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Radzi Chinyanganya
Opportunity knocks

Arsène Wenger
Still gunning for glory

FAT BOY SLIM
Tom Watson

ONCE MET, NEVER FORGOTTEN
Bobby Ball

Kevin Kennedy
Saved by a soap

Aled Jones
Everyday blessings

+

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Mesut Özil.


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Gunnersaurus.


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Captain Sir Tom Moore.

Not Mes-sing around

During this global pandemic it has sometimes been harder staying positive than it is simply testing positive. But while the coronavirus outbreak left many afraid, it also inspired some amazing acts of kindness.

If these uncertain times have taught us anything – alongside us teaching our own children – it's that there are always people looking to help. Captain Tom Moore's extraordinary fundraising efforts raised nearly £33m for the NHS. The war veteran had initially hoped to raise just £1,000 by completing 100 laps of his Bedfordshire garden before his 100th birthday.

In May, at the end of his birthday, his donation page closed at £32,794,701, from more than 1.5m supporters. The message on his page said he was now putting his feet up.

Then there was Marcus Rashford's campaign to end child food poverty as he called for an extension of free school meals to 1.4 million more UK children, and an expansion of charity-led holiday hunger schemes. It saw a tidal wave of kindness as cafes, bars and restaurants rallied to help.

> **'There are things we can do when we cooperate.'**


Marc Atkins/Getty Images

Marcus Rashford.

These are only a few of many extraordinary examples of kindness and compassion, but one of my favourites was when the footballer, Mesut Özil, offered to pay Gunnersaurus' salary, after Arsenal axed their popular dinosaur mascot due to Covid cost-saving measures at the Premiership club.

It turns out the furlough scheme didn't include creatures with scales. It was a cold-blooded decision but the Premiership team decided he was going from Gunnersaurus to Redundasaurus.

Özil wrote on social media: 'I was so sad that Jerry Quy aka our famous & loyal mascot Gunnersaurus an integral part of our club was being made redundant after 27 years. As such, I'm offering to reimburse Arsenal with the full salary of our big green guy as long as I will be an Arsenal player so Jerry can continue his job that he loves so much.'

The German midfielder promised to pay for Gunnersaurus' £350 wages, as well as all the fresh goat meat as he could eat.

We might not be able to raise £33 million on a sponsored walk around the garden, feed millions of children or bring a dinosaur back to life, but there are things we can do when we cooperate and show kindness to our fellow humans.

Along the way, you'll become healthier, happier and more successful. That's a pretty good resolution for 2021. S!



STEVE LEGG

Steve is a British entertainer and motivational speaker. The author of 13 books, Steve launched *Sorted* at the Odyssey Arena, Belfast in 2007. *Sorted* has been voted the world's most wholesome men's magazine, with 100,000 readers in 21 countries.

stevelegg.com

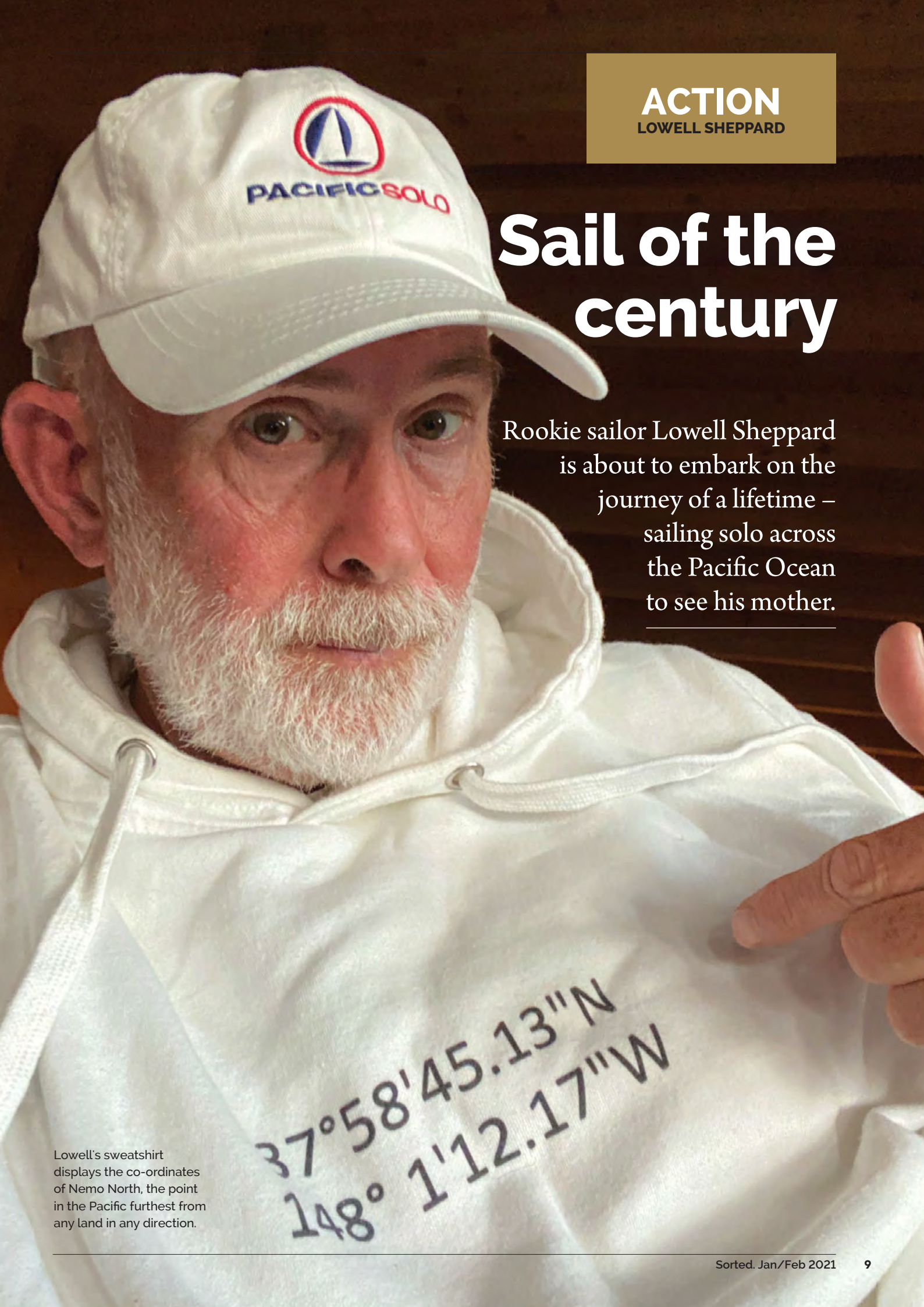
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Sail of the century

Rookie sailor Lowell Sheppard is about to embark on the journey of a lifetime – sailing solo across the Pacific Ocean to see his mother.



Lowell's sweatshirt displays the co-ordinates of Nemo North, the point in the Pacific furthest from any land in any direction.



SV Wahine on the day Lowell bought the boat.

What is this journey all about?

On my sixty-fourth birthday in March 2019, I made three announcements, the final one being that it was my intention to sail solo across the Pacific before turning seventy. That announcement was contingent on the following: finding a successor to run HOPE JP, the sustainable development organization I founded in Japan in 2001. I also needed Navigate 22, an ethics consultancy launched earlier in 2020, to become my primary income source, and I had to find a boat – oh, and to start training.

And was all that clobbered by the coronavirus?

Yes, the world has changed for me just as it has for everyone else. Still, there has been progress. I've got an excellent successor, and he started work in October 2019, but launching Navigate 22 has been far more problematic. It turns out that it is tough to conduct seminars, consult and speak during a pandemic! On the other hand, I found THE BOAT (*SV Wahine!*) a year earlier than expected. This gave me a head-start in gaining much-needed experience. And all these factors mean I can now dedicate most of my time to Pacific Solo.

What made you decide on such an ambitious project?

I have always wanted to sail across an ocean: a boy's romantic dream of adventure and daring. But that was always tempered by fear and a lack of belief I could do it. I also wanted to live on a sailboat, but I gave up on that dream when I moved to Japan, and everything seemed opaque and expensive. Then I discovered an English-speaking sailing club, the Tokyo Sail and Power Squadron, and through them gained my skipper's licences and learned that sailing need not be as expensive as I thought. It was about 3 years ago I allowed myself to dream again. In fact, I had been pondering what to do for my next big challenge. I haven't been on a transformative challenge since I rode the length of Japan during the Cherry Blossom Season. For two years prior to that bike ride, I had fallen asleep each night dreaming of it, fretting about it, planning it in my mind and dreams. And although I had had many bicycle journeys since, including circumnavigating Japan by bike with my dog, nothing had compared to that first epic bike ride (captured in my book *Chasing the Cherry Blossom*, published by Lion Hudson).

At first, I did not share it with anyone, as it was one of those fragile ideas and dreams that need to be cared for. I needed to be sure… then eventually I shared it with my wife and others close to me, and while they were surprised, they expressed the belief I could do it.

FAQs

How long will the crossing take?

Two to three months.

Are you crazy?

This question comes in a variety of forms which have included 'Why not run a marathon?' and 'Do you have a death wish?' I don't think so.

What if your engine fails?

I sail. Actually, I am thinking of converting from diesel to electric motor. I am looking into that now.

Why solo?

That is a good question …there is just something compelling about being on my own, in the middle of the ocean.

Can you swim?

Yep, but I hope I won't have to.

Will you fish?

It would be silly not to have a hook and line in the water. But to be honest, I do not expect to catch anything during the entire crossing!

What does your wife think?

Ask her! But, in my opinion, she is remarkably supportive.

NAVIGATE22



Training at sunset with the self-steering hydrovane.



Below decks.

How much experience have you had sailing?

Not a lot. But I have learned a lot in the last 18 months, first crewing on other boats and then on board *Wahine*. Prior to 2019, I had done just a little. I have loved sailing lasers (fast dinghies) and used to sail my friend's 26-footer when I was single, and spent a week, once, cruising (with skipper)around islands near Corfu. But, in fact, my focus has been learning to sail *Wahine*.

How hard is it to teach yourself to sail?

It just takes persistence, and refusing to be a fair-weather sailor. And it all starts with learning the vocabulary. Wow, an entirely different lexicon. →



Cruising under Tokyo's iconic Rainbow Bridge.

← A toilet is a head, a door is a companion way, and ropes on a boat are called lines but, depending on their usage, will be then called something more specific. Vertical lines are usually halyards, horizontal lines are usually sheets, then there are preventer lines, lanyards etc. I have also needed to learn sailing plans and, most of all, how the boat's sails interact with the wind and the waves.

What is Navigate 22 going to do, when it is up and running?

It is simply a platform for me to do more speaking, writing and consulting. I actually have some work now but not at the level I need it to be. I have conducted several Personal Mission Statement Seminars, advised companies on ethics-related issues and am currently helping a solar company develop a communications strategy. They approached me because, in their view, I had the right experience of creating community around a cause. And they wanted to step up their communications with investors on one hand, and their partners overseas.

How are you doing the fundraising?

The boat is paid for. I have depleted my life savings to buy and upgrade the boat thus far. But also, I had help from some initial sponsors who joined my Keel Club, in particular Harry Hill of A Better U. He is also my personal trainer at the UFC Gym he owns in Tokyo. My other main Keel club founding member is Tokyo Super Cars. But now I must gain more sponsors for the final preparation.

Where does God come into all this?

Good question. And that is the question I have too. My goal, to go to Nemo North, is really meant to address this. In my later years, I want to ask fresh questions and seek God. Nemo North for me is a sacred notion… of being in a place where it is only you and life's most profound questions.

Immanuel Kant referred to what strikes reverence and awe: looking up and looking within. I have added a third. There is looking *up* to the expanse above, *within* to the mysteries of the soul, and *below* to the terrors of the deep. Nemo North represents that place for me. I am going to meet God, or perhaps better said, to spend time with God; unfettered by the religious responsibilities of being a church leader, the son of a minister, the father of children etc, just me and God.



Lowell's route across the Pacific.





Lowell's mother.

You have had to change your start time now?

Yes, I have brought it forward to June 2021. Initially, I had planned for it to be a part-time activity lasting five years. But like everyone, I have had to make significant changes. Not that change is always bad: it can both bring out new ideas and unleash positive energy. I have chosen to embrace change. This is a good thing. Dealing with unforeseen situations and the ability to change will be an essential part of my solo voyage. I might as well start now! Because I will be leaving earlier, I have focused on growing the Pacific Solo YouTube Channel faster to create a sustainable income source sooner.

What other changes have there been?

On a deeply emotional level, my motivation has been enhanced by my desire to see my mom! Her physical health is okay for a 92-year-old woman. Nevertheless, her mental acuity is diminishing. I want to get there while she is still going to recognize me as her son. S.

WHAT IS THE ACTION PLAN?

To leave by June 2021, I need the following:

The right weather window

June is the recommended month to leave because of favourable prevailing winds. Departure any time after that puts me into typhoon season. If I leave earlier, the winds will be against me. So I have various potential sailing plans. In addition to lots of day sailing in Tokyo Bay, where *Wahine* and I have been getting to know each other against the backdrop of Tokyo Skyline and Tokyo Disneyland, I have also gone on two 8-10 day training cruises in what is known as Area One, an area extended out of Tokyo Bay into the Pacific, about fifty nautical miles. In February 2021, I plan to sail for several days in the deep blue, perhaps as far as Okinawa as my final training sail. Then I plan to leave Yumenoshima Marina in Tokyo Bay early to mid-May 2021, and sail to Choshi in Ibaraki to complete my final preparations there, awaiting the right weather window to depart sometime in late May to late June 2021

To upgrade SV *Wahine* by January 2021

I need:

- ☐ Solar and lithium batteries
- ☐ New sails
- ☐ A new furler
- ☐ To check and possibly replace all rigging and lines
- ☐ A drogue which allows me to slow the boat down when the wind and the sea are too fast
- ☐ To add communications and navigation equipment including AIS, EPIRB, radar, VHF radio, Iridium GO, etc
- ☐ A liferaft
- ☐ To resolve the registration of *Wahine* (Japan or Canada?)
- ☐ I will also need to obtain a VHF Marine Radio Licence and increase my blue-water sailing experience.

To improve relationships with schools and colleges

- ☐ Launch the 'Great Pacific Learning Project'. A separate organization called 'A Place to Grow' is coordinating with schools and students who will use my voyage to learn about plastics in the oceans, particularly nurdles.

To raise the necessary funding

- ☐ Recruit sponsors for *Wahine*'s upgrades and other costs related to the voyage
- ☐ Enlist the support of more patrons (monthly supporters)
- ☐ Grow the YouTube Channel as the platform to share the story, educate and inspire, and produce passive income from Google Advertising.
- ☐ Build the Pacific Solo Store.



Enjoying the view.

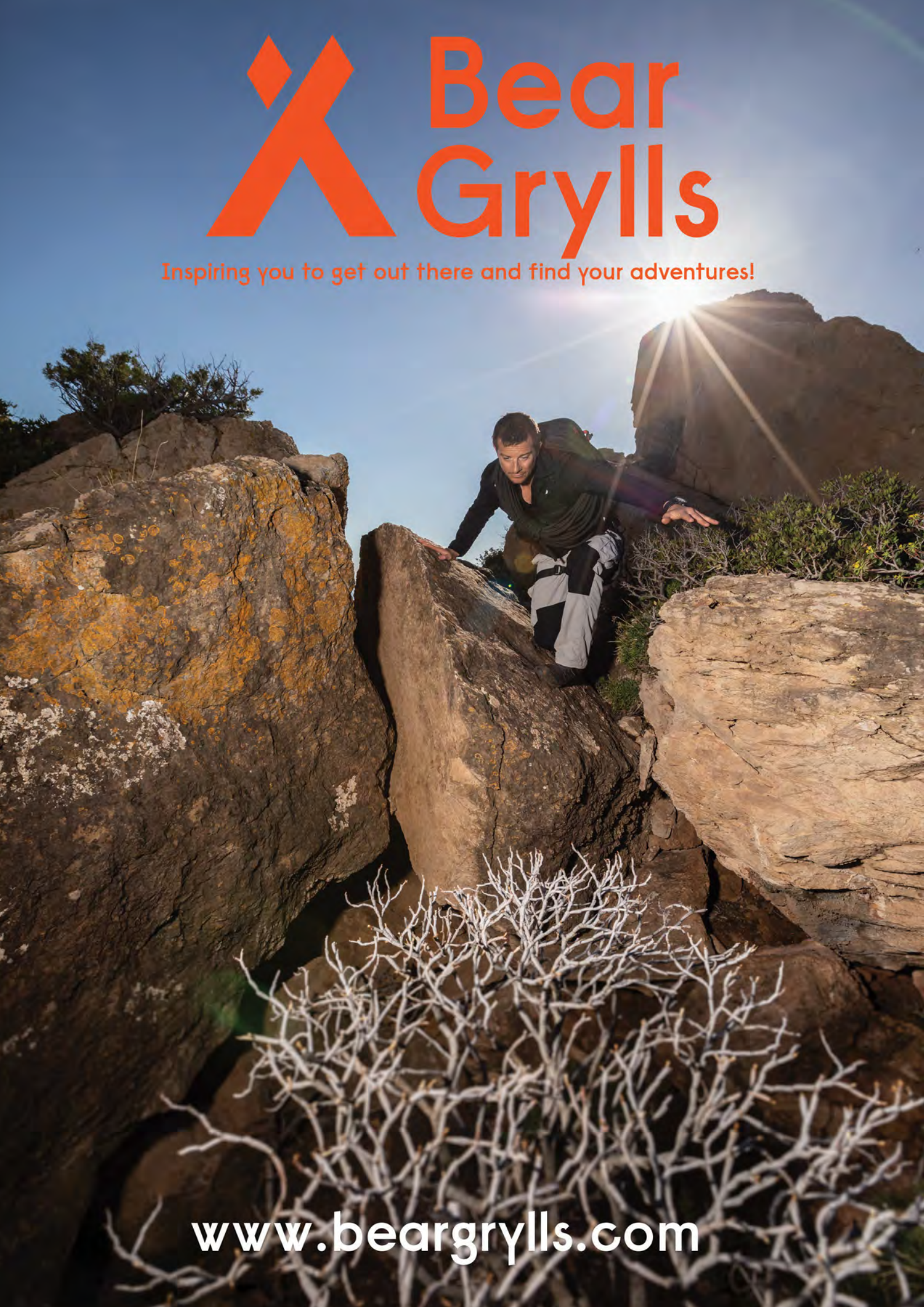
'It is only you and life's most profound questions.'



Lowell's dog, Skylie.

The trip is also being filmed by a major TV channel. For more information and to check on his progress, go to Lowell's blog:
pacificsolo.com/blog/2019/silence-and-solitude
pacificsolo.com/blog/2019/nemo-north

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This is not the end

I heard a story once about a one-year-old boy who fell down a flight of stairs, shattering his back in the process. He spent his entire childhood and his teenage years in and out of hospital. To many people, his story was one of heartbreaking tragedy.

But when he was interviewed one day, the boy said something that stunned people.

'God is fair,' he said.

'How old are you?' asked the man who was interviewing him.

'Seventeen.'

'And how many years have you spent in the hospital?'

'Thirteen.'

'Do you think that is fair?' said the interviewer.

The boy paused and smiled. 'God has got all of eternity to make it up to me.'

This brave young man saw beyond his current suffering.

Suffering is not part of God's original created order. There was no suffering when the world began, and there will be no suffering when God creates a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:3–4).

'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' S.

> **'He will wipe every tear from their eyes.'**

WANT TO READ ON?



Extract taken from *Soul Fuel* by Bear Grylls, published by Zondervan in the US and Hodder Faith in the UK.

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BEAR GRYLLS

Known worldwide as one of the most-recognised faces of survival and outdoor adventure. BAFTA award-winning TV host Bear Grylls began his journey in 21 SAS before becoming one of the youngest-ever climbers of Mount Everest.

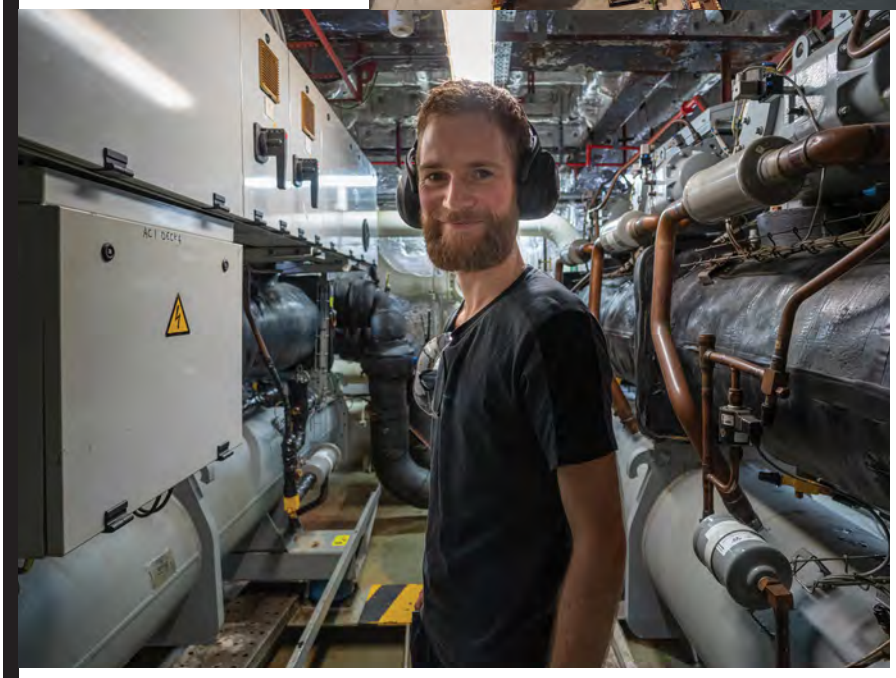
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Men on a mission

As the Covid recession hits and many industries look uncertain, some skilled professionals are taking the opportunity to reassess and re-evaluate their careers. We met a group of men who are using their skills to give back and help improve healthcare systems around the world by volunteering with Mercy Ships.

This global charity uses hospital ships to offer free world-class medical care in developing nations. Whilst medically trained professionals are needed for the work, that is only half the story. It takes a wide variety of skills to bring hope and healing to the poorest people in the world. In fact, only half the roles onboard are medical. As well as performing thousands of surgeries, all for free, the volunteers also help provide training for local professionals so that the healthcare systems are left stronger once the ship leaves port.





Ruben Gamala – HVAC/R Engineer

'I do not work directly in the hospital, but I can contribute in a different way. I feel like I'm having an impact on the lives of the people we serve here. I originally signed up for one year and that was three and a half years ago!

