to-back Lana Del Rey all week. I took it to be some sort of protest. I mean, I love a bit of Lana now and again but it’s hardly family singalong *Club Tropicana* stuff is it?

I am constantly judging my own parental performance: am I caring enough, understanding enough, hands-on enough and yet, at the same time, laid back and fun enough? Am I a role model? Am I generous enough? Do I give them enough nice things?

I am aware this makes me sound like I have an insane Daddy Warbucks complex. I know that aspiring to lavish my offspring with ruinous pampering and material indulgences is ridiculous. But what can I tell you? I am a product of a deranged consumerist culture, shaped like everyone else by cynical marketing, TV, Hollywood movies and a childhood spent pouring over the Argos catalogue like it was a holy scripture.

Not that I’m saying society is entirely to blame. I am, independent of environmental factors, a bit of a twat.

On holiday I have a particular tendency to critique myself harshly. I allow a single week of the year to symbolise my entire fathering record. Am I giving these kids a good life? Am I providing them with precious memories they will treasure forever? Or will they be the sort of kids who one day tell stories about how miserable and stingy their childhoods were because their old man was a pathetic schlub who couldn’t even predict that Brittany in late July would be all drizzly and bleak?

For the record, in case my parents are reading, I absolutely loved every single holiday they took me on as a kid. I have particularly fond memories of my mum taking us to a caravan park on the Isle of Wight in the Easter of 1985, where we drank tea and watched Dennis Taylor beat Steve Davis in the snooker final on a small portable telly. My brother Cas, who was 17, got so bored by day three that he stole the rental car we had arrived in and tore around the campsite, terrorising holidaymakers and knocking down laundry lines. I found it thrilling.

My dad took us on very different holidays: rented houses in France or Italy, with their own pools, where he would encourage us to eat the local food while disapproving of our council estate diction. We didn’t live with him,

I am a product of a deranged consumerist culture, shaped by a childhood spent poring over the Argos catalogue like it was a holy scripture

so weeks away in his company often felt like a performance, in which we had to be the kids he might have hoped us to be: polite, sophisticated, a bit posh. I never quite pulled that off. But who was I to complain? I had an all-expenses paid fortnight in the sun, with Oranгина on tap and all the olives I could eat. I knew he loved us and wanted us to have a nice time. And we did.

Parenthood is the stuff that happens in the little moments, day to day: the hugs in front of the telly, the late-night chats, the inside jokes you share over WhatsApp, the support you give each other when times are rough. Buying stuff is neither here nor there. As a son, I know all that. As a dad, I sometimes need to remind myself.

Read more at samdelaney.substack.com @DelaneyMan



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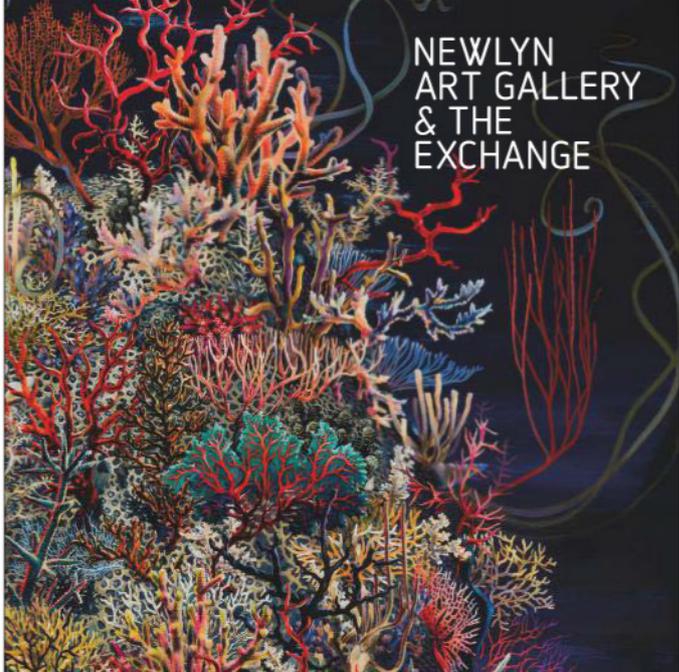
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Music

Matt Griffiths

NORTH SOUND

We need help to nurture our next generation of northern stars

From The Beatles, Oasis, Corinne Bailey Rae and, more recently, Youth Music Awards winner English Teacher, many of Britain's most-loved artists originate from the north of England. The region emerged as a musical powerhouse for one important reason: in cities with strong industrial backgrounds, like Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield, music became a form of expression and escape.

For aspiring musicians, there was once a much wider array of physical spaces to perform in the region – from local pubs and youth clubs to the legendary Hacienda in Manchester. These venues provided crucial platforms and access to music. Sadly, they have been in sharp decline nationwide in recent years. Meanwhile, labels like Factory Records in Manchester played a pivotal role in the rise of bands such as Joy Division and Happy Mondays.

Now, this legendary music scene is in crisis. As funding across the music sector reaches a historic low, many grassroots organisations fostering creativity and musicality in young people are under threat, with 88% of Youth Music-funded projects reporting concerns about the impact of austerity and the cost of living crisis on young people, together with the workforce supporting them. Funding is being diverted to cover basics such as food, shelter and everyday essentials, meaning that music and creative activity are being sidelined.

This is highlighted in Youth Music's new *Sound of the Next Generation* (SONG) report, which found that almost a quarter (24%) of young people in the north of England don't believe that all children and young people have equal access to musical opportunities in the UK

The report, published to mark our 25th anniversary, looks at young people's relationship with music and found that only half (52%) of young people in the north of England see themselves as musical in comparison to 62% of people in the south. This drop in young people feeling musical, with a decrease in those learning their craft and a slim minority performing in public, has only been worsened by the economic shocks and the bleak social-political landscape.

Our research polled 2,100 children and young people across the country, finding that those in Yorkshire (49%), the North-West (57%) and the North-East (52%) are among the least likely to feel supported when making music.

In addition, only 25% of young people from the north of England have recently played their music in public, and just 2% had the chance to play at a local music venue. The findings further emphasise the rapid deterioration of opportunities in the region that was once the musical powerhouse of the UK.

A decline in young people playing musical instruments is contributing

The north of England has always had to punch above its weight to be heard, which has led to innovations we haven't seen elsewhere

to an overall decrease in musicality. Young people in the north-east, home of cultural icons such as Sam Fender, are feeling a disconnect when it comes to making music. Young people in the region are nearly a fifth (18%) less likely to be playing an instrument than those in London.

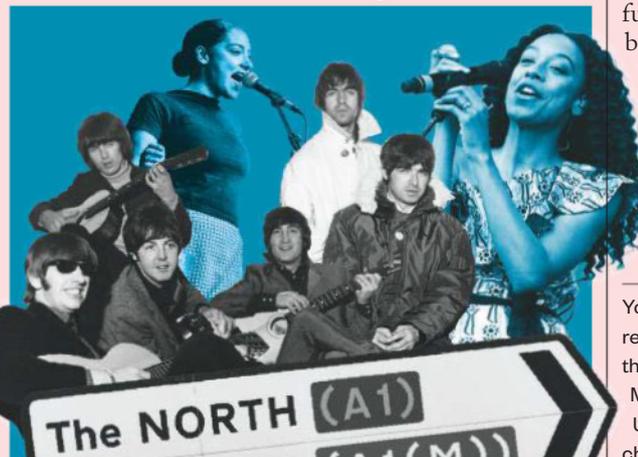
The north of England has always had to punch above its weight to be heard, which has led to innovations we haven't seen elsewhere. Several northern cities have put music at the heart of economic and cultural strategy: for example, Manchester and Liverpool establishing themselves as 'music cities'. As well as benefitting the local scene, such initiatives aim to stem the 'brain drain' of young people having to leave their local area to pursue their career goals.