Originally from the Netherlands, Ruben works in the engineering department onboard the *Africa Mercy* hospital ship. With a background as a mechanical engineer, his roles onboard include being an HVAC engineer, where he is responsible for maintaining the essential heating, ventilation, air-conditioning and refrigeration systems throughout the ship.

Ruben met his wife, Silke, whilst serving onboard and the two now volunteer together. 'We met each other during the 'Onboarding programme' [the training programme for long term volunteers] and we really hit it off. Silke is from Germany so we would never have met if we hadn't both decided to volunteer with Mercy Ships.'

Guido Kortleven – Biomedical Technician

'I'm a really calm person, I like to stay in the background. So, I have the right job, as being a biomedical technician is working behind the scenes of a hospital. All my life I've wanted to serve people, so Mercy Ships is a perfect fit for me. Serving the people who need it most with the talents that God gave me is really awesome.'

Guido lives on the hospital ship with his family. His children attend the school onboard, which educates the children of long-term volunteers. His wife is a qualified nurse, who serves in the hospital deck. 'Having the school onboard for the children means that they are getting an amazing education whilst we are here. I feel like this is exactly where my family belongs.'

As a biomedical technician, Guido fixes and maintains medical equipment in order to keep the hospital running. As part of Mercy Ships 'Medical Capacity Building' programme, his team also train local technicians in maintenance techniques, in the various countries where the ship docks. He is leaving a lasting and life-changing legacy that will benefit each nation for decades to come.

There is also a ground-breaking project on the horizon for Guido and his colleagues. Soon the Biomedical team will be commissioning state-of-the-art equipment for the latest addition to the Mercy Ships fleet, the *Global Mercy*, which measures one and a half football pitches in length. It's an exciting opportunity for volunteers to be part of such a historic project.



'I feel like this is exactly where my family belongs.'





Stuart Clear – IT Manager

'Volunteering on-board is a great opportunity to use your professional IT skills in a Christian international development context. Whilst onboard you witness the organisation's programmatic activity first-hand, whilst working with modern up-to-date IT systems and hardware, within a strong support structure.'

Stuart leads the IT team on the *Africa Mercy* hospital ship. His team is a mix of service desk and endpoint analysts, as well as audio-visual (PA) technicians. They provide support for all of the *Africa Mercy*'s computers, applications, systems, telecommunications, network and internet connections They also operate and maintain the audio-visual equipment in the operating theatres and look after the crew entertainment systems on-board.

The unique model of Mercy Ships means that there are opportunities for people from all walks of life to volunteer onboard. As Stuart says, 'It's an opportunity for spiritual growth and to exercise your faith in a practical way. It's also a great way to travel and experience another country, and to be part of a multi-cultural team.'

From biomedical technicians to IT professionals, sound engineers to teachers, anyone with professional skills has a role to play in bringing medical care to the poorest people who would otherwise have no access to a doctor or life-changing surgery. 2021 will be a big year for Mercy Ships, as they are gearing up for the launch of the brand new, purpose-built hospital ship, the Global Mercy. So there are now more opportunities than ever to bring your skills to bear and make a huge difference onboard. S.

To find out a little more and begin a chat about volunteering with Mercy Ships, just visit: **mercyships.org.uk/beahero**



How to be more human

Can we be the antidote to the wave of mistrust sweeping the world?

Are we becoming less human? To trust is innately human, yet we're increasingly suspicious of institutions, organisations and even each other: a once trusted neighbour could now be carrying COVID. We're wired to collaborate, yet we're now more easily offended, judgemental and listen less. Humans need connection yet we're doubtful who's on our side and slip easily into fight or flight. No wonder so many feel anxious.

I was comforted, however, by leadership guru Simon Sinek , an 'on-line mentor' for me, who told Richard Branson, 'We think things are black and white when in reality they're mostly grey… there are a lot of human skills that are missing. I would love to teach us all how to be a little more human.'

Until Simon ramps up, I offer some simple yet powerful practices from my mentoring work to help us create connection and be more human.

- Let's not wait for others to make the first move. Be proactive and reach out.
- In our speaking, let's not dehumanise people we disagree with by turning them into things. Instead of a slur like 'Crooked Hillary' or labels like 'liberals/conservatives' or 'far left/right', we could use people's actual names. Instead of a faceless organisation, we could talk about individuals. It's easier to slide into genocide when people become 'cockroaches' (Rwanda) or 'viruses' (Nazi Germany).
- Select someone you're suspicious of and give them the benefit of the doubt, shifting your mindset from 'I'll only trust them when I see evidence' to 'I choose to trust them without evidence.' It changes everything.
- Let's listen hard to understand the other's perspective.

If each one of us learns to be more human within our own sphere of influence, it could change the world. S!

'Let's listen hard to understand the other's perspective.'





MILES PROTTER

Miles has worked with thousands of people as a mentor and coach and now runs The Values Partnership, a professional mentoring practice, together with his wife Deborah. He's also founded Men's Business, a not for profit dedicated to men connecting with each other, listening and learning together how to navigate life well.

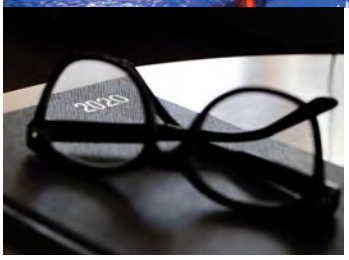
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GET GOOD AT WORK

WITH LEE JACKSON





Let's be absolutely clear

Reflect on the good bits of 2020.

This time last year people were blogging and posting stuff about '2020 (or 20/20) vision' for the year 2020. I'll be honest, I thought it was a bit cheesy and dull. But yes, 2020 was a date that related to a phrase about clarity.

20/20 vision is actually a measurement used by opticians to state that you can see the bottom row of the eye chart from 20 yards away without specs. So you have 20-yard vision: that's the simplified version! And over time through slang from jazz musicians, it became a phrase that means – 'I can see clearly' or 'The fog has lifted' and 'We can see the future now.'

So at the beginning of March 2020, we were all ticking along, I was in New York celebrating my big 5-0 and then we started hearing about a virus. People were texting us, and in those few days in March, it suddenly got serious. By the time we had left New York, the shops were emptying and Times Square was nearly deserted. When we landed back home, we were locked down. At that point, everything had changed.

It has been a tough year, really tough for many, devastating for some.

But as I write this and we approach the end of 2020, I feel, in part, that 2020 has weirdly given me better vision and has helped me focus, at work and personally.

I have simplified my business, I am now offering less to my clients, I have focused my attention on what I do well and what solves people's problems (the heart of any good business).

Plus, even though I haven't been able to see as many of my friends and family as I'd have liked in 2020, I have certainly realised how grateful I am for them, have kept in touch, and have already thought of ways to enjoy hanging out with them later in 2021.

It's been uncomfortable, boring and hard at times but also a kind of a refining process.

Anyway, that's just me thinking aloud. What about you?

We all want to leave 2020 behind. But what did you learn?

Where have you been more focused, or refined even?

Press pause for five minutes and have a think.

Don't rush into 2021 without taking stock of 2020. S.

> **'The shops were emptying and Times Square was nearly deserted.'**



LEE JACKSON

Lee Jackson is an award-winning motivational speaker and presentation coach. He delivers his 'Get Good At Work (from home)' sessions on and offline internationally.

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DVD & STREAMING
WITH DAVE HOPWOOD

Justifiable losses



County Lines

★★★★★

In cinemas and on digital platforms from 4 December

This is a raw and disturbing depiction of one fourteen-year-old's descent into the sordid and violent world of the county lines drug distribution system. Tyler is a loner, feeling lost and misunderstood. He is doing his best to look after his little sister, but incommunicative when it comes to his mum and teachers. The first person he really connects with is the friendly stranger who rescues him from a bullying situation in a take-away. Lonely and frustrated, in spite of his teachers' best efforts, he is drawn into transporting and selling drugs. In one telling moment, he is told that every business has its justifiable losses, and in this kind of work – it's him.

You may be familiar with Ken Loach's films, most recently *Sorry We Missed You*, or *I Daniel Blake*, and this is very much in keeping with that style. Many of the scenes feature little dialogue, as we simply watch Tyler's life unravel. The camera just follows him and his family, revealing the situations which lead him into this brutal catastrophe. This is a side of life that is squalid and relentless, yet taking place in plain sight. The performances are understated, naturalistic, and compelling, and Conrad Khan is superb as Tyler. Writer and director Henry Blake was a youth worker for several years and has created this from his experience.

It's a grim, compelling and unsettling watch.

Rogue

✪✪✪

Rated 15

On digital download and DVD



Megan Fox leads a bunch of gun-toting, hard-bitten, roughneck mercenaries on a mission to free a young woman, kidnapped and caged by al Shabaab in the middle of nowhere. During the mother of all gun battles, they find not one but three young women, and against their better judgment, decide to break all three out. What follows is a perilous game of cat and mouse as the liberators are pursued and outgunned by the merciless terrorists. When Megan and her mates (Philip Winchester, Sisanda Henna, Adam Deacon, Jessica Sutton) take refuge in an old lion farm, they get more wild cat than they bargained for. Imagine a deadly version of *The Lion King* merged with the sensibilities of *Rambo*, and you won't be far off. The action is full on, and the story keeps you tuned in. The dialogue is fairly standard, and ripe throughout too, but there is some heartfelt conversation regarding the plight of the women. It's not a film where you care very much about the many characters, though. If you want a fast-paced gung-ho adventure, with gunfire aplenty and spilt blood to spare, then this is for you.

The Racer

✪✪✪✪

Rated 15

Available on streaming platforms and in cinemas from 18th December

It's 1998 and the start of the Tour de France has been moved to Ireland. Dom Chabol (Louis Talpe) is a Tour de France support rider, a *domestique*, a servant for the rest of his team. His job is not to win, but rather to hold the lead so that the team leader can power through at the close and achieve his winning finish.

The tension and thrills are captured beautifully, as are the tensions between the riders. Dom's masseur, an on-form Iain Glen, brings his gravelly wisdom to bear as he attempts to keep Dom racing in what might well be his last Tour. The years of the hills, the searing adrenaline, and the sweat of the racing have taken their toll. Dom struggles to sleep, he's an intense and lonely figure, constantly on edge, a racer but never a winner. And then there's the doping, a grim shadow in the background. Things only get more difficult when he gets together with the team doctor Lynn (played by Tara Lee).

This is a challenging tale. We find ourselves rooting for Dom in his last year, while on the other hand, there is use of drugs to consider. The film is shot with a visceral sense of immediacy and urgency, and the performances are all strong. Whether or not you're into cycling, this drama is worth the ride. S.





DAVE HOPWOOD

Dave Hopwood is a freelance writer and speaker. Accessible, entertaining and honest, he spends much of his time communicating the Christian faith using contemporary media and relevant language. He is author of several books, including *The Bloke's Bible*, and *Film & Faith*.

BOOKS
WITH ALI HULL

Tome bandits: books to get your teeth into

Populista! The Rise of Latin America's Twenty-One Strongmen

Will Grant

Head of Zeus

★★★★★

REVIEWED BY JIM MCKELLAR



Only a first-class writer with a deep, hands-on experience of their subject matter would even attempt something as ambitious as looking at Latin American 'strongmen'. Will Grant is just such a writer. He brings to life the seriously flawed yet colourful individuals who have changed, exploited, and impoverished so much of Latin America. He gives an insight into how these ruthless single-minded people are able to push their nations into the populist shape they desire. Each chapter teaches us much about various characters, from Chavez through to Castro. This is a superb book that deserves a wide audience.

Britain's Best Political Cartoons

Edited by Tim Benson

Penguin

★★★★



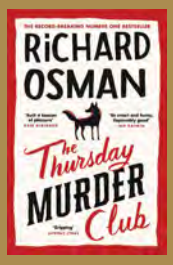
This collection of political cartoons runs from September 2019 to the end of August 2020, so covers a very full year, starting with Brexit and the chaotic government of Theresa May, through the election of December 2019, into the New Year and then the disruption of the coronavirus pandemic. Woven through domestic politics there are, of course, plenty of cartoons lampooning the latest idiocy from the other side of the Atlantic, with occasional appearances by other leaders, though Boris Johnson, Jeremy Corbyn and Donald Trump do provide a wealth of material without any need for recourse elsewhere. The cartoons come from the *Times*, the *Sun*, the *Guardian*, and many other places but none, sadly I think, from the brilliant Matt at the *Daily Telegraph*. That said, this is a good collection, with notes for each cartoon, putting it into context.

The Thursday Murder Club

Richard Osman

Penguin

★★★★★



Fiction doesn't often feature in our review pages, but being a big fan of Richard Osman, and his wonderful sense of humour, I thought his first novel had to be worth a look. And it is. It has had a huge amount of publicity, but don't let that put you off. There are some wonderfully funny bits in this story of a murder, set in a retirement village. Osman clearly appreciates the wealth of experience and wisdom that you can find in such places, and his main characters are all in their seventies and still going strong. A good book to enjoy as the evenings get darker!



'A good book to enjoy as the evenings get darker!'

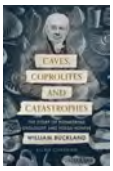
John Phillips/Getty Images

Caves, Coprolites and Catastrophes: The Story of Pioneering Geologist and Fossil-Hunter William Buckland

Allan Chapman

SPCK

★★★★★



Let me declare an interest: I commissioned this book and edited it, and did so with a great deal of enjoyment. Allan Chapman is a great storyteller, whose aim, with every book he writes (and I have now been involved with a few) is to produce 'a thumping good read'. Once again, he has achieved his aim. He has that rare gift of taking something you may think you are not interested in (in this case, it is geology) and writing about it in such a way that you discover you are interested after all. And the book is not just about geology, it is also focussed on William Buckland, a true Victorian eccentric, and many of the other pioneers in geology. If you have read Tracy Chevalier's novel, *Remarkable Creatures*, you will have met Buckland and his world before, and it is also the world that we meet in John Fowles' book, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and the film.

The Cyclist Who Went Out in The Cold

Tim Moore

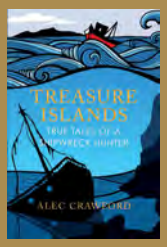
Yellow Jersey

★★★★



Tim Moore has made something of a name for himself by doing inventive bike rides, including cycling the route of the Tour de France, and tackling that of the 1914 Giro, the Italian road race, but riding the same sort of bike and wearing the same sort of gear as the original cyclists did. In this book, he sets himself the challenge of cycling 9000km along the old Iron Curtain, on a two-geared East German shopping bike. He starts far up in the north, and travels down through Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and so on, ending up at Tsarevo on the Black Sea. The ride is a huge challenge, and a very difficult thing to do, but it makes for an entertaining read. Tim Moore has the ability to recreate, in a few words, the people he meets and the places he goes through, and above all the gruelling realities of the ride.





Treasure Islands: True Tales of a Shipwreck Hunter

Alec Crawford

Birlinn

★★★★★

As an island nation, Britain is surrounded by shipwrecks – vessels that ran aground, broke up in storms or fell victim to enemy submarines. Many of these boats have a great deal to offer to anyone brave enough to dive down and retrieve it, and Alec Crawford has spent years doing just that. This book is an account of those searches around the northern coast of Scotland, and about one ship in particular – the *Oceanic*. In its heyday, this luxury liner took people across the Atlantic in great luxury. Crawford pioneered many of the methods now used in deep sea recovery, but this book is more about the excitement than the technicalities. It is also a love song to Scotland and a vanishing way of life.

Oliver's Britain

Oliver Hellowell

Acc Art Books

★★★★★



This is a book of stunning photographs, made the more unusual, however, because the camera belongs to Oliver Hellowell, who has Down's Syndrome. He has also faced significant health challenges, but you wouldn't know any of this if the book didn't tell you. He has captured some wonderful wildlife moments; including seal pups, deer, red (and grey) squirrels, and a truly magnificent bullfinch. He obviously has an excellent eye, and many of the photos are from unusual angles, all of which work well. The photos are divided into different chapters, and include great shots of wildlife, fishing, lakes and lochs, the seaside, castles, churches and cathedrals and a host of others. The book would make a lovely gift. S.

> 'Some wonderful wildlife moments.'



ALI HULL

Ali Hull is addicted to books – reading them, and helping others write them, polish them, publish them and publicise them.



New sounds for good listening

> ‘A new wave of energy and spirit.’

Faithless

All Blessed

★★★★

Best known for ‘Insomnia’, ‘God is a DJ’ and ‘We Come 1’, British electronica heavyweight Faithless is back … with a difference! Gone are the sub-bass vocal tones of Maxi Jazz, for so long the immediate focal point of their sound, replaced by a new tribe of guest vocalists and rappers – in particular spoken-word poet Suli Breaks, singer-songwriter Nathan Ball and alternative artist Gaika. Riding on the solid shoulders of original band members Sister Bliss and Rollo, this new creative community successfully reinterprets all we love about Faithless, adding a fresh and invigorating dash to the flow and rhythm of their dance.

Dipping in and out of various club styles, ‘I Need Someone’ is a floor-filling rocket, ‘Synthesizer’ is cheeky and relentless, ‘My Town’ is grimy and cinematic, ‘Innadadance’ featuring Jazzie B is infectious, and ‘Take Your Time’ conveys smooth laid-back vibes. *All Blessed* may not contain the big chartbusters of old, but it certainly announces a new wave of energy and spirit for a much-loved band.











Kari Jobe

The Blessing

✪✪✪✪

At the beginning of Covid-19, Kari Jobe's recording of 'The Blessing' immediately resonated with millions around the world. You could say it went viral. Hearing Jobe declare God's blessing became a mantra of comfort for fearful hearts, and within a few months of release, many nations had recorded their own version. YouTube was truly blessed!

Alongside 'The Blessing', fourteen other tracks grace Jobe's latest album, recorded live during the pandemic without an audience at her home church. Featuring songs co-written with husband Cody Carnes and other established songwriters, the result is a soundscape of magnitude and majesty, excellently produced and awash with a sense of awe.



Bruce Springsteen

Letter to you

✪✪✪✪

Rock'n'roll poet Bruce Springsteen releases his twentieth studio album *Letter To You*, recorded at his home studio where the entire band and vocals on the finished product are completely live, bar a few minimal overdubs. The Springsteen-sound is alive and well, especially in 'Burnin' Train', 'I'll See You In My Dreams', 'House Of A Thousand Guitars' and the thumpingly emotive title track.

Themes of mortality and aging radiate throughout as Springsteen grapples with the death of former bandmates. 'Ghosts' gives voice to the remembrance of those who have gone before as well as the realisation of the importance of living your present life. Known for his authentic approach to song-writing, *Letter To You* is no exception. It is heartfelt, personal and powerful, and possibly one of his finest works of art.

Various Artists

Worship Anthems 21

✪✪✪✪

More than ever before, songs of hope and faith are strengthening our fortitude in the midst of life's challenges and opportunities. The Worship Anthems series is unique in that it features a wide variety of contributors recorded live at significant international events, delivering an inspiring and eclectic sound.

This double CD contains 30 songs of worship; some incredibly popular, such as the spirited 'Way Maker' and the adapted version of 'Amazing Grace', and some relative newcomers like 'Hope Has A Name' and 'Protector'.

With a line-up including Elim Sound, Jesus Culture, Tim Hughes, Bright City, Worship Central and Spring Harvest, *Worship Anthems 21* is a very robust release.



SUE RINALDI

Sue Rinaldi travels internationally as a concert artist, worship coordinator, speaker and creative consultant. A self-confessed info junkie and movie enthusiast, her interest in culture, justice, technology and the future fuels her living and writing.

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Top Marques

We take a look at what motors will get your pulse racing in the year ahead.

FAST FACTS

DS 7 Crossback E-Tense 4x4 Ultra Prestige: as tested

Max. speed: 149 mph
0-62mph: 5.9 sec
Combined mpg: 166.2 - 235.4
Engine layout: 1598cc four-cylinder turbo petrol + electric
Max. power (PS): 300
CO2: 35 g/km
£56,075

DS 7 Crossback E-Tense

At first sight, the DS 7 Crossback shows off conservative rather than cool characteristics.

On the move, body lean is kept to a minimum, even though the steering is spongy and dead. Don't let me rain on the parade too much, though. The French motor has a sublime ride quality.

This car isn't all about the zero to 62mph sprint; it's far happier as a laid-back cruiser. But it can still pull stunningly, with the plug-in hybrid E-tense version of the DS 7 doing 0-62mph in just under six seconds. This is down to its 1.6-litre petrol engine and twin electric motor (plus battery) combo.

The car's silky eight-speed auto 'box and four-wheel drive make for effortless driving, and you can even motor about in silence for up to 31 miles on pure electricity. Don't worry: people will still hear you coming in this mode. For safety reasons, electrified vehicles have to feature a noise-emitting device, which sounds like a traditional engine. Driving the car like this is best reserved for urban commuting – and it'll save you loads of fuel, as long as you plug in and charge the DS 7 regularly.

'It'll save you loads of fuel.'

The E-Tense 4x4 Ultra Prestige, driven here, is likely to be the model to please the masses. This car has 19-inch alloys, a gloss black grille, and LED lights. In the cabin, leather abounds, while a 12-inch touchscreen infotainment screen hogs the limelight. Playing second fiddle to the big display is a classic analogue clock, perched above the ignition button.

The infotainment system itself is intuitive and responsive, and is supported by a bunch of touch-sensitive switches for the cabin controls. But more remarkable in this car segment is the addition of an infrared night vision camera that projects a vivid picture onto the driver's display. It picks out pedestrians and animals ahead of you and, as I found out driving around rural England's unlit backroads, it works! The only drawback is that this innovative driver aid is an option costing £1400.

Room in the cabin is suitable for five-up, and it's a very comfortable car fore and aft. What's more, the boot is generously proportioned with 555 litres of cargo capacity.

The DS's weak point is its price-tag. At over £56,000, other more established premium brands may seem more attractive. The Audi Q5 50 TFSI e is an example of the stiff competition the French machine is up against.

Still, being different is quite appealing, so it'll be interesting to see what the future holds for the DS 7 Crossback E-Tense.



FAST FACTS

LC 500 Convertible Sport+ Pack: As tested

Max. speed: 168 mph
0-62mph: 5.0 sec
Combined mpg: 24.1
Engine layout: 4,969cc, normally aspirated V8
Max. power (PS): 464
CO2: 275g/km
£96,625



New Lexus LC Convertible

The Lexus LC Coupe has always looked impressive and elegant, all at the same time. With fluid flanks, a low-slung roofline and razor-sharp lights, it never fails to create a sense of theatre. But now Lexus has stepped the pace up further, by ushering in a brand-new soft-top version – called, funnily enough, the LC Convertible.