The Northern Music Network is a cross-regional partnerships of grassroots organisations who have come together to provide a united voice to support the music sector in the north of England. This new way of working together has great potential to spark further innovation and give under-represented talent the platform it deserves. Let's be clear, this crisis is not due to a lack of musical and creative talent. However, grassroots organisations are having to focus on short-term survival, restricting their ability to plan for the longer term. They need support.

As a charity, we continue to take action to address regional imbalances, with over 85% of our grant funding awarded outside London, but there is only so much we can do.

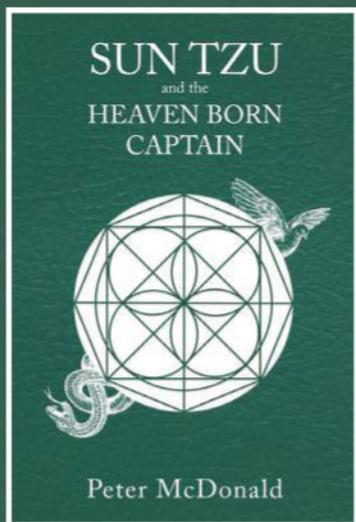
The new Labour government must pledge to prioritise funding organisations outside of London to equalise young people's access to music opportunities. If we don't act now, we could be missing out on a whole generation of regional talent.

Northern powerhouses: (Clockwise from below) Corinne Bailey Rae, Oasis, The Beatles, English Teacher



You can read more in the full 2024 SONG report at youthmusic.org.uk/sound-of-the-next-generation-2024

Matt Griffiths is CEO of Youth Music, the UK's leading young people's music charity @YouthMusic



Numerous books have been written about Sun Tzu and his masterpiece, Art of War. However, none have the scope and perspective of Peter McDonald's volume...

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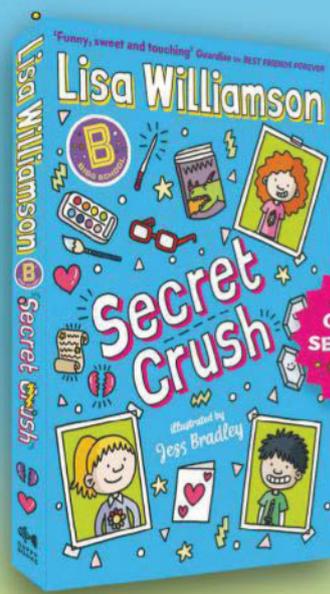
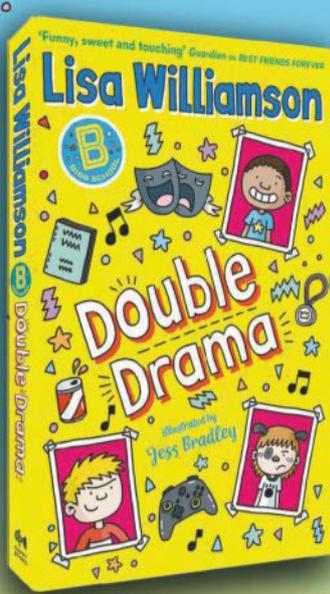
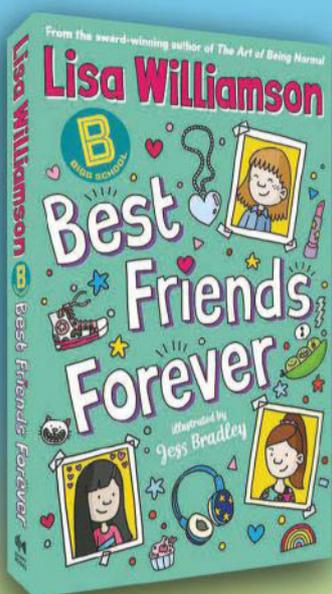
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Human Writes is a long-established organisation founded for the purpose of befriending prisoners on Death Row in the United States through letter-writing. Based in the UK, with an experienced team of state co-ordinators, our organisation is well-known and internationally respected. Around 2300 prisoners are currently held in harsh, Death Row conditions in the US (many in total solitary confinement for 20-30 years or more). Letters from the outside world are often their only contact while awaiting their execution dates. Some states now permit correspondence using secure email systems for penfriends who prefer to communicate that way. In the words of a Death Row prisoner just prior to his execution *"My execution date has now been set and I know I will soon die at the hands of the State, but to have had someone reach out for all these years and take my spirit out of this grey concrete box through their letters has meant more than I can say."*

If you would like to know more about joining our organisation or becoming a penfriend, please contact **Human Writes** at

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Contact: Nicole Burchett, Project and Development Manager for the Mental Health Manifesto Project (Mind Our Future), nicole@singleparentswellbeing.com



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Hope St Mellons (legal name Here For Good Collective, charity no 1202371) is a volunteer-led, community development charity based at and managing The Beacon Centre, an independent community centre in St Mellons.

VOLUNTEER AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

Contract: 12-month fixed term
 (continuation subject to availability of funds)

Hours: 30hrs/week

Salary: £34,086 (£27,269 pro rata)

Location: Beacon Centre, St Mellons, Cardiff

Start date: 01 October 2024

Closing date: 21 August 2024

You will work with the Director to deliver our commitment to invest in volunteering; helping to support, sustain and develop work with volunteers at the Beacon Centre and support volunteer-led community development across Hope St Mellons.

Please contact info@hopestmellons.org for the application pack for both roles.

RECEPTION AND ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT

Contract: 12-month fixed term
 (continuation subject to availability of funds)

Hours: 22.5hrs/week (flexible hours available)

Salary: £25,158 (£15,095 pro rata)

Location: Beacon Centre, St Mellons, Cardiff

Start date: 01 October 2024

Closing date: 21 August 2024

You will be responsible for the smooth running of our Reception area. You will support the Director with a variety of administrative tasks, including managing the bookings diary and general enquiries, and offering clerical support to our groups.

To advertise here contact

Tim Deeks

tim.deeks@canopymedia.co.uk

Please help us find

Leigh White - Gorton, Manchester



Leigh White has been missing from Gorton since 16 June 2024. He was 58 at the time of his disappearance.

Leigh, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support, in confidence, whenever you feel ready.

Gillian Affleck - Patcham, Sussex



This week is Gillian Affleck's birthday. Gillian was 50 when she went missing from Patcham on 24 August 2017.

Gillian, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support, in confidence, whenever you feel ready.

Durrell Cooper - Barnet, London



This week marks 21 years since Durrell Cooper went missing. Durrell was 25 when he was last seen in Barnet on 6 August 2003.

Durrell, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support, in confidence, whenever you feel ready.

Paul Johnson - St Andrews, Scotland



This week is the birthday of Paul Johnson, who was 74 when he went missing from St Andrews on 15 September 2021.

Paul, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support, in confidence, whenever you feel ready.

Patricia Duncan - Buckie, Banffshire



This week is Patricia Duncan's birthday. Patricia was 51 when she went missing from Buckie on 15 November 2002.

Patricia, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support, in confidence, whenever you feel ready.

Anton Fernando - Islington, London



This week is Anton Fernando's birthday. Anton was 35 when he went missing from Islington on 14 June 2023.

Anton, we are here for you when you are ready; we can listen, talk you through what help you need, pass a message on for you and help you to be safe. Please call or text 116 000.

Call or text **116 000**
Email **116000@missingpeople.org.uk**
It's Free and Confidential

Missing People would like to thank The Big Issue for publicising vulnerable missing people on this page.

To help Missing People bring them back to safety text FIND to 70660* to donate £5.

Our free 116 000 number is supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

missing people

Registered charity in England and Wales (1020419) and in Scotland (SC047419)

*Texts cost £5 plus network charge. Missing People receives 100% of your donation. Please obtain the bill payer's permission. Missing People will send regular updates via text and may contact you at any time to ask for your contact preference.

www.missingpeople.org.uk/help-us-find

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News from the Intrepid Wool Lady

A Wonderful and Welcome Presence

Regular readers will know that I have occasionally made passing reference to her. However, this blog is dedicated to my guardian angel.