The all-new car shares the LC Coupe's gorgeous design and adrenaline-charged performance, while adding the fun associated with wind-in-your-hair motoring (yes, it's still possible to drive roof-down on bright, crisp, winter days!) And, as with the hard-topped model, a non-turbocharged unit sits under the hood. This alone makes the LC different. Why? Well, there's a glut of turbocharged cars out there, so a burbly, normally aspirated 5.0-litre V8 lump kind of forces you to take notice.

Furthermore, the LC is armed with a ten-speed auto 'box. There are so many gears that you rarely need to ask for more engine power because you can compensate with the precisely assembled collection of ratios.

The muscle and range of cogs help the Convertible blast to 62mph in 5 seconds, and on to a licence-losing top speed of 168mph. The timbre of the V8 pulling in air as the throttle input changes is as gratifying as it is galvanising.

As well as the glorious sound the LC makes, there are other plusses to its atmospherically nourished powerplant – and that's throttle feedback. Any weight, however slight, that's added to the accelerator-pedal has an instantaneous influence on forward propulsion.

Gearshifts are on the ball and clear-cut, too. The steering-wheel-attached paddles are pleasingly weighted and lovely to operate. But, if you don't want to experience changing gears by hand, the auto mode does a great job.

> 'Impossible to dislike.'

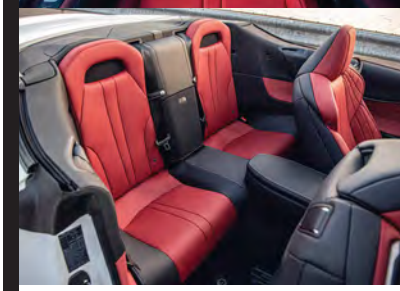
The LC Convertible's ride is firm, but there's loads of control, so any sense of inflexibility is worth it. The Lexus' body feels robust, too, with no indication of agitation from the shell, even over tatty tarmac. The steering is pleasantly light as well, so it's unchallenging to point the LC's snout in the direction you want it to go. Indeed, every aspect of the Japanese-made car, from the feel the chassis provides to the engine and steering, enables you to drive the new model with confidence.

If top-down luxury motoring is what you're after, then the LC Convertible is a beautiful choice of car. The roof can be lowered or raised in just 15 seconds, and its refinement and kit list, including Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, make it hassle-free to live with.

In its most fundamental form, the model is priced at £90,775. But the £96,625 Sport+ Pack grade is the one to have. It comes with 21-inch wheels, integrated neck heaters (that you'll need this time of the year!) and semi-aniline leather upholstery. Yes, it's a lot of money, but not many drop-tops provide the same level of elation as well as sophistication. The fact that the LC Convertible also looks good enough to eat makes it impossible to dislike. →











FAST FACTS

Volvo S90 T5 R-Design Plus: as tested

Max. speed: 140 mph
0-62mph: 6.8 sec
Combined mpg: 42.8
Engine layout: 1969 cc four-cylinder turbo petrol
Max. power (PS): 250
CO2: 154 g/km
£44,285



Volvo S90 T5

← The S90 is a handsome booted car, radiating real kerbside presence. My Volvo review model was the T5 R-Design Plus variant, housing a smooth-shifting eight-speed automatic transmission, front-wheel-drive and lowered suspension.

There is no denying the R-Design version of the Volvo S90 comes with a visually pleasing appearance. An assertive-looking front grille is complemented by meatier bumpers and appealingly sporty twin tailpipes.

But it isn't just about looks – you won't be left wanting for performance with this car, either. The 2.0-litre T5 turbo petrol powerplant delivers 250PS – meaning it will get from 0-62mph in 6.8 seconds and it'll top out at 140mph. It is also a relatively efficient machine, returning an average of 40mpg if driven carefully.

As mentioned, the R-Design suspension set-up is lower. While the hunkered down look works well, it means the Volvo delivers a stiffer ride, which may not suit everyone. However, it does give better handling because the car stays flatter on the road, and there is less roll when cornering.

Staying on the topic of handling, the car offers good traction, which inspires confidence when you're in poor weather or tackling snaking sections of road. However, the steering doesn't provide a great deal of feel, and its self-centring can, on occasion, feel too extreme.

The Swedish-made motor is brilliant at sucking up the motorway miles, too. The cabin is superb at staying hushed from wind and tyre roar. What's more, the semi-autonomous Pilot Assist gadgetry is fantastic for dispensing with stress on a long commute.

One thing that's obvious about the S90 in any environment is that it is a large car. It's nearly five metres long, so manoeuvring it in, for example, a tight multi-storey car park can be tricky.

That said, the benefit of the Volvo's external size is a substantial cabin. As well as the flawless fit and finish, there's lots of room for five people, and the boot is a decent size, with 500 litres of cargo capacity. That's certainly large enough for a family-sized bunch of suitcases. Even better, with the rear seats folded via a push of a button, you're looking at nearly two metres in length. That's handy if you need to transport some flat-pack furniture home.

Intelligent use of room is matched with a gorgeously crafted interior. On the R-Design, you get a leather steering wheel with gearshift paddles, supportive leather sports seats and a black headlining. There's also a vibrant digital instrument display and a touchscreen infotainment system.

If you've always been a fan of German executive saloons, but you now want to go for something a bit different, then the S90 should be on your shopping list. The Scandinavian car is superbly built, exuding class inside and out. Despite the premium badges of the competition, this level of quality isn't something all Volvo's rivals necessarily have.

'Superbly built, exuding class inside and out.'

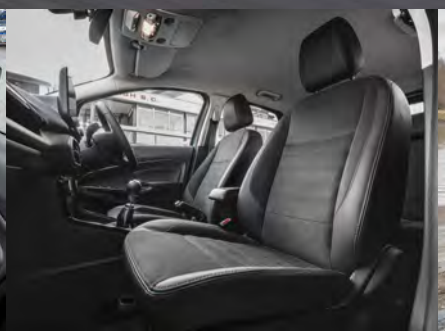


FAST FACTS

Ford EcoSport ST-Line 1.0 EcoBoost 125PS: as tested

Max. speed: 111 mph
0-62mph: 11.0 sec
Combined mpg: 43.5
Engine layout: 998cc 3-cylinder turbo petrol
Max. power (PS): 125
CO2: 148 g/km
£20,995







Ford EcoSport

> 'A Fiesta on stilts.'

Does Ford's EcoSport convince as a compact crossover? Not particularly. But it has charm, particularly in sprightly ST-Line spec, as tested here.

You get lots of kit in the £20,995 1.0T EcoBoost version I tried. Equipment includes cruise control, a reversing camera, parking sensors, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay connectivity, as well as navigation.

The EcoSport is based on the same platform as Ford's well-known Fiesta, and you get hints of this pedigree. The steering is pleasing, and the petrol engine pulls nicely. The six-speed manual gearbox is sweet, too, and the EcoSport's driving position is bang on. The seats are positioned high, so you get a good, safe view out.



Also, there's decent space in the back, which is due, in part, to the Ford's erect seats. These enable your rear passengers to slip their feet under the seats in front of them.

The 356-litre boot is respectable enough, and it's easy to load, due to the right-angled rump. Mind you, the five-door motor has a side-hinged tailgate, which you'll either like or loathe.

With a claimed mpg of up to 43.5 and 148g/km CO2, this model will be inexpensive to run. So, along with the plentiful kit, acceptable performance and rear space, the EcoSport is not bad transport for small families.

Just don't think of it as a mini SUV-cum-crossover-type thing. Think of it as a Fiesta on stilts.



TIM BARNES-CLAY

Tim Barnes-Clay trained in broadcast journalism and has worked in radio and at ITV. He is now a freelance automotive writer, focusing on car reviews and features. He has media accreditation with motor manufacturers' press offices, and this enables him to test drive the latest cars. He also regularly attends new vehicle press launches around the world.

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GOING GREEN
WITH ANDY ATKINS

On the money

It really is possible to save cash and the planet at the same time.

'Save money and carbon emissions by switching to a renewable energy supplier.'

There's a myth that it costs more to be green. Actually, reusing, recycling and choosing greener options will save pennies and pounds. With the pandemic causing job losses and insecurity, and further economic disruption predicted as the UK leaves the EU, it will be more crucial than ever to save any way we can right now.

It is also still a critical time for the climate crisis. Even though much of modern life has slowed down over the pandemic, global temperatures are still rising at an unprecedented rate. The impact is obvious as the UK has just had the wettest October since records began. Choosing the green option is a win-win, for your bank account and for the planet. Here are a few suggestions to get started.

Green travel alternatives are a great way to cut down on the cost of running a car and now the health risk of taking public transport. It is also more important than ever to get outside, enjoy nature and keep active. The government's 'Cycle to work' scheme is a great incentive to switch that morning commute to a more sustainable option, save money and keep healthy. Of course, you are not restricted to using that new bike for commuting!

Working from home is costing individual employees more from running heating and electricity. So this is a good time to save money and carbon emissions by switching to a renewable energy supplier such as Ecotricity, Ovo, Octopus or Good Energy, which only feed electricity from renewable sources into the national grid.

Finally, buy secondhand or bring a new lease of life to old furniture with simple repairs or new paint. It's extraordinary what can be made of something which otherwise might have ended up stacked in a landfill. And it'll make a great creative lockdown project.

It's likely to be a tough winter for everyone, with ongoing or intermittent lockdowns proving painful for the economy and mental health, but with a few simple green alternatives you can save cash and keep your spirits up, as well as do your part for the planet. S.





ANDY ATKINS

Andy Atkins was previously CEO of Friends of the Earth. Prior to that he was Advocacy Director at Tearfund, and a founder member of the 2005 Make Poverty History campaign. He became CEO of A Rocha UK in 2016.

@ARochaUK

@arocha_uk

A Rocha UK

MAF is the world's **largest humanitarian airline**, bringing **help**, **hope** and **healing** to those in need.

Tackling isolation across the globe

In hidden pockets around the world, life continues much as it has for hundreds of years — with millions of people, who live far from roads, education and healthcare, cut off from the help they need. For many, the only way to reach them is by air.

Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF), which brings help, hope and healing to 26 developing countries, is now assisting the fight against coronavirus in vulnerable areas.

In Chad, MAF transported essential supplies to Bardai Hospital, enabling patients' temperatures to be screened so they could be treated more effectively.

In South Sudan, alongside the usual items such as food, cooking oil, fertiliser and washing powder, MAF transported face masks, buckets and banners bearing crucial information for a coronavirus awareness programme.

In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo there was a surge in the number of coronavirus cases, with patients suffering from respiratory problems being admitted to Panzi Hospital but dying soon after because they had sadly sought help too late. After obtaining special permissions to fly, MAF was asked to transport medicine and coronavirus test kits — the flight enabling the vital cargo to remain at the correct temperature and reach its destination safely.

In Uganda, the work of hundreds of organisations was either prevented or hampered by the limited road travel permitted. So it was a great relief to many when MAF was officially allowed to resume its domestic passenger flights in September — enabling MAF partners such as the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which supports 850,000 refugees, to again provide remote communities with the help they needed.

'It's a great thing to resume passenger flying, which has a direct impact on the people we serve. Once again, we're helping our partners to get the job done.' — MAF Pilot Greg Vine

In Papua, Indonesia, MAF delivered 2,500 Bibles to the Yali people, 55 years after MAF's aerial survey flight first discovered the tribe. The Yali, originally feared because of their violence, witchcraft and cannibalism, murdered missionaries Phil Masters and Stan Dale in 1968. In summer 2020, however, members of the thriving Yali church rushed to the airstrip to greet MAF's plane and its precious cargo.

For 75 years, MAF has been flying over jungles, mountains, swamps and deserts to help isolated people in hard-to-reach places. Every five minutes, an MAF plane is taking off or landing somewhere in the world, bringing medical care, emergency relief and hope to thousands of people.







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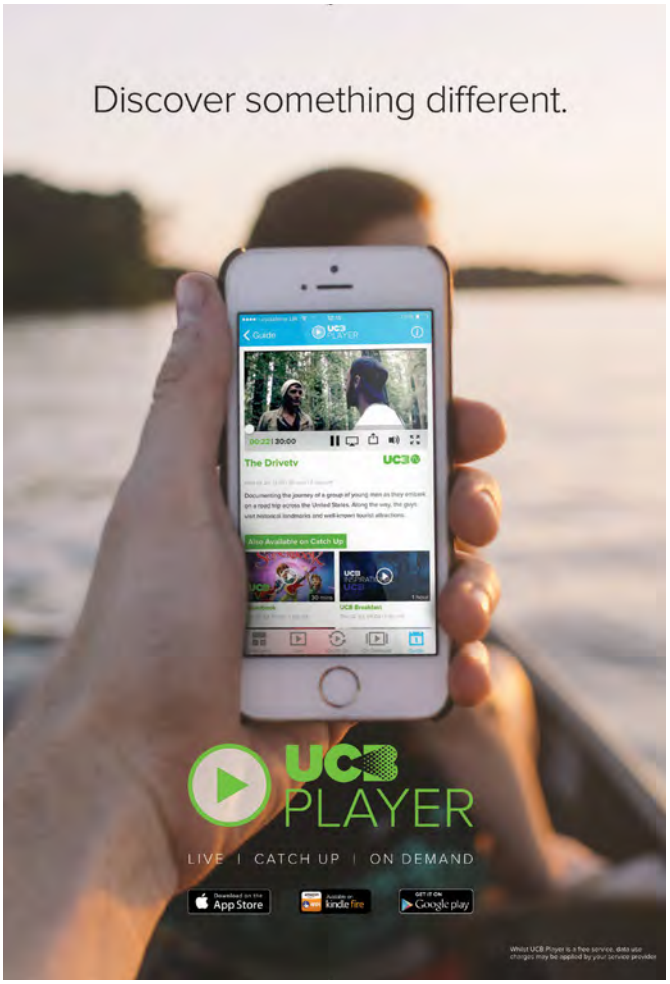
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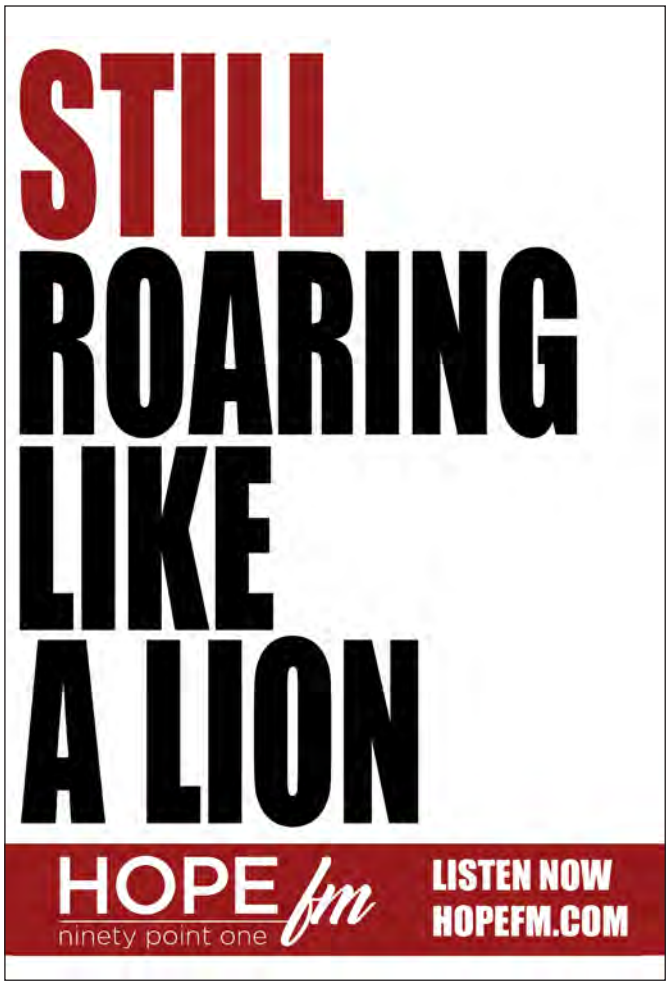
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Thinking bigger and better

60 SECOND LIFE COACH
WITH PETER HORNE

As we enter a new year, is it time to set our sights a bit higher?



> 'They are more likely to keep pursuing it and less likely to give up.'

In 2012 I went to see my optician and told him that I could see 8 years into the future. He examined my eyes and nodded in agreement. 'Yes, you've got 2020 vision.' Back then, this seemed like a great little gag. Fast forward to the back end of 2020, and it's not quite so witty. For many people, the nightmare of 2020 completely bulldozed over the dreams they had in 2019!

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Research has found that if you strongly desire a goal, this will help to induce an emotional response in your brain. A study published in the Journal of Experimental Psychology showed that highly emotional goals (i.e., the subject is highly motivated to succeed) cause participants to downwardly evaluate the difficulty of achieving that goal. They are more likely to keep pursuing it and less likely to give up.

Ambitious goals are far more motivating

Your amygdala is the part of your brain that creates emotion. Your frontal lobe is the part of your brain that undertakes problem solving and analyses what you must do to achieve your goal. These two parts work together to keep you focused on achieving your goal. Setting challenging goals will help to fully activate them towards being more successful.



PETER HORNE

Peter Horne is a qualified life coach with a passion for helping people change things in their lives when they feel stuck. He works with individuals and organisations and can be contacted at admin@therealyou.info. Peter is married with four adult children and attends All Saints Church in Littlehampton.

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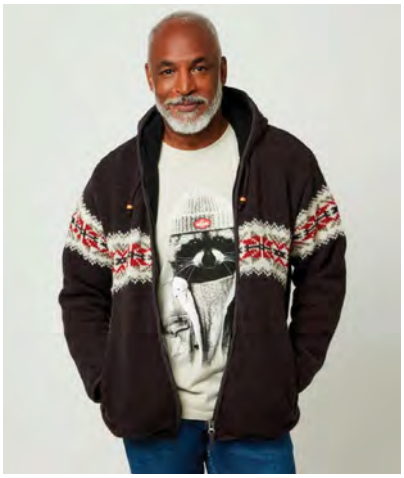
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RADZI CHINYANGANYA



‘I’d love to see somebody who reflects our country, leading our country.’

Robert Timothy

I kid you not

From bobsleigh to *Blue Peter* and beyond: Radzi Chinyanganya has kept us entertained on everything from *Crufts* to *Songs of Praise* – and even *Dancing on Ice*. Here, the TV presenter turned children's author tells us how God has been the guiding light behind his success …

BY SAMANTHA REA

How have you been getting through lockdown?

I've been staying with my mum in Wolverhampton. My mum works in mental health for the NHS, so I've known the importance of the NHS since I was four years old, and the only positive for me [about lockdown] is that a light's been shone on the NHS. Hopefully it will mean it gets funded more effectively for however many years to come.

With your mum working for the NHS, what did you think about the clapping during lockdown, and the posters etc. thanking NHS workers?

I like the principle of the clapping, because on my street there are three people who work for the NHS and it put a smile on their faces. It's rare that the country comes together and says a unified thank you for everything you do, especially in a sector that doesn't necessarily get remunerated that highly.

I'm proud to have the NHS in our country, but it only works as well as it's resourced. Hospitals are run on goodwill, because the reality is, the staff are going above and beyond, doing more hours than they're contracted. It's lovely that we applauded them, but from a long term standpoint, that can only last for so long. I believe in rewarding people, and funding things, properly.

Do you think the money spent on posters and paint thanking NHS workers should have been spent on pay rises?

I don't think it has to be one or the other. If I was in charge of the country, one of my main priorities would be putting money in the NHS. I'd be less concerned about people who are shooting grouse, and more concerned with people on the frontline. If you have Prime Ministers, 75% of whom have all attended the same secondary school, at a price per year that's greater than the average salary in this country, something's wrong. I'd love to see somebody who reflects our country, leading our country. →



Stu Forster/Getty Images

← How has COVID affected your work?

It meant a total transformation of what I was doing. I was meant to be working at the Olympic Games in Tokyo, the Invictus Games in the Hague, and the World Indoor Athletics Championships in China – and it all went down like a stack of dominoes.

So I went back to what got me into TV – hustling! I've worked on *Songs of Praise* and a Team GB podcast series called *The Moments that Made Me*. I've done a lot of the online stuff from my bedroom, and when I've worked at Broadcasting House for the BBC, there'd be about 16 people on a floor that would normally have at least 500 people on it.

Working at the World Snooker Championship and the US Open meant filming without a crowd, and working with the same people every day. We were tested daily, with either temperature tests or swab tests and we had bracelets to prove we'd been tested. We had meals brought to our rooms because we couldn't go out of the hotel to get food. It's not as much work as I'd normally do, but I've been very fortunate in the work I have done.

Did working with COVID restrictions feel strange?

I'd rather we skewed that way, because if you're run by risk-averse people, nothing will ever get done. I drive on a motorway at 70 miles an hour – I can crash, I could die. But we don't ban people from driving. In order for society to continue, for jobs not to be lost, for businesses not to go under, for people to survive, we need to continue in some vein. If that means making adaptations, I'm all for it. As long as it's safe, I don't see any problem in getting things moving.

I'm from Wolverhampton, and three weeks after lockdown started, the units in the town centre were already becoming vacant. That was always going to happen, because it's not an affluent area and a lot of businesses are only just making ends meet, so if you extricate any demand, they'll go under.

It's a question of balance, in terms of avoiding people contracting the virus, and protecting the lives of people who will struggle to survive if they lose their jobs. We can all say, 'It's right to stay safe,' and it *is* right, but people sometimes say 'You can't be too safe' – and the fact is, you *can* be too hungry, you *can* be too poor, and you *can* be too homeless. I feel strongly about that because people on lower incomes have really suffered and will continue to suffer. I hope they'll be given help in the months and potentially years to come.

We know you're massively into fitness and your Instagram shows you're doing lots of training. How much has exercise helped you cope with lockdown?

Two things that help me cope with life are the gym and being busy. Being busy got taken away from me, and the gym got taken away from me, so I bought a bench press, a power bar, and Olympic dumbbell bars for my mum's garage – I've had to be inventive! It didn't really scratch the itch, but it just about kept my needs at bay. I love working out, so possibly my hardest challenge was not being able to do what I like to do in the gym.

A lot of people have struggled with their mental health during lockdown, and this is something men often find difficult to talk about. What do you think we need to do as a society to help men with their mental health, and if you find yourself struggling, what do you do?

The biggest killer of men under 40 is suicide. If we go back 40 years, that's just after Thatcher came in and caused unemployment, specifically in manual labour. As a man you have testosterone coursing through your system and we operate well when we're being physical, whether that's in the mines, the Army, or a factory. Taking away men's ability to move and lift stuff is one factor. Another is losing our identity, which is often as the breadwinner. From a societal standpoint, that really hurts. I also think that as men or women, we're not meant to be locked up. I see a therapist and it's enormously useful, but if I didn't have the gym – or my mum's garage – no therapist would be able to help me. I'd spiral, because I need that to cope. A lot of guys do. So if you take away the gym, you take away their ability to cope.

How much of an influence has Christianity had on you?

God has been my guiding light all my life, whether it's a small prayer, or a continual prayer I might have about certain things. My granddad from my mum's side was Catholic – he was an altar boy. My mum's Catholic and so am I. I go to church and I was an altar boy myself. Growing up, I was christened, I had my first Holy Communion and I was confirmed.

I wanted to represent my country in skeleton bobsleigh, in the Winter Olympics of 2014. I spent years training for it, and when it became clear it wasn't going to happen for me, outside of personal loss, it was the hardest thing I'd ever had to face. That was when I decided to pursue another unicorn – becoming a presenter.

I spent three years working for free, being a runner, an intern, even a mascot! But underpinning it all was a belief in God, that whatever I'm doing, it has a purpose. Not that I will get where I want to per se, but that it has a purpose.

It was difficult because my friends were starting life – they were getting jobs and going on holiday, or going out, and I had no money. I was staying on at university as a sub-warden, so I had free food and accommodation, and in return I had to be on call for students. I felt like the guy who stayed at the party too long.

My family were pillars of support but I didn't know if what I was doing was futile, because it's not like most things where you see progress.

I became frustrated with God. I felt as though sometimes you can pray for something, and hope that it happens the way you want it to happen. Or you can try to involve God in everything you do. I felt I was trying to do that, and the result was nothing but personal pain and anguish.

In the March of 2013, I said a prayer. I said, 'God, I believe in you, but I'm not going to bother trying to keep you in my heart in everything I do, because it's obviously not working.' I said: 'This is my final prayer, over and out.'

Two weeks later, I was asked to screen test for a new CBBC show called *Wild*. A week after that, I was offered the role, and at the end of the series I had two meetings on the same day. In the first one, they offered me a job presenting *Match of the Day Kickabout*. Then in the next one, they said: 'We'd like you to become the 37th *Blue Peter* presenter.'

As far as best days ever go, that was it. I'm not an emotional guy, but I cried and I cried.

In the Bible, it talks about how Abraham was going to sacrifice his own son, because that's what he thought he had to do. He was taken to breaking point, but when it came to the moment of cutting the boy in half, God says he doesn't have to, because he's proven himself.

It says in the Bible that God will only take you to breaking point – not beyond. I was taken to breaking point, then I had an incredible breakthrough and my life changed. It hasn't been easy and I don't have a social life, but I've never looked back.

They say it's not what you know, but who you know. I kind of agree, but unfortunately, I don't know the right people, so for me it's about hustling and working hard. And when you're given an opportunity, grabbing it with both hands and riding the bull until the wheels fall off! I believe God's guiding me, but I have to work as hard as it takes because it's never going to be a handout.



Robert Timothy

‘There’s often discussion around gender equality, but seldom around race equality.’

You presented a BBC World Service special on George Floyd, and we’ve seen the strength of support for the Black Lives Matter movement. What do you think we need to do in this country to get us to where we need to be, and what would you say to people who think racism is just an American problem?

My first experience of racism was when I was six. I remember coming home and saying to my parents, ‘What’s a black bastard?’ I fell asleep on a bus once, and when I woke up, someone had written ‘BNP’ on the back of my seat. Three guys tried to jump me, and I’ve had a guy hurling abuse and shouting the ‘n’ word at me. He was about 5ft 5, and he was with two girls, standing next to a park. A week later, I saw on the news that small guys with women were threatening people from various communities to lure them into the park, where a bunch of 20 guys would smash their faces in.

So does racism exist in the UK? Sadly, yes it does. It doesn’t affect me on a daily basis, but is there bias? Well, QCs and politicians are seldom black, and none of the BBC’s top-earning presenters are black. There’s often discussion around gender equality, but seldom around race equality. I’d like to see discussions on television and radio, and a young persons’ *Question Time*.

I’ve been given an opportunity to do incredible things, and a chance to communicate to young people, ‘This is who I am, and I’m not a stereotype.’ For example, there’s a stereotype that black people can’t swim, and it’s true that there’s a higher percentage of black people who can’t swim – but it’s not a physiological thing, it’s a cultural thing. A lot of black girls, if they have weaved hair and it’s glued or sewn in, they don’t want to get their hair wet. If mothers don’t want to get their hair wet, the chances are, they won’t take their kids swimming. Also, it takes me about half an hour to wash my hair, so if I get my hair wet in →



Matthew Lewis/Getty Images for Laureus

Radzi is proud of both sides of his heritage – the Scottish and the African. Pictured with David Coulthard at the 2019 Laureus World Sports Awards in 2019.

← chlorine, it's a bit of a commitment. That's why on *Blue Peter* I made a thing about, 'I'm *going* to jump in the water, I'm *going* to get gunged, I'm *going* to do all these things,' just to quietly, subconsciously, communicate to young kids like me growing up, that you *can* go swimming, and you *can* do silly things.

My name is not John Smith – that's communicating a message. The way my hair looks – *that* communicates a message. I'm proud of both sides of my heritage. At formal events, you'll see me wearing kilts, because my grandad fought for the Black Watch – and I'm as proud of my African side as I am of my Scottish side.

A lot of the issues that affect black people also affect working class white and Asian people. I believe it's about galvanising communities to find collaborative solutions to problems. This is far-reaching and people do have answers, because it isn't rocket science. It's about having a plan and being able to action that plan, with governmental support.

You've done so much for young people – is it important to you to reach young people while they're still open to being influenced?

It doesn't take a lot as a kid to spark an idea, for the lightbulb to go on, to empower a child, subconsciously or otherwise, for it to change the rest of their lives. I could have opted for a life of crime – I could be waking up now in prison, or I could be excited about what I'm doing next in television. That boils down to decisions you make when you're young, and the effects they have.

University has become more transactional than ever. When I was at Uni, people didn't really choose subjects based on an occupation – it was often about an interest or a passion. Whereas increasingly, I'm hearing young people say, 'I'm going to get my 2:1 and get my grad job.' I think that's a shame. Because we're saying we need the right A-levels, to go to the right university, to get the right grades, to get the right grad job. To do that, you have to go to the right school to get the right GCSEs to get the right A-levels. That's missing the whole thing, because when we're six feet under, I don't think we'll say, 'I wish I'd spent more time in the office.' It's about seeing the flowers along the way and learning about who you are. We're taking all of that, 'Who am I?' out of the equation.

Can you tell us about your children's book that's coming out in January?

It's aimed at six to eleven year olds and it's all about getting kids moving. I've loved sport all my life. Growing up, I went to seven different schools, so I'm used to being the new kid. I knew I'd be OK at break time because that's when you do sport and I could communicate that I had value. But it wasn't until I worked in kids' TV and went into schools as an adult, that I realised sport excludes, as much it included for me. When I said the word 'sports' some people cowered away and I could see they hated the thought of it.

I thought, 'How can we make it for everyone?' That's when I decided to focus on movement rather than sport. It's not competitive, and we can all enjoy how we feel, without worrying about how we look – because if you focus on how you *feel*, you might want to do it again and again. That may in turn change how you look, but that's not the point. If you're sporty, you'll get something different out of it than if you're not so sporty.

> **'It doesn't take a lot ... to empower a child.'**

It's about balance, co-ordination, concentration and moving like different animals. I looked at animals that inspired me and thought, how could I replicate that movement? Each page has facts about an animal, as well as showing you how to move like that animal. You don't need equipment and you don't need much space – it's about using your imagination to move your body, and hopefully it's fun to read. There are 'waking-up routines' to get you ready for the day, and 'settling down routines' for going to sleep.

The illustrator has made it everything I wanted it to be and more. It's important to me that the book is affordable for everybody, so we've avoided coloured pages because that adds £10 onto the RRP. This book isn't just for wealthy kids or sporty kids, or kids who are a certain size – it's for every kid. I'm really excited about it. S.



Move Like A Lion by Radzi Chinyanganya is published by DK, £5.99 (7th January 2021)



SAMANTHA REA

Samantha Rea is a London based dual-nationality freelance journalist with an MSc from LSE. When she's not interviewing celebrities or writing lifestyle features, she can usually be found amongst her eclectic assortment of plants, reading Jilly Cooper or ducking from seagulls while doing yoga.

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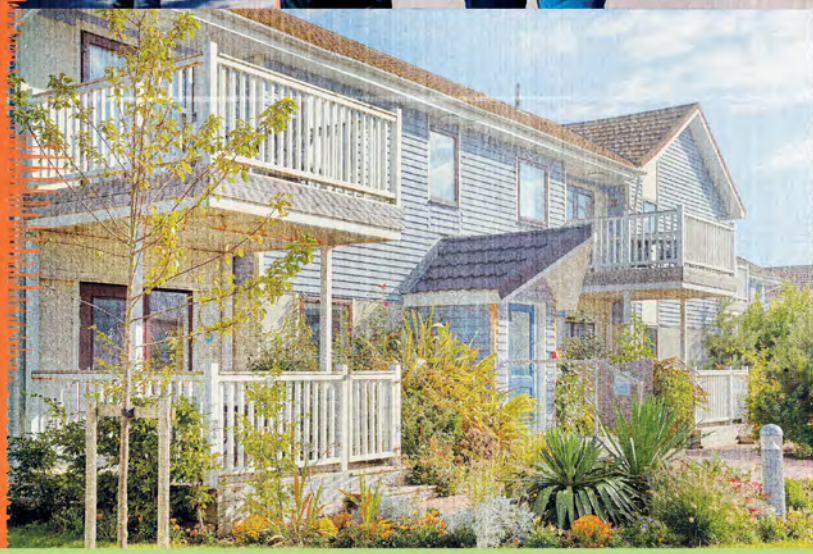
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Tom Watson pictured in 2015 when he became deputy leader of the Labour Party.

Labour of love

From Deputy Leader of the Labour Party to *Sunday Times* bestselling author, Tom Watson talks exclusively to *Sorted* about life after Westminster and his eight stone weight loss (despite buying cheese by the truckle…)

BY SAMANTHA REA

A lot of us have been eating and drinking more in lockdown. Have you been able to maintain your healthy lifestyle?

Lockdown was disruptive, but I'd also just left Westminster, given up a team that provided me with a support network, and moved back to the Midlands, with only a month to set up a home office and start trying to live a commercial life, writing books and doing new things. So lockdown was up and down for me. The first month, I was doing Joe Wicks PE, but by the middle of lockdown, I'd gone into a slump. My routines were undermined and I developed a big cheese-eating habit! For my new podcast series, I'd interviewed Ned Palmer, the author of *A Cheesemonger's History of the British Isles*. His enthusiasm for cheese was infectious and I was soon buying Mrs Kirkham's Lancashire Cheese by the truckle!

My home office is 15 feet from the fridge, and I didn't realise how much I was eating, so for the first time in three years, I put on weight. The gyms were closed, so I couldn't compensate, and I got really worried. Now I'm through my cheese-eating phase, and I'm getting back on track. It shows that if your routines are disrupted, it's easy to slip back, if you don't address it.

In *Downsizing* you wrote that the lifestyle changes you made brought you closer to your Christian faith. What did you mean by that?

At the heart of it, it was the ability for reflection. I spent more time on my own, reflecting on my life and values. I was brought up Christian, and confirmed Christian, and went to a C of E school, and it put me back in touch with my faith in a way I wasn't expecting. That came from the headspace to reflect more, at a deep level.

You've referred to your mum as having 'that strand of Christian Socialism in her,' and said, 'that was a powerful force in my upbringing, though I didn't know

TOM WATSON BIOGRAPHY

- Born 8 January 1967
- Chair National Organisation of Labour Students 1992-1993
- Worked for the Labour Party and the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union
- Elected MP for West Bromwich East 2001 and remained the MP until 2019
- Appointed Parliamentary Under-Secretary of Defence in 2006, a position he had to resign after he called on Tony Blair (Prime Minister at the time) to resign.
- In 2007, he rejoined the Labour Whips office, under the new Prime Minister, Gordon Brown.
- 2008-2009: Minister for Digital Engagement and Civil Service issues
- 2011: new leader Ed Milliband appointed him both deputy chair of the National Executive and campaign co-ordinator for the 2015 election: Tom Watson resigned from both posts in 2013.
- He became deputy leader, under Jeremy Corbyn, in 2015, and remained as such until he left politics in December 2019.

‘I’ve never been more relieved that I left political life when I did!’



it at the time.’ When did you become aware of that and in what way did it influence you?

When I was born, the local vicar was a Marxist theologian. As a child, I didn’t realise it was unusual that your local vicar would’ve stood for the Communist party – but he did. He did a lot for the community and my mum thought he was wonderful. That twin track of Christianity and politics was all around me in my formative years, without me knowing the significance. It was only in adulthood, probably as I approached middle age, that I could work it all through more deeply.

What do you think of the way the Covid crisis has been handled? Is there anything you would have done differently?

I’ve never been more relieved that I left political life when I did! It’s virtually impossible for a public policy maker to make the right calls on a fast moving situation like the spread of a global pandemic. They’re making huge calls that impact on millions of people’s lives and cost the taxpayer billions, with only partial information.

It’s difficult, so I don’t want to apportion blame, but I would have locked down a week, maybe 10 days before we had the first proper lockdown. Having been on the cabinet sub-committee that dealt with avian flu, and having been the minister that had oversight of civil contingencies, I realise how making those early decisions can have a dramatic impact on the number of cases that develop.

Not having a track and trace system in place earlier has slowed up our ability to be resilient, and I’d have probably involved public health bodies and local authorities more in the development of it.

In May, the law on organ donation changed to the opt-out system. You proposed this in 2002: how did you feel when you heard the news? →

© Colin Thomas



‘It felt like my IQ had gone up.’

Tom Watson with Jeremy Corbyn and Shadow Chancellor, John McDonnell, at a meeting in 2017.

Leon Neal/Getty Images



← I was delighted. It’s called ‘Organ donation presumed consent.’ I wasn’t the first to do it: Tam Dalyell had proposed presumed consent in the 1970s, so the notion had been around for decades. People are losing their lives, even now, because they’re on a waiting list for organs and they don’t get them in time. I’ve lost friends like that, and I’ve got a loved one who would have lost his life had he not had a transplant, so I was moved when it went through.

Given the change in leadership of the Labour party, would you ever return to politics?

No, not to frontline politics. There’s nothing more ex than an ex-MP. I’ve given 30 years to the Labour party and public life – you’ve got to know when to go. I’d seen a lot of MPs, particularly if they’d been ministers, and then they’re in opposition, leaving it too long to go, so I think I was right to leave when I did. I’d run out of road. I’d done my best to hold the Labour party together, I’d lost the row on our positioning on the EU, and I thought it was right for the next generation to take over. I’ve been pleasantly surprised, and proud of Keir for the leadership he’s shown already and for reuniting the Labour party so quickly. He’s got tough decisions ahead, and he’s under pressure, but so far so good.

Your 2012 book *Dial M for Murdoch* shone a light on the power of media tycoon Rupert Murdoch. What do you think is the extent of Murdoch’s power now?

When I talk about *Dial M for Murdoch* it feels like I’m looking back on a different life. It was such an emotionally, spiritually, physically traumatic episode, living in fear a lot of the time.

I think we’ve made great progress. I don’t think tabloid journalists would routinely break the law now, like they were a decade ago. Rupert Murdoch is in his latter years as a media mogul, and his legacy will be mixed. He could have been the great media entrepreneur and innovator of the 20th century, but he will forever carry the phone-hacking scandal around with him, as part of his reputation. Politicians will be more wary when they deal with him and his people. However, he is still probably the most powerful media mogul on the planet, and he carries great weight with politicians. You can see his influence in the editorials of his newspapers, so in that sense, he survived. Remember at the time, David Cameron promised a police enquiry into historical relationships between police and journalists – which Theresa May shelved, when they shelved the Leveson 2 enquiry. Rupert Murdoch took a glancing blow from the industrial criminality that took place on his newspapers many years ago, but he survived it.

Do you think Labour’s poor showing in the election last December was a result of people not wanting Corbyn as Prime Minister?

I don’t think you can ever blame an election loss on one issue. The market research is clear, and most Labour candidates heard it on the doorstep: a large number of what I would describe as traditional Labour supporters had lost confidence in Jeremy as a leader and, perhaps more importantly, the manifesto he stood for. So that’s part of it, but there are other issues too. We didn’t have a clear position on Brexit, and I don’t think people wanted a Christmas election – I was against it myself – and I think people went for what they thought was the least worst option. So they didn’t make a positive choice, they just stuck with the status quo.

You’ve been described as an anti-gambling crusader, so there was something of uproar when you took on a role as an advisor with gambling firm Flutter. Did you anticipate that?

Within some political factions of Westminster, anything I do creates a stir! I’ve never actually been anti-gambling – I’ve had

the odd bet since my early working life. I'm not good at betting – I don't win very often – but I don't put much money on.

The Chief Executive of Flutter has said he wants a race to the top on responsible gambling, and I'm trying to find the best mechanisms to reassure the public that the harm caused by gambling to a small section of society are dealt with. It's early days but I'm pleased they're determined to get these arrangements right.

Offering you a job might almost be viewed as a PR stunt – did you believe they really wanted to do better?

Yeah, I'm definitely not a spokesman for the company, and I understood there was a degree of risk on my side – but there's also a degree of risk on their side. You have to be convinced of their intention, and I was. A lot of the gambling reformers I've worked with have got in touch and said, 'We hope you can do some good from the inside at Flutter.' They're one of the biggest companies in the UK and hopefully they can take their competitors with them in the reforms they make. I hope I'll play a positive role there.

After indulging over Christmas, what are your tips for losing weight in the New Year?

Tiny changes over time have a powerful cumulative impact, but even tiny changes seem huge at the start. I decided to cut out as much sugar as possible, and that meant changing what I drank. I used to love Guinness and beer – now I drink wine and spirits. It means I drink less and I don't feel as impacted by alcohol. When I drank beer, I got momentous hangovers – now I realise that's probably sugar spikes. So if you're starting in January, think about it beforehand. Don't panic over Christmas – let yourself go with your loved ones, but get a plan in place. It could be as simple as cutting out sugar and giving yourself a steps target for the month. It doesn't have to be dramatic to start the journey.

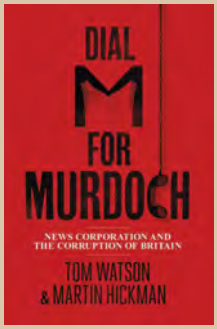
Cutting out sugar can seem like a big step. What's a good starting point?

There's low-hanging fruit, if I can use that metaphor! I used to eat KitKats and Mars Bars every time I went into the Members' canteen in the House of Commons, and whenever I went into a coffee shop, I'd buy sugary pastries. I eliminated them and I replaced them – if I replaced them with anything – with nuts, but not peanuts! If you want to go further, I then moved from processed food to real food. As an MP, I'd get lots of takeaways, burgers on the go, and microwave meals. I moved to what you'd classically call meat and two veg, although these days I'd call it meat and five veg, because I eat lots of vegetables! That's harder, because you have to find time to shop for the right food, prepare it, and in my case, remember the recipes. But the rewards are great.

It wasn't just losing weight – you found you had greater clarity of mind and more energy, didn't you?

I used to have broken sleep and go to the bathroom once or twice in the night. In the morning I'd wake up thinking, 'What part of me aches the most?' But when I cut out sugar and started mild exercise, my sleep improved. Sleep is medicine, so it had a great impact. I slept deeper and better – and in the morning, my brain was alert. It was like a lifting of brain fog. It felt like my IQ had gone up. I could remember facts and figures better and quicker, and I could think through complex ideas more deeply. Even now, if I eat processed food or carbs, I'll feel mild brain fog, because there's a relationship between food and cognitive health. I'm more focused and disciplined now. It's the cognitive gains that I value the most and I never want to lose them. S.

'There's nothing more ex than an ex-MP.'



Dial M for Murdoch

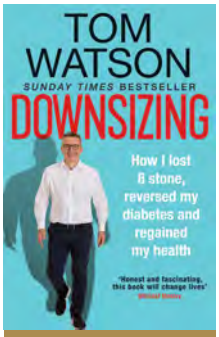
Tom Watson & Martin Hickman

Published by Penguin at £8.99

This book is not just about the concerted campaign to destroy Tom Watson, but the whole of the phone-hacking scandal. To quote the blurb, 'For years Rupert Murdoch's newspapers had been hacking, spying, blagging, bribing and destroying the evidence. They thought they were untouchable. They were wrong.'

Times may have changed but, as Tom Watson says, essentially Rupert Murdoch and most of his staff got away with their behaviour. This book reminds us of just what happens when one man is allowed to become too powerful, and when those organisations that should stand against his power – government and police, in some cases – do not do so. For some reason, the book was not reviewed in the *Times*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Sun* or the *Sun on Sunday*. I wonder why? Highly recommended.

REVIEW BY ALI HULL, DEPUTY EDITOR



Downsizing by Tom Watson is published by Kyle Books, out in paperback on 7 January, £8.99.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

The award-winning singer-songwriter Josh Groban talks exclusively to *Sorted* about his breakthrough duet with Celine Dion, a $50,000 surprise, and why he wants to replace Noel Fielding on *Great British Bake Off*…



BY SAMANTHA REA

How did you choose the songs you covered on your new album?

Part of the early process was getting a piano and singing through songs I've wanted to sing for a long time, songs people shared with me that they thought might be right or that they just love, and songs I haven't listened to in a long time, but which have new meaning with what you're going through in your life. Also songs where fans have said over and over, 'Please sing this song!'

One of the good things on social media is talking about music, and fans telling you songs they love hearing you sing. You start to realise what feels good in your voice, and feels good in your soul.

It's daunting picking classic songs that people know. In some ways it's scarier than writing your own, because these songs have meant so much to people – they're soundtracks to people's lives. →





← I was surprised that you covered Robbie Williams' song *Angels* alongside more established classics. How did that come about?

I love Robbie Williams, and America loves Robbie Williams! I grew up listening to those songs – they were part of my high school and college life. He has so many eras of amazing music, and that song has a message I love right now.