Twice a week I work out at a local gym. If I had to go in to train on my own, I would never get there; such is my lack of motivation. However, Ben, my trainer is always waiting for me, and his anticipation of my arrival is the sole reason why I turn up.

His gym is at the end of a typical street in Yeovil - seriously parked up on both sides of the road. Last week, I was navigating my way down the hill when, from out of nowhere, two very young children just suddenly appeared from between two parked cars and dashed right in front of my car. How I missed hitting them could only be ascribed to the diligence of my guardian angel. I slammed on my breaks as my seatbelt locked across my collarbone. My driver's airbag did not deploy but all the post and my gym kit on the passenger seat flew forward, hitting the windscreen.

Then there was silence as the two children, aged probably 6 and 4 years old froze in front to my car and just stared at me. In my shock, I didn't handle the situation as well as I could have. I got out the car and, ignoring my shaky legs, told them in no uncertain terms that they must never, never, NEVER run into the road without looking and making sure it was safe.

It took me the whole day to calm down. The horror of what might have been kept flashing through my mind. The fact that I had come so close to changing the course of the lives of these children and their families will be something that will stay with me for the rest of my life. I just hope that my guardian angel will also stay with me for the rest of my life.

Jessica



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Puzzles

Crossword

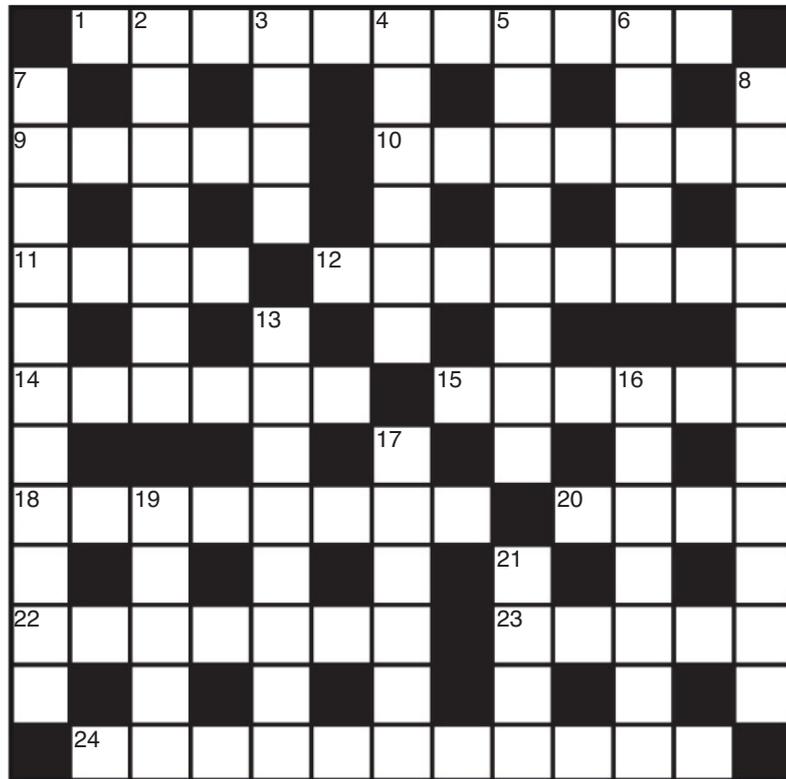
CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

1. It is not easy to act confidently with such an affliction (5,6)
9. More ready to drop? (5)
10. Greek racing round with hidden energy (7)
11. Money despatched, we hear (4)
12. Prepare for take-off (8)
14. The aim of going camping? (6)
15. Symbol of one's standing (6)
18. Joining girl before eleven, useless afterwards (8)
20. Endless deceit of German lady (4)
22. Generosity from a big ship (7)
23. Smell is nothing grim (5)
24. Going presently with this (7,4)