The song will always be Robbie's – but like any great song, it can be done a number of ways. When you try to tackle a song that's so beloved, by an artist who's so beloved, you want to honour it, but you also want to try your own style on it, so I had fun singing it. When we finally get touring again, I'm going to have so much fun singing it live. Maybe I'll get to sing it with Robbie!

You've done duets with the most amazing people including Barbara Streisand, Johnny Mathis, and Placido Domingo. Who's been your favourite person to duet with?

The most life-changing duet for me was with Celine Dion when I was 16, and I was asked to sing *The Prayer* – that was the moment that started the trajectory of having a career in this business.

It made my life to sing *Bridge Over Troubled Water* with Paul Simon in New York, and I'll never forget singing with the great Aretha Franklin at Radio City Music Hall for Nelson Mandela – but my favourite duet ever was with my dad.

I'd recorded *Old Devil Moon* with the great trumpet player Chris Botti, but Chris was touring and wasn't able to do our LA concert. My dad had played trumpet all through college, then put it away for 30 years. I said to my dad: 'You've got three months. Dust off the old trumpet, learn this song, then I want you to come up on stage!' The song's from *Finian's Rainbow*, which is the first musical I had a lead role in, so doing that and being able to call out my Dad on stage – it meant a lot to us.

What inspired the two original tracks on the album?

I write my best songs on an airplane, or on a walk, just putting it into my phone, but whenever I unexpectedly have an idea, it's always in a place that's *not* convenient to write a song! I'll have to wake myself up out of bed, or towel off and put my clothes on.

This album was going to be all covers. I thought, 'The album after this, I'll start refilling the tank to write again.' But the world changed, and all I had was time by myself, and a piano. I listened to music to feel better, and get inspired, and I played the piano to express myself.

Writing these songs was therapeutic for me and I recorded them in my bedroom. They felt right for me, right now, because they express the hope, the gratitude and the idea that we have to take stock of the simple things in our lives that give us the most joy.

You've performed at the Vatican, the Emmy Awards and Barack Obama's presidential inauguration – to name a few! Is there one performance that stands out to you?

I've been lucky to perform on so many wonderful stages. One of the most special was making my Broadway debut with my family flown in from LA, because that was my first dream, from that dorm room bed, when I wondered if I should sign the record deal. I knew I was giving up an amazing musical theatre education to take this risk, so all those years later, to step out on a Broadway stage for the first time in a lead role, with my parents in the audience, was very special. Particularly after all the countless theatre productions I did at school, and making costumes in my bedroom, and the flood of memories of what this meant to me growing up. It's amazing when you can see things through the lens of your family, so whenever they've been in the audience, it's meant a lot to me.



Josh Groban and Celine Dion at the 2007 American Music Awards.

Frederick M. Brown/Getty Images

'The most life-changing duet for me was with Celine Dion.'

I read that you were raised in a Christian household. In what way has that shaped you?

I was raised in an interesting household, religiously. My father's side of the family is Jewish, and my mom's side were raised Episcopalian. Growing up, we had Christmases, but the idea of faith was more open-ended. My brother and I were raised on humanism and love, and the idea that we could find, in our own ways and our own time, a personal connection to spirituality. We didn't have Bible study, we were just taught the tenets of trying to be a good person, and loving somebody as you'd want to be loved. I felt lucky that I was raised with that kind of love and understanding.

I wouldn't say I fall into one religion, necessarily – especially now. Having a tightly controlled life, and wanting to know all the answers can lead to cynicism when it comes to faith, but I've felt more comfortable, especially in the last four years, being OK with a →



At the Obama Inaugural celebration in 2009.

Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

SELECTED CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Albums



Josh Groban **2001**



Closer **2003**



Awake **2006**



Noel **2007**



Illumination **2010**



All that Echoes **2013**



Stages **2015**



Bridges **2018**

Films



Crazy, Stupid, Love **2011**



Coffee Town **2013**



NBC Guest appearance in *The Office* (US) **2011**



Netflix *The Good Cop* **2018**

TV/Streaming



Muppets Most Wanted **2014**



The Hollars **2016**

← wider notion of faith in terms of just putting my hands up and letting go, and being at peace with what's unknown.

If I were to go back to school, I'd love to study all religions. I have wonderful conversations about art, religion and politics, and how it's all intertwined. I'm still on that journey, I'm still trying to define it, but also I feel a deep sense of peace in the not so defined.

What are the highs and lows of fame?

It's a privilege to have a voice and a platform, where you can express yourself and people want to hear your expression. It's incredible travelling around the world and seeing it through the lens of music – you realise we all have so much in common.

Travel is sometimes a pitfall too – you have to leave your friends and loved ones behind. It's lonely, especially as a solo singer. You're constantly in a recording studio, or a tour bus, or a hotel room, so you're experiencing a lot, but often in an isolated way.

You get a lot of praise and criticism. There's so much noise, and sometimes it's hard to listen to your truest inner voice. You have to learn to trust your instincts. I try to amplify those instincts and that voice, to remember the nucleus to who you are, why you're here, why you love to do this, and what makes you *you*. When there's a hype around you, that can be hard to go back to.

> **'I hope we all come back to what makes us who we are.'**

You've popped up on some brilliant TV shows like *Glee*, *Ally McBeal* and *The Muppets*. Are there any TV shows you haven't been in yet that you'd still like to be in?

I've been in so many shows I've loved, like *The Office* and *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*. I'd love to have been in *Breaking Bad* playing a real bad guy, and if I could bring back *Peewee's Playhouse* I'd want to be in that. It was my Saturday morning show and the most amazing actors made cameos in insane outfits.

I'm starting to get into cooking and I'd love to take a lesson on one of the cooking shows. If Noel wants a break from *Great British Bake Off* I'd volunteer. I'd be a terrible judge, but it would be incredible – my whole face would be covered in frosting!

You've performed at a lot of charity events and you have your own charitable foundation. Why is it important to you to give back?



I love giving back to lots of charities, but the arts are something I have personal experience with. Growing up, I was lucky to have a family environment that nurtured the arts and arts education. My dad had played trumpet, and my mom was an arts teacher before my brother and I were born, so they understood the value of the arts, and I got to go to arts camp, and take lessons, and see concerts at the Hollywood Bowl.

My fan base is so philanthropic, they surprised me with a $50,000 cheque at a concert. They stopped the show and said, 'We've sold all our autographs and we're giving this money back to you – we want you to start a foundation.' So I created the Find Your Light Foundation which gives kids the experiences I was lucky enough to have growing up.

There are so many kids trying to cope with their neighbourhood, their family life, their school life. If we find real talent, that's a bonus, but the main purpose is to give kids a purpose, because it's proven that when the arts are incorporated into the curriculum, your whole life changes. Parents come to their school productions and they have something to talk about. Kids that had behavioural problems, or who felt shy and trapped inside themselves, suddenly, with a drum or a monologue or a dance, get to know their own thoughts and emotions for the first time, and the kid who was sitting in the back row starts sitting at the front.

The best way I can give back is to make sure as many youngsters as possible get to have that chance to express themselves through the arts.

What are your hopes for 2021?

We're in a unique position now, in that many of our hopes are the same. Prior to this year, we all had our own treadmills we were running on, and our own thoughts about what we wanted to accomplish, what diet we want to try, all the *stuff* we wanted. I think this New Year's Eve will be sobering for a lot of people, including myself.

In my country, we're so divided. Between the election and the pandemic, we're all exhausted, isolated and afraid, so my hope for '21 is that we find vaccines, and get over this pandemic and connect safely with each other again, which is something we all crave. I hope we all come back to what makes us who we are. Music will play a big part of that for me. I'd love to travel and sing in front of an audience again – but my main hope for '21 is that we start bridging the divide we have right now. S.



Josh Groban's new album *Harmony* is out now via Reprise Records.

Remembering a proper **Bobby dazzler**

Steve Legg pays tribute to the late, great Bobby Ball.



Hilaria McCarthy/Daily Express/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Cannon and Ball made a feature film *The Boys in Blue*, in 1982.

I'll never forget standing next to Bobby Ball, in just our underwear, looking at a crowd assembled for our show. We thought no one could see us. It turned out they most definitely could, and a new double act was almost formed, 'The Spy-Fronts'. More of that later.

Bobby was one half of comedy duo Cannon and Ball. Together with his friend and colleague, Tommy Cannon, they started their career in clubland, before becoming mainstays of TV in the early 1980s with their own top-rated show. In 1982, they even made a feature film: *The Boys in Blue*.

In later years, Bobby starred in sitcoms such as *Last of the Summer Wine*, *Mount Pleasant*, *Benidorm* and most recently, *Not Going Out*, where he played Lee Mack's unreliable dad, Frank.

Cannon and Ball both took part in *I'm A Celebrity...Get Me Out Of Here* in 2005, with Bobby making it to the last five. So it looks like he wanted to stay more than the title suggested.

Their story began when the ex-welders, who clearly sparked off each other, made their first TV appearance in 1968 on Hughie Green's popular talent show, *Opportunity Knocks*. They came last, but some years later, against the odds, LWT supremo Michael Grade saw their act and insisted they were given their own series.

They hadn't made the grade, but Grade made them. The rest, as they say, is history.

Cannon and Ball were my childhood heroes. As a kid, Saturday evenings saw me sitting in front of the TV to watch Bobby winding Tommy up. Their daft sketches, great guests and musical numbers saw the show fast become ITV's most successful series in the 1980s – pulling in a staggering 20 million viewers at its peak.

Apart from the regular Saturday night shows, there were Christmas and Easter specials, musical albums, pantomimes and, in 1985, their summer season theatre performances out-sold Bruce Springsteen's British tour. While 'The Boss' made records, Tommy and Bobby broke them everywhere they went. That year, it turns out, it was the boys who were on fire.

At the height of their fame, they bought identical gold Rolls-Royces, beachfront homes in the Canary Islands, and even boats. When Bobby invested in a nightclub in Rochdale and called it Braces, Tommy – not to be outdone – bought his local football team, Rochdale FC.



Fox Photos/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

Cannon and Ball starring in the pantomime *Babes in the Wood*, 1987.

Yet behind the scenes, not everything was so rosy. The real irony was that while the duo had achieved the success they worked so hard for, their own relationship had fallen apart. For a couple of years in the mid-80s they didn't speak a word to each other, except on stage.

In 1985, I heard that Bobby had become a Christian. He'd been known for his wild, unpredictable character and his drinking, fighting and womanising. Then he met theatre chaplain, Rev Max Wigley, for a chat about Christianity. Despite the fame and fortune his career had given him, Bobby realised something was missing from his life, and he asked God to take over. He was never the same again.

As a young Christian myself, I was really encouraged by this and started praying regularly for Tommy. Amazingly, six years later 'Rock on Tommy' became Tommy on The Rock as he became a Christian (I don't want to take all the credit on that one, but I'll take a little) and the two decided to use their talents to share their faith.

At that point, I'd been travelling all over the UK and Europe for seven years, using a daft mix of comedy and escapology, and you can imagine how I felt to be invited to be part of Cannon and Ball's Gospel Tour in theatres and arenas all around the country.

Christianity had had such an impact on Bob, he would readily share his faith in every way he could, and his amazing gift for weaving comedy and faith into his routines meant that he was listened to by audiences everywhere he went. He wanted to share the reality of the Christian message and the change it had made in his life. It was impossible for him to keep his faith quiet.

In our 1995 touring show, we performed to more than fifty thousand people over 48 nights. It was the stuff of my dreams – performing with my favourite comedians, becoming pals and sharing Jesus with people as we travelled the length and breadth of the country. It was a wonderful experience. Bob and Tom were the stars of the show, but the cast also featured the solo singer, Danny Owen, the duo Perfect Match and yours truly – as in me, not a badly named tribute band.

Each night, I'd open the second half, appearing out of an empty box, only to be manacled into a regulation straitjacket from which I attempted to extricate myself faster than Houdini, with a daring difference: I escaped upside-down whilst dangling from the top of the theatre. It was a busy and exciting time, and it had more than the intended laughs.

It was all going well until we arrived at Edinburgh's magnificent King's Theatre. →



At the VIP launch of the hit kids Christmas cartoon, *It's a Boy!*

'Bobby was one of the funniest and kindest people I've ever met.'



The Cannon & Ball Gospel Show Tour.



Bobby at the British Soap Awards in 2013. Tim P. Whitby/Getty Images

← The organisers had taken us out for a slap-up pre-show, all-inclusive, eat-as-much-as-you-possibly-can Chinese buffet. Never one to let the side down, I dutifully ate as much as I could. Two hours later, Tom and Bob waited in the wings armed with buckets: I was turning various shades of green as I hung upside down, trying to get out of the straitjacket not just faster than Houdini, but before I was violently sick all over the stage. Forget escapology – keeping my dinner down was the most impressive thing I did all day.

When the shows ended, I have fond memories of sitting in the hotel bar each night laughing and joking over a few pints, egg mayonnaise sandwiches and an occasional Bacardi and Coke. We would all go to bed in the early hours exhausted, worn out by all the laughter.

A couple of years later, we were back together again for a big outdoor event in Sefton Park, Liverpool. It was the scene of a deeply unfortunate incident with a one-way mirror – you know, like the ones they have in police stations where you can see out, but no one can see in. It was also one of the most embarrassing moments of my life – and as you can probably imagine, there's been some competition.

The show itself was a huge affair organised by local churches and we had an awesome stage vehicle for the day – a bit like those used for the Radio One Roadshow –and I felt like a proper star.

Hanging out backstage drinking tea (still as rock and roll as ever), Bobby and I realised we were soon on and needed to get changed. 'These mirrors are amazing, aren't they?' I said to Bobby, as we started getting undressed. He agreed and we both stopped for a moment to stare at the crowd, hands on our hips, wondering just how many people were out there.

I'm not entirely sure how long that moment was as we stood there in our underpants, but it was brought to an abrupt halt as we spotted some women giggling and pointing in our direction. In case we had any illusions left that we were stood behind a mirror, they mouthed 'Look, it's Bobby Ball.' They probably didn't mouth it; they probably said it loudly, we just couldn't hear them through the soundproof, if not one-way, glass.

It was crystal clear that the *very* normal glass was all that stood between our pants and the vast crowd who had come to hear us tell them about Jesus. It was not the show people were expecting us to give.

Frozen to the spot, we realised we had been entertaining the crowds in a quite unplanned and most unexpected way. I belatedly caught sight of the curtains at the side of the window and swiftly pulled them. We had been caught very much with our pants, fortunately, up.

Bobby was one of the funniest and kindest people I've ever met. He had genuinely funny bones. He was a joker through and through and loved winding me up.

Another time we gigged together in Harrogate for a church guest meeting at a swanky hotel. Bob got there before me. Six hours later, I arrived at the venue to be turned away by an over-officious woman on the door because I didn't have a ticket, even though my face was on the poster. I phoned Bobby to come and rescue me, but he came to the door and, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, said 'Sorry cocker, I've never seen you in all my life.'

He was a joker, but he had a heart of gold (as well as previously owning a Rolls Royce of the same colour) and cared very much about everyone he met, and he'd help me out with anything. He and Tom appeared as quails on my kids' Christmas cartoon, *It's a Boy*. It came out in 2005 as the pair were Down Under, starring in *I'm a Celebrity*, causing a new generation of young people to fall in love with the pair.

Nothing was too much trouble for Bob – he had a truly generous spirit. In fact, we'd been texting each other about appearing on my podcast just a week before he died.

Meeting one of my childhood comedy heroes was one thing, getting to work with Bobby was another, but calling him a friend was the honour of a lifetime. S.

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Chris Jackson/Getty Images

When the booze turns to cheers

The first of two interviews with actor Kevin Kennedy.

BY TONY YORKE

Alcohol, drug and substance abuse are on the rise in the UK, with many Britons locked into taking a vicious cocktail of drink and drugs just in order to get through the day. According to the government's latest statistics, 268,251 adults – and more than 15,000 teenagers – now require help from specialist NHS drug and alcohol rehabilitation services. Yet with a success rate of less than 20% in helping patients deal long-term with their addictions, the country's mainstream services are failing to tackle the problem.

There is hope, however, and a number of Christian-based organisations are now rising to the growing challenge and having a significant impact. Tony Yorke speaks to one in particular that uses its celebrity status to help people in need.

Going down...

The cobbles were cold and unforgiving. Saliva and blood mingled with the grit and tar of the hard, northern pavement – and Kevin Kennedy's crumpled body lay deathly still.

Kevin was one of the biggest stars of *Coronation Street*, Britain's most popular television soap opera, and he had just collapsed outside his local pub. He was out cold. His body, ravaged by booze, had spectacularly decided to call time on years of revelry.

Yet things were to get worse before they started to get better.

Capturing everything that unfolded on that fateful day in 1996 was a national newspaper photographer who recorded the full, unedited story of the popular actor's plight.

There is an old saying that the camera never lies. And this day, the lens absorbed everything as Kevin lay unconscious on the roadside just a few feet away. Within hours, the dramatic pictures would reveal the secret to the world: Kevin was an alcoholic, his problem was out of control and his body could take no more.

The revelation also meant he could no longer hide. The protective cocoon that had shielded Kevin and his wife, Clare, for so long had disintegrated, leaving the couple to deal with everything that was to follow.

'It was one of the most shameful moment of my life,' recalls the star, whose Norman 'Curly' Watts character graced the small screen for 20 years. 'My secret was out of the bag. The world knew what I had been doing to myself. I couldn't pretend or hide it any more. Yet the truth is, I hadn't been driven to drink by the pressure of show business and living my life in a goldfish bowl; far from it. I liked drinking and having a good time. My big mistake was to do it to excess and get attached to addiction, so it took over my life."

Fresh in the memory

Kevin has been sober for the last 22 years, during which time he and Clare have seen their marriage go from strength to strength, albeit there has been at least one major 'bump'. Yet for Clare, the memory of finding Kevin on the kerb, after he had experienced what is called an alcoholic seizure, is still extremely raw.

'We were going home and Kevin announced he was desperate for the loo. He couldn't wait,' she remembers. 'We were close to the local pub we knew well. So I pulled the car over and let him out. I started to get worried when he didn't return after about 15 minutes, but I certainly didn't expect to find him in the condition he was in. But reaching this low didn't stop us drinking.

'I wasn't stupid. I knew Kevin liked a drink and a good time, but I really didn't want to believe he was an alcoholic. Because if I admitted he was an alcoholic, then I would have to admit the same for myself. We were both living the high life but we were both also in denial. As a result, we hit the crash barriers in a major way.'

The next few years passed by at whirlwind speed until the couple hit 1998, a year that saw their relationship and drinking hit rock bottom. It was then Clare decided she could no longer watch Kevin slowly kill himself. So she left him, and it was this time apart that would see Kevin's world fall apart, leaving him with a stark choice: ask for help or die.

At this point, Kevin was a household name and one of the main characters on the Street. Thankfully, Granada TV recognised he was in trouble and stepped in, helping the actor get access to real help and support.

The decision saved Kevin's life. Granada's cash paid for vital treatment, and it was during his time at the renowned Priory clinic that Kevin was able to begin a new, sober chapter in his life.

The time apart also forced Clare to confront her own inner demons. 'I was a binge drinker, and due to the added pressures, drama and general chaos, these binges became more frequent. I believed the drinking was helping me to cope with the crazy life we were leading. But my own denial was a problem and was clouding my thinking. I could only really see Kevin's problem as being the big issue, yet I was also a chronic alcoholic, whose life was rapidly spiralling out of control.'

Recognising they both had a serious problem took time to accept and resolve, and there were many tears along the way. And Clare also threatened the small matter of divorce!

'It wasn't a normal response to hearing your husband may die if he's around alcohol. I still loved him dearly, but his addiction meant our lives had to change, and I wasn't happy about that.'

But the couple were gradually able to confront things together.

On leaving the Priory, Kevin's career went from strength to strength. He returned to the Street, and the door opened for him to launch a musical career, which would lead to a Gold album and rave reviews on some of London's biggest West End stages.

It was the decision to take leading parts in musicals that directly led Kevin and Clare to a new faith life, and a worthy home for their passions and energies.



Lance Burkitt

'We were taken aback by the amount of addiction we saw on the streets.'

'I was brought up as a Catholic,' explains Kevin. 'Religion had always been a part of my family life. But it wasn't really relevant. And because of this, I no longer went to church or spent much time thinking about God, even though I did always believe. But when I had been sober for seven months, I had a eureka moment, suddenly realising my recovery was only made possible by a force much bigger than me. I couldn't have done it on my own. I just didn't have the willpower. Something far more powerful than me had been guarding me, keeping me on the straight and narrow. It's hard to explain, but it was a hugely significant and personal moment that was to change my life.'

People with real needs

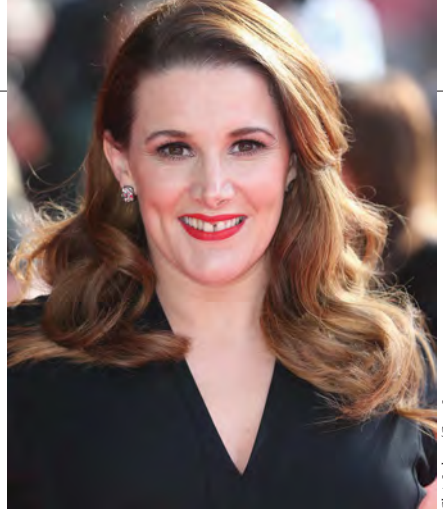
His return to health had a profound effect on Kevin. 'We had left Manchester and moved down to Brighton, and we had really settled into the community. The place had a good feel and we were keen to make a fresh start. But we were taken aback by the amount of addiction we saw on the streets. It was in Brighton. It was everywhere we went. Before my problems really surfaced, I saw people having a good time and didn't really think anything more about it. Now, after purging beer from my life, I saw things very differently, and everywhere I looked, I could see people with real needs.

'A lot of celebrities and high functioning addicts got in touch with me, and Clare and I were able to help them. These were people who had a lot to lose if their addiction became known publicly. I had experienced it myself, and I wouldn't wish that kind of exposure on anyone. You have to be strong, and have great family support to get through it, and not everyone is as lucky as me.'

Kevin continued to remain sober and rebuild his acting career, working extensively in London and in theatres throughout Britain. Meanwhile, Clare trained as an addiction counsellor and, when she had completed the formalities, opened her own not for profit organization on the south coast, dedicated to supporting the many people who have seen addiction devastate their lives.

'Kevin has been a real brick these past years,' she says. 'A lot of the money he has earned has been used to fund my work with addicts. We haven't been relying on grants, or big corporate sponsors. For two decades, we have put our money where our mouths are. And, by doing so, we have been able to help an awful lot of people.' →


John Phillips/John Phillips/ Getty Images


Chris Jackson/Getty Images


Jeff Spicer/Getty Images

Denise Welch, Sam Bailey and Darren Day are enthusiastic supporters of Kevin's Kennedy St Foundation.