Down

2. Highest speed going to one's head? (7)
3. Spinner shortly used in riotous orgy (4)
4. What is left when one stops smoking (3,3)
5. Unfairness in the acting fraternity (8)
6. In Idaho I still use the elevator (5)
7. Almost in effect (11)
8. Performing with broken nose, rail worker is alert for possible danger (2,4,5)
13. I name wizard who is unskilled (8)
16. Shut down and lose enthusiasm (4,3)
17. Agreement on occupying the same pitch (6)
19. Another Roman lady (5)
21. Going to lose one metal plate (4)



QUICK CLUES

Across

1. Pupil (11)
9. Essential (5)
10. Alight (7)
11. Lurch (4)
12. Hotchpotch (8)
14. Sewing implement (6)
15. French Channel port (6)
18. Far from centre (8)
20. Dread (4)
22. Rubbing out (7)
23. Thick wire (5)
24. A few times (4,2,5)

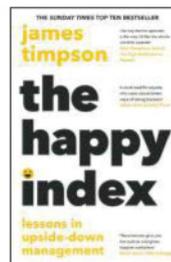
Down

2. Reflector in road (4,3)
3. Greasy (4)
4. Little boy (6)
5. Opening in floor or wall (8)
6. Pack animal (5)
7. Repeatedly (4,3,4)
8. Homeless (inf.) (2,3,6)
13. School break (8)
16. Bitter (7)
17. Wild ass (6)
19. Retinue (5)
21. Sailing barge (4)

Sudoku

The second-toughest Sudoku in Britain

		3		7				
								9
4		2				1		3
				8		5	6	
9			5				4	7
	6				1			
				8	3			
2								
		7		4			8	



Win

The first correct drawn entry to the crossword will win a copy of this week's random book selection, *The Happy Index: Lessons in Upside-Down Management* by James Timpson

Send entries to:
Crossword Competition,
The Big Issue,
43 Bath St,
Glasgow, G2 1HW

ISSUE 1626 ANSWERS

CRYPTIC

- Across** - 2 Pop; 5 Acacia; 7 Larynx; 9 Minesweeper; 10 Vision; 11 System; 13 Tabard; 16 Fresco; 18 Hairdresser; 19 Gramme; 20 Coddle; 21 Roe.
Down - 1 Scampi; 2 Parson; 3 Pliers; 4 Entrée; 6 Cannibalism; 8 Repossessed; 10 Vet; 12 Moo; 14 Ashore; 15 Dodger; 16 Fleece; 17 Circle.

QUICK

- Across** - 2 Tub; 5 Triple; 7 Larger; 9 Cold-hearted; 10 Denier; 11 Heifer; 13 Basalt; 16 Squirrel; 18 Chiroprapist; 19 Open up; 20 Ponder; 21 Ely.
Down - 1 Crèche; 2 Tether; 3 Bleach; 4 Meddle; 6 Palpitation; 8 Retribution; 10 Dab; 12 Rut; 14 Accept; 15 Troupe; 16 Sloppy; 17 Rotten.

9	3	4	8	2	7	5	1	6
1	2	6	4	5	3	8	9	7
5	7	8	9	1	6	2	3	4
6	4	7	5	3	8	9	2	1
2	8	1	7	9	4	3	6	5
3	5	9	1	6	2	7	4	8
8	6	2	3	4	5	1	7	9
4	1	5	2	7	9	6	8	3
7	9	3	6	8	1	4	5	2

MY PITCH

M&S, Lemon Quay, Truro
Monday-Saturday 8.30am-3pm

PUPPY LOVE

Last week we told you that big-hearted Big Issue vendor Nick Cuthbert was raising cash for an animal rescue centre to name his new puppy – it's had a huge response.

The little labrador has already attracted plenty of attention from Big Issue readers and locals in Truro after making her debut on his pitch outside Marks & Spencer at Lemon Quay on 17 July. Nick's campaign captured the attention of customers who helped him raise £1,108 for Last Chance Hotel animal rescue charity in nearby Chacewater.

The charity had helped him get new canine companion Bracken, a puppy to fill the void left by chocolate labrador-mix Bryony, who died at the age of 14 on 21 February.