← Covid-19 has undoubtedly had a negative impact on many aspects of UK life. But for the Kennedys it has helped them turn their charitable ambitions into reality.

'As soon as the pandemic hit the country, the services and support structures that normally helped people in need all closed down,' states Clare. 'All of a sudden, I started to receive hundreds of phone calls. We were inundated.'

So the Kennedys decided to get involved.

'It became apparent we had to find a way of helping people from the local area and all over the world, not just the UK,' continues Kevin. 'So many people were getting in touch and telling us they had nowhere to turn. They needed immediate support so they could start to tackle their addiction. They were desperate. Clare and I talked about things, and we agreed the best way forward was to establish our own charity so we could offer virtual recovery connections. So, earlier of this year, that's exactly what we did, and it builds on the wonderful recovery coaching work Clare has been doing.'

Kennedy St Foundation, also known as Kennedy St CiO, was formally registered with the Charities Commission on 29 April. Kevin is its Patron, while Clare is CEO. A further 15 volunteers are based at the couple's home, where they 'do whatever is necessary to make a difference'.

Actively seeking opportunities

With Kevin's help, the charity has embarked on a major recovery awareness campaign. Its launch has featured in the national press and on national TV. Several well-known friends, including *Coronation Street's* Denise Welch, *X-Factor* winner Sam Bailey, and Darren Day, the singing sensation and theatre performer, are among the foundation's enthusiastic supporters.

'I am heavily involved, but I can't get too close,' adds 59-year-old Kevin. 'The nitty-gritty of the charity is where Clare is meant to be; but it's not for me. My job is to promote what we are all about and raise our profile. It is wonderful to get such high-profile backing. The stars who are helping us are shining a spotlight on the work we do and the challenges the people we support face on a daily basis. But once the publicity machine has ground to a halt, there is still an awful lot of work to be done, and that's where Clare comes into her own.'

Among the outcomes Kevin and Clare are seeking for the people they support is a renewed sense of purpose on the work front. To this aim, they are actively seeking opportunities for former addicts to partner with experienced business professionals, so a range of diverse business ideas and opportunities have a chance of bearing fruit.

'Addicts are incredibly creative people,' confesses Kevin. 'We have to be to get our daily fix of alcohol.

I remember going into an off-licence outside of their normal opening hours, picking up a birthday card and pleading with the store staff to let me have a bottle of vodka because I needed to give someone a present to celebrate their big day. And I did these sort of things all the time, in order to get my way. Other addicts are equally creative. But we are trying to get them to turn their energies to thinking about their futures once they are in recovery. Many of them have got some wonderful ideas, but they lack know-how and the experience that will help them bring their thoughts to life. That's where teaming up with an experienced third-party could really help. So if there is anyone out there…?' S.

To speak directly to the Kennedy St Foundation, please call the organisation's recovery helpline on 01273 758561 or visit its website: **kennedystreetcio.org**

In the Next Issue of *Sorted*

Kevin Kennedy talks about his music career, gold record albums, playing blues with Willie Nelson, being signed by Simon Cowell – and playing guitar alongside Johnny Marr in the band that was the precursor to the Smiths.

> **'Everywhere I looked, I could see people with real needs.'**



TONY YORKE

Tony Yorke is an award-winning journalist, a committed charity worker – and the author of *The Hacker Chronicles*, a series of novels about the English Civil Wars.



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Good Will hunting

Archeologist Will Bedford spends most of his working day trying to make sense out of mysteries that have been buried for hundreds of years. He talks to Tony Yorke about some of his own 'Indiana Jones moments', and an adventure spanning more than two millennia that has led to a major transformation in his own life.



Will on a dig.

'He was just watching and pointing his machine gun directly at me.'

BY TONY YORKE

It's not every day a platoon of heavily armed soldiers point their machine guns at you and threaten to rearrange your features unless you provide satisfactory answers to their questions. For archeologist, Will Bedford, that was exactly the scenario that presented itself when he was working in South America, attempting to locate and record the lost villages, towns and cities of the once mighty Mayan civilisation.

Will was in the thick of a Mexican forest, preparing to feel the exhilaration only felt by those who have unearthed a long-lost treasure. Little did he realise his unbridled joy would abruptly be turned to fear.

'I was at university in 2002,' he recalls. 'I was 23 years old and I was full of myself. I had gone to Belize and Mexico with my professor and a group of students, and we were going all over the place trying to find evidence of the existence of a major settlement. After a few weeks of getting nowhere, we suddenly found the spot – and we knew we had struck archeological gold. In the undergrowth we could see the raised platforms of so many big buildings. It was amazing. But it was getting late, and so we had to come back the following day.

'When we gathered in the morning, we were in high spirits and not really taking anything in, other than our need to find this long-lost city. After a while, I remember turning around and seeing a Mexican soldier standing behind me. He was just watching and pointing his machine gun directly at me. As I looked up, I saw a line of guys in uniforms. They were the rest of his squad. They had surrounded us while we were surveying the site, and at least two of them were also pointing guns directly at us. I froze on the spot.'

The soldiers, regulars in the Mexican army, were on the lookout for the gangs that regularly plunder archeological sites before academics like Will have a chance to record and recover priceless artifacts.

'Thankfully, I could speak Spanish, so I quickly explained we had a permit, and everything was legal. The soldier still seemed unsure, and he continued to



Major construction jobs like the HS2 project dig up the past. Inset: Will with a skeleton uncovered on a dig in Oxford.

Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

eye me suspiciously. I was getting nervous, so I opened a packet of cigarettes and started to have a smoke. The guy who was pointing his gun at me suddenly asked if he could have one. When I said he could, it was the signal for all his mates to come down and join in. At that point, we realised they no longer thought we were smugglers. All these years later, I still look back on this moment. It really opened my eyes, as it's the only time I have ever had a loaded gun pointed at me. Then, I wasn't afraid. Now I am in my forties, I sometimes wonder how I would now react if it were to ever happen again?'

The incident, and another about being pursued by 'killer bees that chase you for at least three miles', are just a couple of the many stories Will tells, from a fascinating career that is now entering its third decade.

'I am based in the UK, and these days a lot of my work is used to support, or challenge, planning applications,' he says. 'That probably doesn't sound very exciting. But it is. You'd be amazed at just how much archeology exists when you scratch underneath the surface. It's the job of people like me to help a wide range of organisations understand the consequences of doing certain things.'

The controversial multi-billion pound HS2 rail project is just one example of a major construction job that is literally digging up the past on a daily basis, unearthing ancient graveyards and architecture as it



Will in Belize to find evidence of the existence of a major settlement.

seeks to connect the north of England with London via a near 150-mile stretch of high-speed railway lines. Will is not directly involved in this particular project, but it's the sort of job that he and his colleagues are regularly called in to support.

'I am used as an expert witness in legal proceedings and, away from a courthouse, I will often be asked to conduct an investigation into the consequences of doing something from an archeological perspective, and then compile a report into my findings. I never →





← tell my clients what to do. All I explain to them are the ramifications of certain courses of action. It's up to them to decide whether my recommendations make the financial and legal considerations worthwhile.'

Question the evidence

Will's work has helped him to develop his views on a number of things – including the importance of being what he calls a 'free thinker'. He is keen to encourage all of us to take a good look at ourselves. He believes that only by assessing how we behave, and what we know and comprehend about our own lives and the world we live in, will we be become happier and more fulfilled.

He says: 'The first question we should ask ourselves, when someone says there is no evidence for something, is "How hard have you looked?" If you haven't tested something, you can't say it is untrue. Yet I find many scientists make inaccurate and misleading statements when, quite frankly, they ought to know better. And I must confess, this is where I was when I started out.

'Archeology is a team sport. You have movies like *Indiana Jones*, which I love, that present this great man and explorer as someone who can discern everything. In my experience, this a myth. It's not true. The discipline of archeology is like volleyball, not golf! If I have a bit of pottery, I can easily tell you it is quite old. I may even be able to identify it as possibly Roman or from the Iron Age. That's as good as it will get. While interesting on one level, this information is utterly useless if you need to develop a greater understanding of the artifact and the period it is from.

'Take the same ceramic to a pottery specialist and you will get a very different story. They will be able to tell you it is second century Roman, or from Gaul. They will tell you how it was made, what materials were used, who used it, and where in the world it may have been exported to. On top of this, there will be a whole load of other stuff that most people won't be able to understand. But the right person will.

'My point is everyone contributes. No one individual can give you the whole story. But a team can, particularly when you remain open-minded. And when that happens, the value to you, and potentially many others, is priceless.'

Yearning for more

Will's loving parents were missionaries. His mother is Argentinean; his father was born in the United States. Together, they took the teachings of the Bible to places like Brazil, where Will spent his formative years growing up.

'I had a very unorthodox childhood,' he says fondly. 'The freedom I enjoyed was incredible. I saw and experienced so much. It made a real impression on me.'

One thing Will learned from an early age was to ask questions.

'If I didn't understand something, my parents encouraged me to speak up and find out about things. And I did… Aged 10, I was a Christian all the way. It was in my DNA. I believed things quite naturally. Things like God and creation were subjects I didn't really dispute. My parents believed these things, and that was good enough for me. But when I came back from Brazil, I started to feel differently about things, I began to realise I didn't see Christianity as something that was giving me any practical wisdom.

'I continued going to church. But I could see it wasn't influencing my life, and it certainly wasn't embedded in my character. I remember thinking Christianity was just another one of those cultural phenomena that people had come to believe for reasons of their own. Many countries have these religions and they all have similar characteristics. But they didn't seem to tell me about life, other than people yearn for more.'

When he went to university, the cord that was bonding Will to his faith roots snapped, and for the next 14 years he would drift between agnosticism and atheism.

'I didn't behave like an atheist campaigner, or anything like that,' he says. 'I just went off and did my own kind of thing. I would think about the suffering and cruelty of the world and I would also focus on the ineptitude of a lot of Christian leaders. This made me think we don't live in a universe that's ruled by a benevolent deity.'

Will's probing mind continued to prod and poke him, posing questions he was unable to answer. After a while of living in what he calls his 'wilderness', and encouraged by his wife, Ellie, and a friend who was to become a Church of England vicar, he was prompted to start thinking about some of life's big questions once again – and how faith might help him find some of the answers.

'I didn't deliberately set out to re-examine Christianity. It just occurred, and a combination of factors made it happen without me being in control. I am a big reader of books, I just can't put them down when I get interested in a subject. And there was one book that just rocked me back on my heels from the moment I picked it up.'

Will is referring to *The kingdom of infinite space: a portrait of your head*, by author Raymond Tallis.

'I had been seeking some answers to these questions that wouldn't go away, and I had been seeking some

'The evidence about God's existence had been staring me in the face.'



Will was encouraged by his parents to ask questions from a young age.



Will with his family.



Will growing up.



Will and his wife Ellie.

answers to these questions that wouldn't go away, and I had read *A Short History Of Nearly Everything* by Bill Bryson, that is brilliant, and another by Iain McGilchrist, which was really dense, spanned hundreds of pages, printed in a small font, and was incredible.

'Then I turned to this book that was written by Raymond Tallis, in which he starts talking about why he thinks there isn't a soul, or anything like that. On every page he makes his case, in support of his central argument. And the more I got into the book, I realised he wasn't succeeding, and he wasn't convincing me. At this time, I was on his side. I wanted to be convinced. Yet he couldn't do so, and it really bugged me.'

In his mid-thirties, Will's wife, who he says is 'blessed with a lot more wisdom' than he is, started examining her own beliefs.

'Ellie started taking our children to church, and everything started to mushroom from there,' he recalls. 'My friend, who went on to become a minister, would then start poking me, which would lead to some fascinating conversations and arguments. Gradually, I came to realise the evidence about God's existence had been staring me in the face all my life. I just hadn't recognised it for what it was.'

Science and faith can mix

Will has been an active churchgoer for the last 10 years, and he believes he and Ellie made the right decision in committing their lives to the faith they now believe in. But surely the decision couldn't have been easy – particularly for two scientists who put the 'emotional stuff' to one side and deal purely in facts?

'In the end, it was a lot easier than I believed it ever would be. When you believe in God, you see things differently. There is a clarity you don't get when both of your feet are firmly camped in the secular world. For me, it was always about the evidence. And once I had started to look into things in a meaningful way, which I didn't do properly until my mid-thirties, then there was only going to be one outcome.' S.

'I wanted to be convinced.'

Counting his blessings

Aled Jones tells Tony Yorke why his latest album, book and tour are amongst his most important works.



Chris Jackson/Getty Images



Tim Whitby/Getty Images

Brian Blessed and The Priests are among those appearing with Aled on his new album.

BY TONY YORKE

Just like mince pies and Santa Claus, Aled Jones is the young Welsh chorister whose angelic voice will forever be synonymous with Christmas. Yet the boy from Bangor has come a long way since those halcyon days, when his hit single *Walking in the Air* reached number five in the charts. It is hard to believe, but that was some 35 years ago.

Since then, Jones's career has gone from strength to strength. He has become a successful singer, even though his voice broke when he was 16. And when he is not touring and making records, the 49-year-old can be found gracing the nation's TV screens, or hosting two popular radio shows.

Right now, he is busy promoting his fortieth album, entitled *Blessings*, which he hopes listeners will realise is all about 'faith, and the difference Jesus Christ can make in our lives.'

The album, and a book called *Everyday Blessings*, are two more brave steps by the man who has never been shy in proclaiming his Christian beliefs. 'It has been a real honour and privilege to record this album and publish the book,' he told *Sorted*. 'They mean a lot to me. I am very proud of them.'

Combined, they are as much a declaration of Jones's evangelical intent as they are works of artistic merit. 'I am proud of my faith' he says. 'I always have been. And, yes, they are my way of praising and proclaiming the God I serve.'

Lockdown has been a big influencer on the content of the album, with Jones admitting it has created logistical difficulties. 'Once we put our minds to it,' he says, 'we found it a lot easier to do than we first thought it would be.'



There are a string of duets with people such as acclaimed Iranian singer, Sami Yusef, and household names in the UK, like Susan Boyle, the Priests, and 'alternative boy band', Libera. Interestingly, Dame Judi Dench is also a collaborator.

One name that really stands out is that of the actor, Brian Blessed.

'Brian is the loudest man I know, and have ever known,' admits Jones, stifling a chuckle. 'And he is also a very prominent Christian. So when I asked him if he would be willing to join me, there was never any hesitation. He was all for it.'

Music aficionados will be delighted to learn that Blessed, who starred in the 1980s cult film *Flash Gordon*, doesn't sing in the pair's rendition of *Silent Night*. Instead, he adds the narrative around the song, which makes the end result really pleasant and a joy to listen to.

'I am proud of my faith.'

Another collaborator on the album is 94-year-old D-Day veteran, Harry Billinge.'The moment I met Harry on *Songs of Praise*, I felt drawn to the man," recalls Jones. Billinge is a former infantry man, who raised £25,000 towards the construction of a national memorial that recognises the sacrifice of his fallen comrades. 'And his contribution brought tears to my eyes.'

The song – *If I can Help Somebody/Let There be Peace on Earth* – features Billinge, a Cornishman, remembering the terror and loss of June 1944 when →



‘I have had a lot of feedback ... from the Muslim community.’



Blessings, Aled’s new album, is out now on BMG. *Everyday Blessings* is published by Hodder and Stoughton and is available from good bookstores. To get tickets for the forthcoming tour, please visit: **officialaledjones.com**

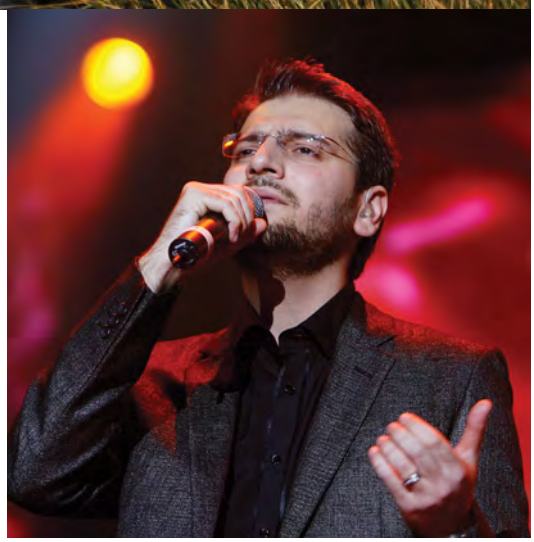
← he was one of the many men who landed on Gold Beach in Normandy, as part of the D-Day landings.

‘It sends a shiver down my spine just thinking about it,’ says Jones. ‘He is a gentleman, someone who has never forgotten about the hardships of those times. And he has done all he can in his lifetime to ensure the men who died are never forgotten. Harry is a man of great faith and we hit it off the moment we met. He wants people to remember those far-off days, and I hope the song goes some way to doing just that.’

It will.

Jones is rightly proud of *Song of our Maker*, the track that has been chosen to spearhead the album’s assault on the charts and broadcasters.

‘It is a duet with Sami Yusuf,’ he says, ‘and it is one of the first musical attempts at pulling together singers from Christian and Muslim backgrounds. Since we released the track at the end of September, I have had a lot of feedback on social media from the Muslim community, gaining thousands of new followers. It has really opened my eyes.’



Getty Images

Sami Yusuf duets with Aled on the album.

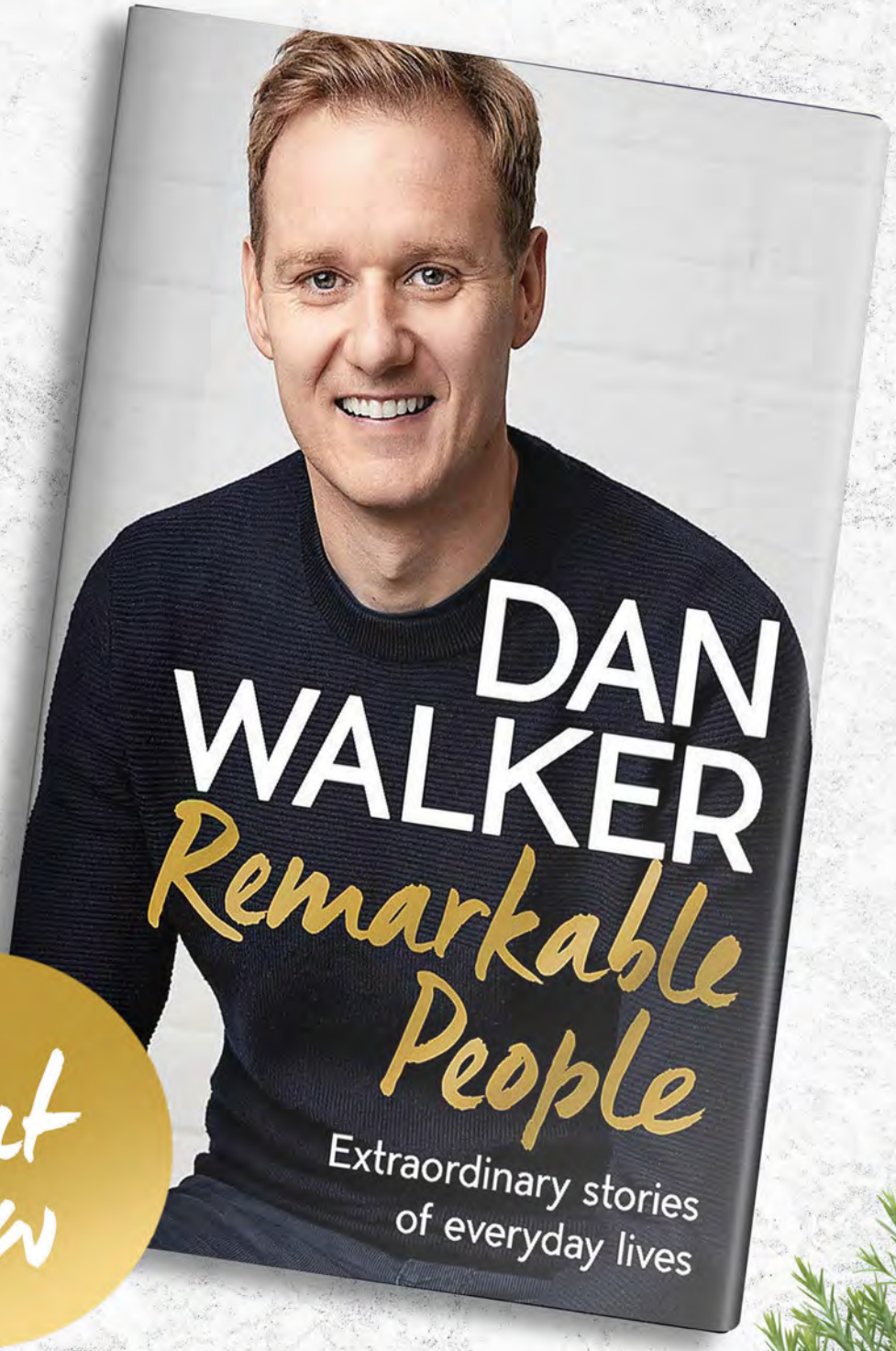
Jones hopes the book – published by Hodder and Stoughton – will also play its part in opening the eyes of many people whose view of the world may have become blinkered due to recent events.

‘The world has changed so much due to the coronavirus pandemic, and everyone has suffered in some way,’ he says. ‘I hope the words of wisdom in this book transport readers to somewhere else and offer hope and comfort in equal measure.’

With the book and album out now, the star will soon be turning his attention to a 24-date UK tour that takes in some of the UK’s most iconic cathedrals and minsters (lockdowns permitting, of course).

‘It is going to be tiring,’ he adds. ‘But it will also be immensely rewarding.’ S.

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Keen to dig yourself out of a hole?

It's time to make the changes that will turn your life around.

I'm just back from a walk which involved walking alongside a ploughed field, with long straight furrows running off in both directions. Following the path, I found myself walking in one of the ruts.

Ordinarily, that's not a place you'd want to be. Ruts are bad; you can get stuck in them. I've met a lot of people recently who feel that 2020 and all its challenges has left them in a rut, feeling tired, bored, listless, stuck, repeating the same patterns, the same habits.

Which begs the question, if you're in a rut, how do you get out?

The answer is to get *delirious*.

Delirious comes from the Latin *delirare* which means 'To go out of the furrow when ploughing'. Nowadays, it has negative connotations, suggesting that you are out of your mind, but in its original form, it is about getting out of your rut.

Delirium, then, is exactly what we need to break free of our unhelpful patterns and behaviours, to break out of our complacency, boredom, or fear, to stop us getting too comfortable, over-confident or too well pleased with ourselves.

'If you're in a rut, how do you get out?'

So, yes, delirium is about being out of your mind… but not in a negative way. Delirium in this sense is healthy. It's about helpfully challenging the way we think. It's about changing the story we hold about ourselves and the world around us. It's about breaking out of our unhelpful thinking patterns, about getting a fresh perspective on our life, about thinking the unthinkable and asking ourselves the questions that others dare not ask.

Only by getting out of our rut can we see new opportunities and possibilities.

So as we head into this New Year with all its possibilities and uncertainties, is it time to jump your furrow?

MARTIN CARTER

Martin Carter is a professionally certified leadership coach. He works internationally with individuals, groups, and organisations, helping them to make a bigger difference in the world. He is also the founder of A Brush with Coaching, a free online resource offering coaching, support, and encouragement to anyone seeking to live a more purposeful and impactful life.

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SCIENCE & FAITH
WITH ARD LOUIS

Does the intricacy of creation point to a Creator?

As a scientist and as a Christian, I find the world to be incredibly beautifully put together. I see that beauty when I go skiing in the Alps and I also see that beauty in the mathematics behind the universe. In my fourth year at university, I studied the work of Paul Dirac, a physicist who tried to combine quantum mechanics (the theory of very small things) and Einstein's 'special relativity' (the theory of very fast things).

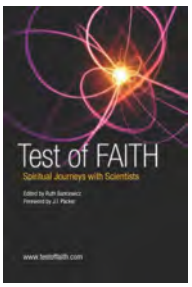
If you do this for an electron, as Dirac did, you find that no matter how you try, the mathematics forces you to include a new and very strange component in the equation. We now call this component 'antimatter.' When matter and antimatter come into contact, the matter gets annihilated into pure energy (this is what is described by Einstein's famous E=mc2 equation). In 1932, a few years after Dirac made this mathematical prediction, the first antimatter was discovered in a lab. I was completely amazed to learn that mathematics could require something so spectacular from the natural world. It sounded impossible. How could mathematics make such demands? I stayed up all night trying to find some alternative way of solving this problem but was finally forced to give up. It's hard to explain to somebody who isn't trained in mathematical physics just how incredible this is!

The confirmation of Dirac's theory through the discovery of antimatter is an example of what the Nobel Prize-winner Eugene Wigner called the 'unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics.' He said that it is 'a gift we neither understand nor deserve.' This 'gift' is regularly reconfirmed to me through my work. In the mathematical structure of the universe I see something that looks beautifully crafted. To me, this seems to point towards a Creator or Sustainer behind the laws of the universe. S.

> **'I find the world to be incredibly beautifully put together.'**



WANT TO READ ON?



Text from *Test of FAITH: Spiritual Journeys with Scientists* (Paternoster, 2009), authenticmedia.co.uk

ARD A. LOUIS

Ard A. Louis is Professor of Theoretical Physics at the University of Oxford, where he leads an interdisciplinary research group studying problems on the border between chemistry, physics and biology. He is an Associate of the Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Cambridge, and a member of St Aldate's Church, Oxford.

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Cashing in on Covid?

If you're re-evaluating your work-life balance, maybe your pension may help you unlock some answers.

Covid has meant a lot of us are wondering why we commute. Quite a few of my clients have decided they can work equally well moving to the coast. Others want to keep their existing homes and raise some capital elsewhere. They are looking at their pensions as a possible source.

Most pension schemes allow you to take 25% of the value as a tax-free lump sum. This can be accessed once you reach age 55 with the rest being classed as income and 'drawn down' as required. However, this income is taxable at your marginal rate. So if you want your lump sum, you can have it and you can then continue to make contributions to your pension to build the value back up again. However, if you take just one penny of income, you are no longer allowed to contribute more than £4,000 in any one tax year, and if your pension has been depleted by 25%, you probably should be throwing a bit of money at it to get it back to a reasonable sum.

> **'Take it as late as possible.'**

What's a reasonable sum?

If you drew £1,500 a month from a pension pot of £250,000 which was growing at a linear 3.5% p/a, the fund would be drawn down to nothing after 19 years. So if you retire at 60 you would have nothing left at age 79. The average life expectancy of a male age 60 is 85 years old (Source Office of National Statistics) and there's a 1 in 10 chance you will live to be 97.

Saving for pensions when you are young doesn't seem like a priority, and I know that money is tight, but the earlier we start, the better chance we have of achieving the kind of retirement fund we would want. If you are twenty years old and you put £100 away each month, if it grew at 4% it would be worth around £116,500 when you reached age 60, but if you only started to contribute when you were forty, it would only reach £36,500.

So start early, take it as late as possible and let time be your friend.



JON COBB

Jon Cobb runs financial advisory business Trinity Wealth Management. He is a keen runner, ex-white collar boxer, passionate Portsmouth supporter, speaker and writer.

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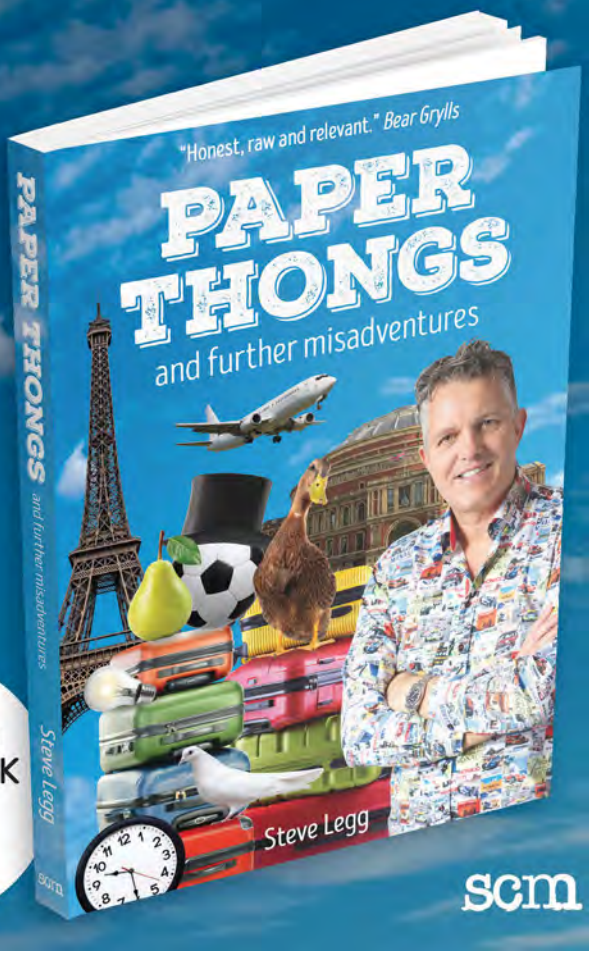
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Mission possible

US sports star's 'miracle' recovery is good news for all.

On 18 November 2018, the Washington football team quarterback, Alex Smith, sustained a horrific injury – a compound spiral fracture of both bones in his lower leg. The wound became infected and he contracted sepsis. Seventeen operations over nine months followed, and it was so bad that doctors suggested amputation above the knee.

A few weeks ago, I was watching American football on television when the match was interrupted and we were taken to a live feed of a different game in Washington, where the quarterback took a knock and had to be replaced. The reserve quarterback trotted on, to a standing ovation from supporters and players of *both* teams. It was Alex Smith. As he took the first snap, everyone held their breath. The next moment the stadium erupted as he completed his first successful pass.

Journalists dubbed Smith's recovery 'The Unthinkable Comeback.'

I love stories like that – defying medical prognosis, setting our minds to an impossible task, and achieving way beyond seemingly *realistic* expectations and dreams.

We often hear things like 'Nothing is impossible if you set your mind to it' but we know that life isn't always as straightforward as that. In our lives, we all face trials and tribulations – challenges at work, with our health, our finances, our families and relationships. Things don't always work out the way we planned, hoped or even dreamed. There are no guarantees. Yet sometimes, we do see 'unthinkable comebacks' in our lives and those of others.

I don't want to minimise anything that anyone is going through, especially given current world events! But whatever the future holds, may I encourage us all today. By the grace of God, all things are possible – perhaps even, just like with Alex Smith, an unthinkable comeback. S.





GERRIT BANTJES

South African by birth, Gerrit became fitness coach at Cardiff RFC after playing first class rugby in South Africa and Wales. He served in two armies and passed the gruelling British Army Pre-Parachute Selection Course, P-Company, at the age of forty. Married to a Welsh girl, he has lived in Cardiff for more than twenty years. Gerrit works for Care for the Family and speaks all over the UK.

careforthefamily.org.uk

Divorce boom?

What does the evidence really say about the effect of lockdown on marriages?

Listen to BBC news and you might imagine marriages everywhere have suffered during lockdown, and a huge divorce boom is on its way. The evidence, as with so many things, shows otherwise. Back in June at the height of the first lockdown, one of the big national household surveys asked 2,500 parents a series of questions about their relationships.

At Marriage Foundation, we analysed the responses. We found that out of every 10 couples in the survey, two said their relationship had improved, seven had stayed about the same, and one had got worse. So the big picture is that twice as many couples thought lockdown had been good for their relationship as thought it had been bad.

In more normal times pre-lockdown, our analysis of a previous survey shows that just a few percent of couples struggle badly with their relationship at any one time. During lockdown, slightly more married men than normal were either very unhappy with their relationship, and slightly more couples were getting on each other's nerves or quarrelling a lot. But the increase was pretty small: we're talking about less than 2 per cent of extra couples.

So lockdown was clearly very stressful indeed for a small minority (low single figures) of married fathers. More married mums than usual were also very unhappy, but for them there was no sign that conflict levels were anything out of the ordinary.

Couples were also asked in the survey how often they considered divorce or splitting up. Once again, the percentage of married parents who think about this a lot is in low single figures. During lockdown in June however, these figures hadfallen by two thirds.

What we're seeing in the data is a lot more stress for a small number of married fathers in particular. I suspect this reflects worries about jobs and financial security. I hugely sympathise, having felt this very strongly myself back in the spring and early summer. But remember that twice as many married dads still said their relationships had improved compared to those where it had deteriorated, and two thirds fewer than normal were considering divorce. S.



'A lot more stress for a small number of married fathers.'

HARRY BENSON

Harry Benson is research director for the Marriage Foundation and author of *Commit or Quit: The Two Year Rule and Other Rules for Romance*, out now

Still suffering from the Covid hangover?

Specialist help is available for anyone in need.

THE GP'S SURGERY
WITH SIMON ATKINS

In his recent book *The Rules of Contagion*, epidemiologist Adam Kucharski quotes a common saying amongst fellow scientists: 'If you've seen one pandemic, you've seen … one pandemic.' Despite there being some underlying 'rules' describing how contagious diseases spread, one outbreak will rarely look like another. And that's just what we're finding with Covid-19: it is not only different to previous pandemics but can itself affect people in different ways.

I've seen evidence of this in my own family. My 22 year-old son tested positive after developing what seemed initially like a nasty cold but which robbed him of his senses of taste and smell. Thankfully, with a bit of rest and some paracetamol, he recovered completely in a week. In contrast, my otherwise healthy 51-year-old cousin was still only able to manage two days back at work a full seven weeks after he was diagnosed with Covid-19, because of the effects of ongoing exhaustion.

Recent research shows that he is not alone in having lingering symptoms. While most people recover from Covid-19 completely within seven to 14 days, at least 10 per cent of people who test positive for the virus have persistent symptoms, weeks or even months afterwards. 'Long Covid', as is being called, covers a multitude of possible symptoms including: a lingering cough, ongoing loss of smell and taste, headaches, poor concentration, fatigue and, not surprisingly, anxiety and depression.

Help for people with these symptoms has been slow in coming. As a new disease, GPs have had to learn about it as we've gone along. But if you feel you may be suffering with long Covid, then book a call with your GP. They will firstly want to check whether it is the correct diagnosis but will also be able to advise on measures to help you manage your symptoms. And if symptoms are particularly disabling, your doctor will soon be able to refer you to NHS clinics around the country where you can receive specialist input.

> **'He is not alone in having lingering symptoms.'**

There are also a growing number of websites offering support. 'Your Covid Recovery' is an NHS resource offering help to all those who have been diagnosed with Covid-19 (yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk), while others offer help for specific concerns related to mental health (mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus), loss of smell (abscent.org/smell-training) and breathing issues (post-covid.org.uk). S.







SIMON ATKINS

A GP for twenty years, Simon Atkins has also been a medical journalist and covered a wide range of health topics on TV, radio, newspapers and magazines. He is also the author of eight books on medical subjects ranging from diabetes to dementia. He is a Reader in the Church of England, a keen runner and Bristol City supporter. Married to Nikki, he has three grown-up sons.

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SEX THERAPY
WITH EMMA WARING

Has the urge been purged?

How to revive a flagging sex life when the TV is a bigger lure than your partner.



Sexual desire is the interest we have in sexual activity, including sexual thoughts, fantasies or actual sexual contact with ourselves or another person, and this process usually starts in our minds. Sex drive or libido is the biological driving force which means we act on our desire and pursue sexual activity. Although the basis for sexual drive is a physical one, driven by hormones, it is actually a complex process incorporating many factors, such as our general health and fitness, self-esteem, past sexual experiences, confidence, and the quality of our relationship.

I see as many men present with low desire in my clinic as I do women, and there are lots of causes. The man may be suffering with stress, work pressures or mental health issues and there may be conflict in his relationship. His partner may have little or no interest in sex either, and this can make it difficult for him to get aroused. Couple counselling can be helpful in exploring these issues further.

If there is an underlying physical cause then the man may be diagnosed with hypoactive sexual desire disorder, or HSDD. For a clinical diagnosis there needs to be deficient or absent sexual thoughts or fantasies or desire for sexual activity. This low desire must be of six months' duration or longer, and it must cause significant distress.

In males, the testicles produce testosterone, and testosterone levels are also controlled by the adrenal glands which produce small amounts of testosterone in both men and women. If the body is unable to make enough testosterone to work normally, this is called testosterone deficiency or hypogonadism. Men are more likely to develop hypogonadism as they get older. The body starts to produce testosterone during puberty, and it is essential for the development and maintenance of male characteristics.

Patients with hypogonadism may notice they have lost their night time erections, experience erectile dysfunction (ED), or have low sex drive. They may also feel tired,



> ‘I see as many men present with low desire in my clinic as I do women.’

depressed, or notice impaired concentration. Some men may notice they have decreased body hair, are losing muscle mass, becoming weaker, or gaining weight, particularly around the stomach area, and some may develop gynecomastia (male ‘breasts’).

To make an accurate diagnosis, you need to talk to your GP, who will consider a number of factors, including your symptoms, and he or she will also check and recheck your testosterone levels. If you have low testosterone, you may be referred to an endocrinologist, a specialist in hormone problems.

If the specialist confirms this diagnosis, you may be offered testosterone replacement therapy (TRT) to correct the hormone deficiency, which should relieve your symptoms. This can be given as tablets, a daily gel, patches, implants or as a long-acting injection. Once a man starts TRT, he should see his doctor for regular reviews to ensure symptoms are improving and side effects are not causing problems. S.

EMMA WARING

Emma Waring is a nurse, psychosexual therapist and author of *Seasons of Sex* and *Intimacy*. She regularly writes on the topic of sexual problems for newspapers and magazines.

How democratic is democracy?

Are electorates around the world being persuaded by arguments, or bamboozled and manipulated?



Democracy is founded on the idea that people are equal and that, through voting, have equal power to decide who runs their collective, whether it be a nation state or the local parish council. Ideologies, policies and leaders are presented and the most persuasive wins the day.

Social media, however, is changing that reality.

Arguments and healthy discourse rely on good relationships and are usually best played out in person. But from a political party's perspective now, there is less and less need for this. Increasingly, what it takes to win elections in the 21st century is not who has the best argument, but rather who has the loudest and most invasive argument.

> **'Who has the loudest and most invasive argument.'**

Political parties purchase data about us, (the people whom they are meant to represent) and sell us ideas in the same way (and literally the same space) that betting companies, toy makers and gyms do. The most scary example of this in the UK was the Cambridge Analytica data scandal during the Brexit referendum, in which the personal information of millions of Britons was harvested and used for political advertising.

The advertising industry has always been used to manipulate consumers and voters, but what is different now is the scale to which we can be implicitly led to vote in certain directions without our knowledge. The vast millions points of data that these companies – and therefore political entities – have access to, mean that what is far more important to winning a national campaign is not credible policy and a strong, capable leader, but rather the knowledge of how to work in the advertising industry and the funds to pay for advertising. Anyone unconvinced of this reality should watch the documentary film, *The Social Dilemma*. And we haven't even mentioned Russian manipulation yet!

These online platforms are simply not designed for the sort of healthy conversation that creates mutual respect and flourishing. Instead, they are designed for maximum engagement that maximises advertising revenue.

For democracy to survive in the 21st century there needs to be intelligent regulation, both of companies harvesting data indiscriminately, and of the use of this same data and platforms by political parties. At this point, the gamekeepers are far too far behind the poachers.



Chris J Ratcliffe/Getty Images

Cambridge Analytica's data-harvesting was used in the Brexit referendum.



ANDY FLANNAGAN

Andy is Executive Director of christiansinpolitics.org.uk and takes the message of positive political engagement around the UK. His book *Those Who Show Up* has inspired many people to get involved in politics: andyflan.com.

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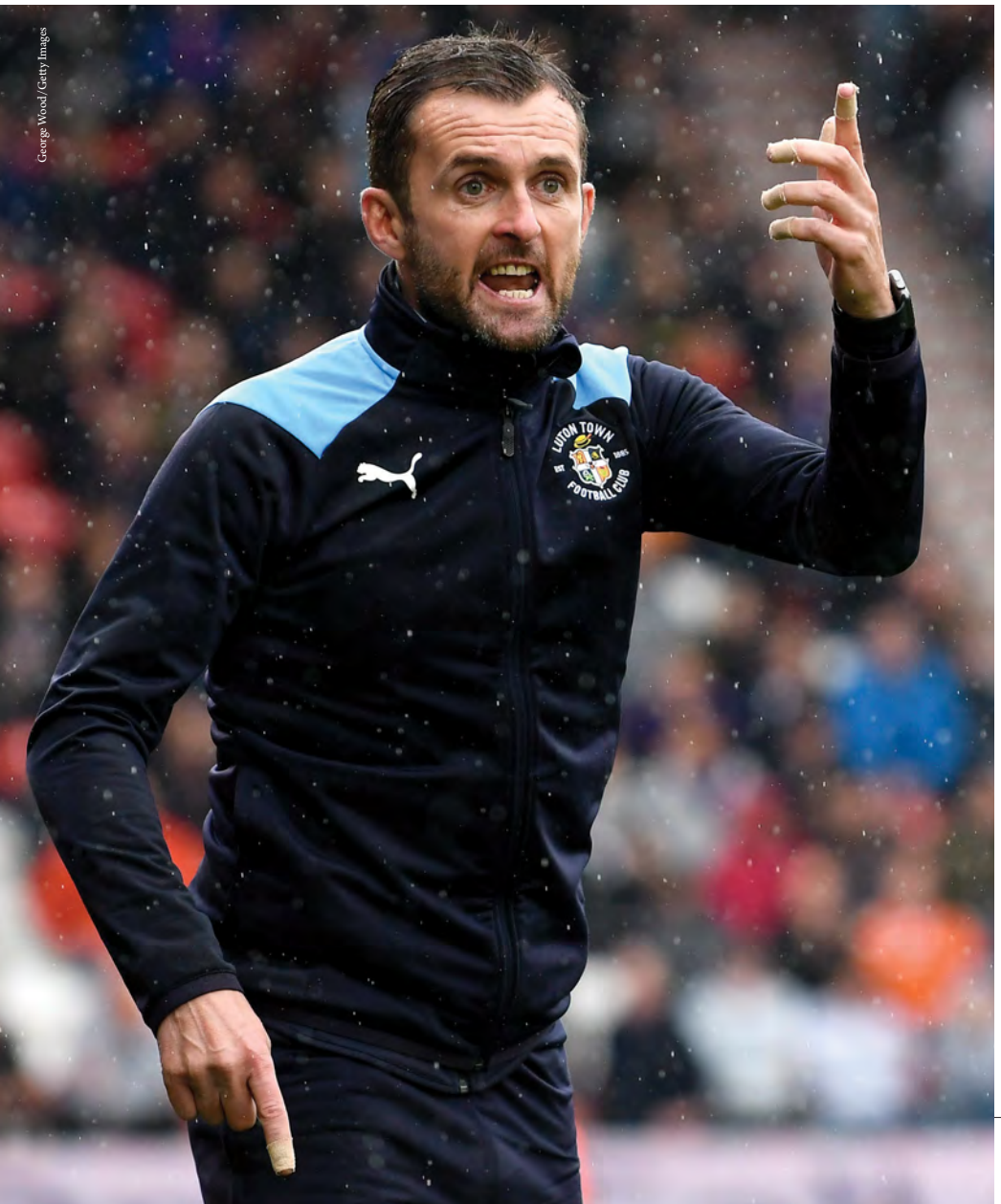
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Remaining faithful in the eye of the storm

Nathan Jones is back in the Luton Town managerial hot seat after a whirlwind year that tested his resilience, abilities and desire to succeed. He talks to Stuart Weir about a challenging period that helped him discover a lot about himself and the God he trusts.



George Wood/Getty Images

Luton Town Manager, Nathan Jones.

BY STUART WEIR

There are just under 15 minutes to go in Luton Town's home Carabao Cup Round Three tie with Manchester United. The visitors lead 1-0 from a first half penalty but the game is evenly poised. Luton manager, Nathan Jones, is about to introduce his first subs, Elliott Lee and Harry Cornick, to try to force an equaliser. Out of the corner of his eye he notices that Man U are also about to introduce substitutes: Bruno Fernandes, Mason Greenwood and Marcus Rashford are waiting to come on. '£200million worth of talent' as Jones puts it. Predictably Rashford and Greenwood score late goals.

Nathan Jones was born in Wales and first played for Merthyr Tydfil in the Conference. As well as two seasons in the Spanish Second Division, he played over 450 games in the English Football League for Southend United, Scarborough, Brighton and Hove Albion and Yeovil Town, in a professional career lasting 23 years. His five seasons at Brighton (2000-05) were eventful as the club started in League Two, were promoted twice to reach the Championship, relegated and then promoted again. He played in play-off finals at Wembley and Cardiff's Millennium stadium.