Nick and Bryony had become an iconic pairing on the Cornish city's streets after meeting when the dog was just seven weeks old. They even bonded with TV star Dermot O'Leary back in 2018 over a shared love of dogs.

Nick described her as the love of his life when she died six months ago. "It's a great legacy for Bryony," he said.

"I'm going to open up a Facebook for the puppy. I should have done it for Bryony because she had such a huge following, when she passed away there was such an outpouring of support. Hopefully Bryony's Big Issue coat will fit Bracken in a couple of years."

Nick's new dog was named by Phil and Ann Raymond, who run a children's ride on Lemon Quay, he told Big Issue.

"He was in tears when he heard I was going to use it," said Nick. "The name Bracken has gone down really well. It's been very tiring – we've been getting up most mornings at five o'clock but it's nice to have a dog in my life again. She's been a big hit on my



Our man Nick Cuthbert raised more than £1,000 for the dog home that helped him get a new puppy



Theresa Joe

Admin · a day ago

All the team would like to say a MASSIVE thank you to Nik Cuthbert for running this fundraiser for The Last Chance Hotel.

Nik Cuthbert and his beautiful lab Bryony are well known in Truro. Sadly Nik lost his much loved girl 6 months ago and has since got himself a new friend little Bracken, Nik decided to run a fundraiser to name the puppy.



Amanda Newlyn

I was soooooo lucky to have a cuddle with this wee girl this morning, Nick looked like a proud dad with his new pup. Happy to donate to the charity as well as they need as much help as possible at the moment.

Enigma Escape Cornwall

Love this 🥰 look forward to seeing her as I walk through Lemon Quay 🥰



Jean Soames

I'm so happy, never will a dog know more love than this man x



Jane MacCoughlan

Absolutely delighted and thrilled to have met Nick's new little pup, she is adorable 🥰

Karen Jane

Amazing. Dogs are such wonderful companions. Bryony was his faithful friend for many years ❤️

Below: Nick with his beloved Bryony, who crossed the rainbow bridge in February

pitch – I couldn't leave her in the caravan on her own anyway – and we've just been hounded with people. Thanks to the people who chipped in to help me get her."

The vendor's idea to raise cash by picking his new puppy's name quickly captured the imagination for many, and has given his own sales a boost too.

"After the one day where I hit £300 [donations] I thought 'Yes, I'm going to hit the £1,000'. I was only selling about 12 magazines a day as most people were doing the donation, but a lot of people have come back to buy the magazine as well afterwards," he said.

"I was going to put my week's sales in if it hadn't hit £1,000, but because I hit £1,100 I haven't done that as it has done amazingly anyway."

Nick passed on the money to Last Chance Hotel, and Theresa

from the centre said the charity want to extend their "massive thanks" to everybody for the donations.

Meanwhile, Nick's new arrival has melted plenty of hearts online.

Jacque Pascoe said: "So happy for you and your new gorgeous pup. You without a dog in Truro just isn't the same."

Tracy Howard added: "We related to each other on our recent sad losses of our dogs. I can't wait to meet the little puppy."

"I was soooooo lucky to have a cuddle with this wee girl this morning, Nick looked like a proud dad with his new pup," said Amanda Newlyn.

Nick is still fundraising for Last Chance Hotel with a box on his pitch. Head to lastchancehotel.org/donate if you would like to donate online
Words: Liam Geraghty



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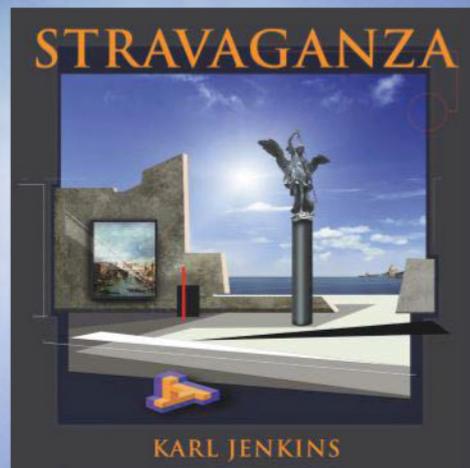
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