Even as a player, he was thinking ahead: 'I knew I would become a coach. I knew I wanted to stay in football, so I was preparing for my first job after playing. I always enjoyed working with players and I was always interested in the tactical side of the game. So,



Nick Potts - Pool/Getty Images

Juan Mata of Manchester United is replaced by Marcus Rashford during the Carabao Cup Third Round match against Luton Town.



Nick Potts - Pool/Getty Images

Mason Greenwood of Manchester United is challenged by Rhys Norrington-Davies of Luton Town in the Carabao Cup Third Round.

I knew, I wanted to go into coaching, but I didn't know at what level it would happen. While I wanted to play for as long as I could, I was also preparing for another career.'

While playing for his last club, Yeovil Town, he coached the Ladies team and later became player-assistant manager of the men's team. After serving as Under-21s coach at Charlton Athletic and assistant head coach back at Brighton, he was appointed as manager of Luton Town in 2015, then in League Two. He got them promoted to League One in 2018 and assembled the team which was to be promoted to the Championship the following season. However, Jones had left in January 2019 to become manager of Stoke City. His time at Stoke was not a success and he was fired after ten months, returning to Luton Town in 2020.

In his book *Living on the Volcano*, Michael Calvin describes how in one year there were 63 managerial changes in the 92 clubs in the four divisions of English football. Why would anyone want a job with no job security? Jones told me that he loved being a footballer and never thought he would find anything to beat playing, but he has: 'I get more of a buzz as a manager than I did as a player. I enjoy my responsibilities and all I do.' That said, he recognizes the demands: 'It consumes your life and it consumes every part of your day. It helps when you win. I had four days off at the last international break and was able to switch off completely and be with my family. But it helped that we had started the season well and had won the last game before the break.'

He works long days: 'I'm usually up about six and I start by praying and reading the Bible – I do that every day. Then I take some kind of exercise – running or on a bike. I get in to work just after eight and I am there until 6.30 or 7.00pm so it's a long day. First thing we'll have a staff meeting to discuss the day and prepare training. Then we all get on with our jobs. The players come in about 10 and train 10.30 to 12.30. After that, for me, it's a day in the office, watching games, evaluating our last game, evaluating training, preparing for our next game, possibly player recruitment. It's full on. I would normally have an evening at home with my family but I'm currently living away from my family because they are still up north.'

I asked him what he enjoyed about the job. 'Winning!' was his quick answer. He elaborated more thoughtfully: 'To be honest, I enjoy all of it. I loved playing beyond anything, and I never thought there could be anything as good but honestly, Luton is a fantastic club. Nothing beats preparing your team for a game and seeing your plan come together, and when you win a game or you get promoted. I enjoy developing players and seeing them get better. Luton is a very hands-on development club.'

The challenges of the job include: 'the highs and lows and the pressure. You try not to get too high and you try not to get too low but it's very difficult. You work all week and a defeat or a bad performance tends to sour how you feel and what you do. Picking yourself up from a defeat is probably the biggest challenge. Particularly as you, as the manager, have to be a positive influence for everyone else. Even though you are hurting, you can't let that show because everyone else is hurting and you are the leader. And you have to lift others. There's never a time you can relax even if you have won. I find it hard to sleep after a game – good or bad result – because you are thinking about it. So, I tend to watch games in the middle of the night. Then you're looking ahead to the next game. The more successful you want to be, the harder and the smarter you have to work.'

Growing up in a Christian family, faith was always part of his life. 'My parents are Christians and from a young age they taught me the gospel. When I got to about 16, I had a choice. I could remain in the faith →

'Why would anyone want a job with no job security?'





Matt Mansfield Photography

‘I get more of a buzz being a manager.’

← or I could leave it. But I knew that I wanted to continue trusting in God. It’s the only way to live. I had a lot of choices to make and after 16 a lot of my football was on Sunday. I remember praying: “God, I want to be a Christian. I want to remain in the Christian faith, I want it to be at the forefront of my Christian life. But I also want to be a footballer, show me the way.” I made the choice and I played on Sundays. I was playing for Cardiff City youth team and a lot of our games were on Sunday, so I had to play on Sundays if I wanted to progress. It’s been a constant fight for me, keeping the Sabbath, but now it’s something that I am reasonably at ease with.’

He continues: ‘I think God is interested in every part of your life – whether you’re a footballer, bricklayer or nurse or a politician, God cares for you. God’s love is for everyone. I do believe that God cares about everyone and that everything is God’s will. I also believe that if you’re a public figure, there is an opportunity to do God’s work on a global scale. I have been very privileged in the lifestyle that I’ve had. I’ve been blessed to do what I absolutely love. And I think it’s only fair that I give something back to God. I couldn’t do the job without my faith and there have been moments when I have categorically known that God was with me. So, I do think he cares about football because he cares about everything.’

Being a Christian in a macho world like football is not always easy. ‘There are a lot of temptations in football, temptations to stray from the gospel, to stray from the straight and narrow path. I was never ridiculed but there is friendly banter. People used to call me “God squad” or “Bible basher” or ask “What is God telling you today?” There are difficulties but I think now, if you’re a Christian, there is every opportunity for you to be open about your faith.’

He believes that it is just as important to live as a Christian in the football club as it is at church on Sunday: ‘I try to be honest and to be upright. I am honest with people. I don’t tell people things they want to hear just because it’s easier to do that. I try to have integrity in my decisions and to show compassion in what I do. Those are Christian characteristics but it’s also what I’ve been brought up in. I forgive easily. I don’t forget, but I forgive. These are human traits that I have learned through a great Christian upbringing. That has made me the manager I am – whether that’s a good manager or bad manager. That is definitely the type of manager that I am. I’m very passionate about my job. I can be angry and vociferous. I like the human side of the job. I like to get to know my players and for them to know that they can trust me. They may not like me, but they can respect me. So, honesty, integrity and the human side of me stem from my Christianity.’

Going back to the game against Manchester United, he told me, Luton Town always take pride in taking on teams from higher divisions and want to test themselves. ‘We had a game plan for Man U and we wanted to be positive against them. And to be fair, for 88 minutes we really tested them. We were 0-1 down from a penalty and had a glorious chance to equalize but it was kicked off the line. But for 88 minutes we took one of the best clubs in the world to the wire. They brought some big hitters off the bench, but we had gone in with a really positive mindset of trying to upset them and trying to win the game. We could have seen that game out and lost 1-0 and lost admirably but that’s not the mentality here. We really wanted to try to take it to penalties, to take a scalp against a very, very good side. We were very proud of the team on the night and the score flattered Manchester United somewhat.’

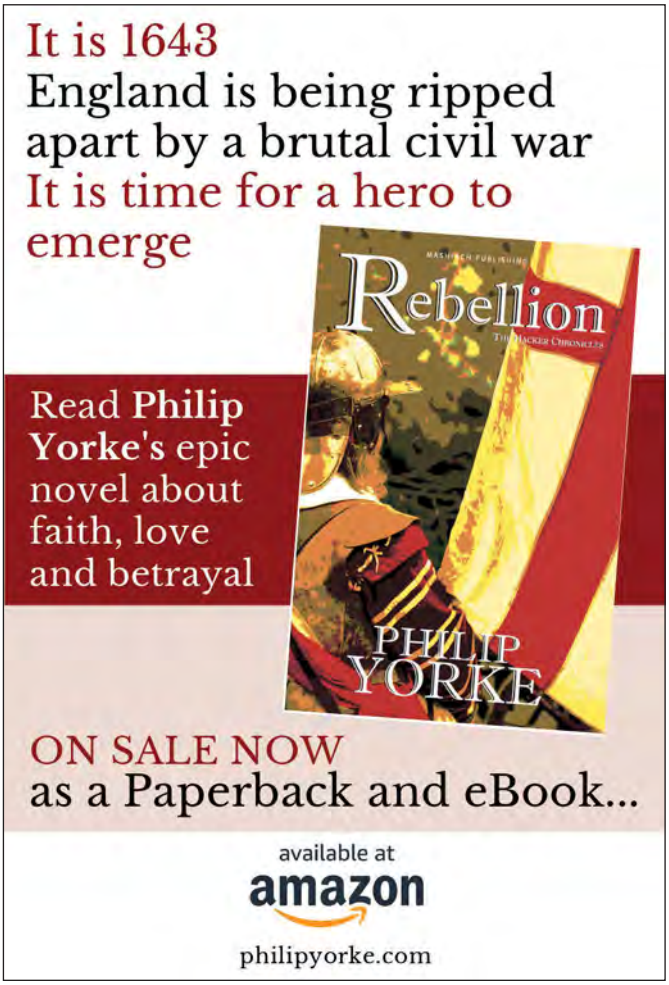
At the time of writing Luton Town are well placed in the Championship but that is not the height of Nathan Jones’ ambitions for the club: ‘We have to establish ourselves in the Championship first. But in the medium term, we will be looking for promotion to the Premier League. When we get our new stadium in two years, we should have the finances to punch a bit harder. And then we’ll be able to be more competitive in cup competitions and also trying to get into the top six of the Championship to have a chance of getting into the Premier League.’ Whether they make it, time alone will tell but you can be sure that the manager will give it his best shot – and he will do it with Christian integrity. S.

STUART WEIR

Stuart Weir is passionate about Jesus Christ and about sport, and he spends his life trying to help people make the connection. He has written several books about sport and Christianity and has worked as a sports writer at Olympic, Paralympic and World Championship events. He has been to three football World Cups and was Togo’s Olympic attaché at the 2012 and 2016 Olympics. Married to Lynne, he has two grown-up children. He is a member of Kidlington Baptist Church and Frilford Heath Golf Club.

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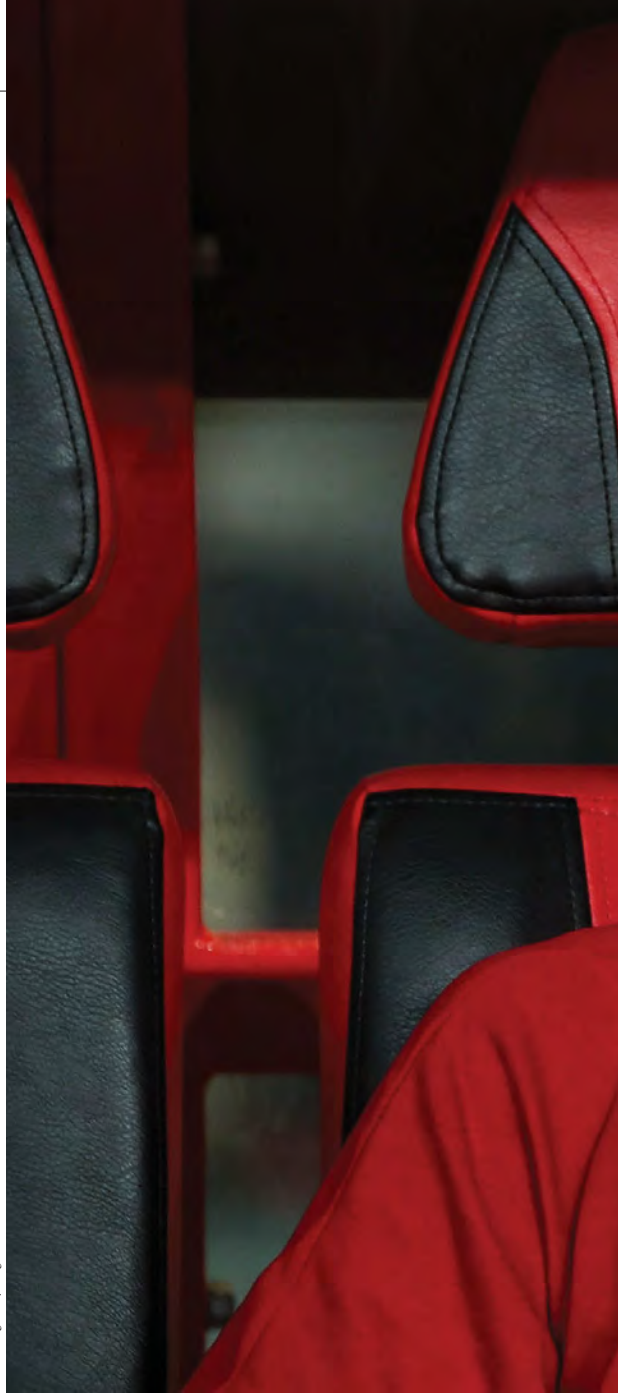

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My life in red and white

The autobiography of Arsène Wenger

What insights does Wenger give us on managing one of the world's most famous football clubs? Stuart Weir finds out.



Lintao Zhang/Getty Images



Shaun Botterill/Getty Images

Wenger celebrates his team's 2-1 victory during the Emirates FA Cup Semi-Final match between Arsenal and Manchester City in 2017.

Arsène was manager of Arsenal 1996-2018, and in charge of 1,235 competitive games. He comes across as obsessive, referring to managing Arsenal as his whole life, his passion and his constant preoccupation, and describes living 'a monastic life devoted to football'. He also describes it, however, as 'A life chosen with passion, perhaps also sometimes with a bit of madness and some sacrifices. Arsenal was a matter of life and death to me.' Acknowledging it was not easy for his wife to live 'with a man who was mad about his profession, who made football his religion', he admits that he lived in London, one of the world's great cities, but never saw anything but his house, the Arsenal training ground and the stadium. One example of his obsessive nature was meeting the head groundsman every day to check the state of the pitch for the next game.

Wenger believes a manager should have three missions; 'to have an impact on the result and the team's playing style, to foster the players' individual development and to strengthen the structure of the club



'Arsenal was a matter of life and death to me.'

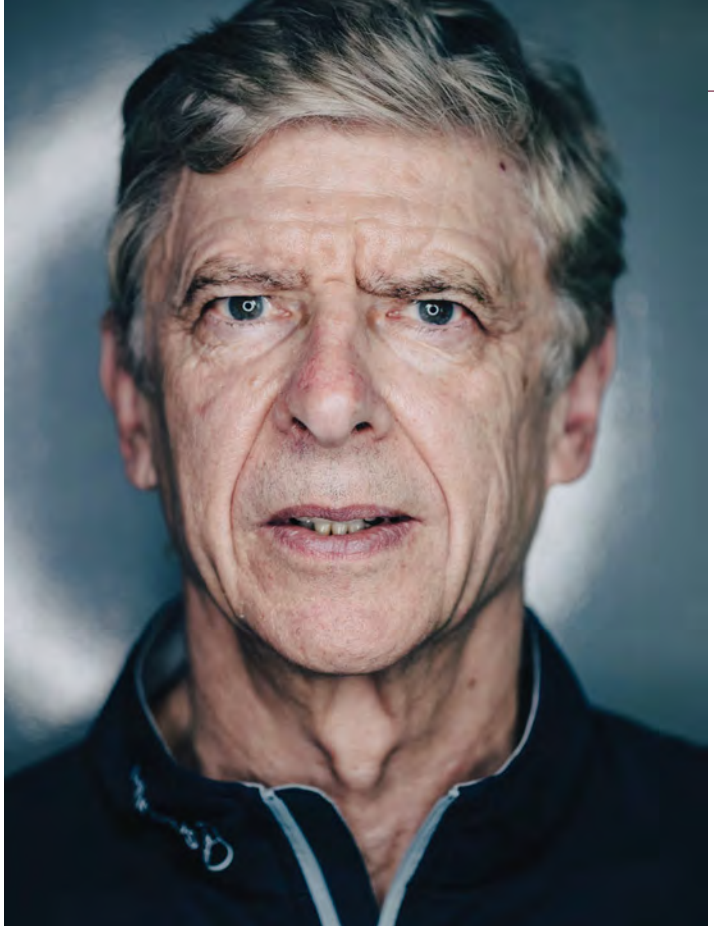
and enhance its global influence'. He refers to the barrage of criticism Arsenal endured, on appointing him, the first foreign manager in the Premier League, and the personal hostility he received as well. But, as he points out, by the time he left, a majority of managers – and owners – of clubs were from outside the UK. It was one of many ways in which he was ahead of his time.

When working at Strasbourg, as coach of the youth team, he had a psychiatrist brought into the club for the first time. Later, in England, he was the first manager to try and measure players' physical performance levels, pioneering evaluation techniques with ProZone and other companies, things that all clubs now use routinely. For the Arsenal players, the real changes he brought included a different approach to coaching methods with more regular sessions, eating meals together, lessons on nutrition and muscle-strengthening exercises. He does, however, sadly, dispel one myth: 'I supposedly made the players eat broccoli morning, noon and night. It was not true, especially as I'm not all that keen on broccoli.' He does refer to the importance of 'invisible training – that is, a holistic approach to fitness lifestyle, including nutrition, sleep, stretching, massage, etc.'

The book's title, by the way, acknowledges the strange fact that every team he has managed throughout his career played in red and white!

One of Wenger's greatest achievements was the Arsenal team which won the League in 2003-4 without losing a game, stretching their unbeaten sequence in the League to 49 games. Wenger, quaintly, wondered if there was some significance in the run ending at 49, as he was born in 1949. The run was no fluke. It was rather a target that Wenger had set for his team, even 'a kind of obsession I carried around with me. You can be top of the class with 90 per cent, but you can't be second with 100 per cent.'

Some of his insights into coaching and player assessment and development are fascinating, for example: 'If football can be summed up as ball reception, decision making and the quality of the performance, we realized that the factor that makes the difference between players is the ability to take in information. In the Premier League, a good player takes in around four to six pieces of information in the ten seconds prior to receiving the ball, and the very good player takes in eight to ten pieces of information.' →



Simon Hofmann/Getty Images for Laureus

Other topics covered in the book include

- The development of his approach to coaching from being inflexible and authoritarian to being more ready to listen to others and compromise
- The decision to replay the Sheffield United cup tie when Arsenal scored, rather than giving the ball back after an injury stoppage
- The pressure of North London derbies
- Pizzagate at Old Trafford and the confirmation that it was Fabregas who threw the slice which hit Alex Ferguson
- Buying and selling players – 450 transfers under his reign
- 55 pages of statistics and facts about his time at Arsenal

Wenger talks about his Roman Catholic upbringing, which gave him a clear sense of morality. He recalls at the age of six watching a game, prayer book in hand, praying for a win! He describes Glenn Hoddle as 'one of the few players I've known to have a religious faith', writing elsewhere that football was his only religion and that it should be the same for every player. Towards the end of the book there is a curious passage: 'I often imagine the first words I will exchange with God when I die. He will ask me what I did with my life, what meaning I gave it. I'll tell him I tried to win football matches! 'That's all?' he'll probably ask, disappointed. I'll try to convince him that winning matches is harder than you might think, and that football is important to millions of people's lives, that it creates moments for sharing, moments of joy and great sadness, too.'

The book gives a unique insight into a legend of English football, a man for whom 'a day without a football match seems empty'.



Clive Mason/Getty Images

Mikel Arteta, the current Arsenal manager

'Mikel Arteta took charge of the team in December 2019, and with him these values, this spirit, this style that was characteristic of the club can once again come to the fore. As an Arsenal player, he was passionate, intelligent, and had the ardour and determination of youth, and he has not lost that, I believe. For me, he was an invaluable go-between with the team. He has the experience, the desire that is needed to revive the soul of the club, and made a great start with a Cup final win over Chelsea in his first season in charge.'



Alex Livesey/Getty Images

Alex Ferguson

'Throughout all those years, I always enjoyed our rivalry with Manchester United, the tension at every match. Alex Ferguson was ready to die for his club, and I for mine. It was him or me. And this extreme rivalry can be explained by our competitiveness. Alex Ferguson was passionate about football, he was very capable and had crushing authority over English football because of his personality and the power of the club. He exerted a kind of subconscious pressure on everyone including the referees. For instance, time added on after injury time was even called Fergie time, and United used to win a lot at home with this additional time. His authority was primarily connected to the exceptional quality of the team. There was always huge mutual respect, a classic rivalry. Of course, there were many clashes, angry scenes between us, but this was not a game, it wasn't for show: it was our lives, our passion, our utter dedication to football. We were totally committed and thought only of victory.'

Wenger on...



Steve Bardens/Getty Images

Olivier Giroud

(Featured in *Sorted* March 2020)
'Olivier Giroud commands huge respect as someone you can always rely on in adversity. When we come to look back, it will become clear that he had a great career. Through his strength and hard work, he achieved the recognition he deserved both in England and France. Deep down, he has unshakeable psychological strength, the conviction that he is going to do things right and that he is going to succeed. And he is ready to prove it and pay the price for it with effort and work. Today he is the third-highest French goal scorer in Premier League history behind Thierry Henry and Nicolas Anelka.'

'Unshakeable psychological strength.'



Clive Mason/Getty Images

Mesut Özil

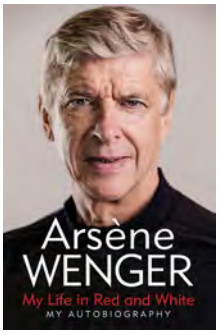
'Özil is an artist who feels football through all the pores of his skin and his soul. He needs to be constantly encouraged. He needs to feel close to his coach and have a relationship of trust with him. Being hard on him doesn't work. Like all artists, he needs to feel supported in his creativity. He has a feel for passing and an exceptional sense of timing when he passes. There is something magical and simple about his playing style. The Premier League is a train that goes by at 200 kilometres per hour, and Ozil doesn't always go at this speed, but you always have great affection for his artistry.'



Andy Rain - Pool/Getty Images

VAR

'I've read a good deal of criticism of the Video Assisted Referee (VAR) but I think it's a huge step forward. A lot of people claim that VAR kills the excitement and that in the past mistakes would just have balanced out over a season. That's an unacceptable argument, because there's no proof the mistakes do balance out, and even if that were the case, it would mean a mistake in itself isn't serious and, even, that we should accept large numbers of them.'



Arsène Wenger's *My Life in Red and White* is published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson £20

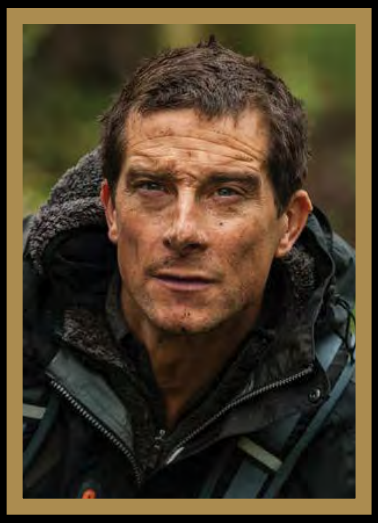
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IN VINO VERITAS

WITH TONY VINO

It's not all Grimm tidings

Fairytales throughout the middle ages were traditionally told during this time of year, to while away the long winter nights. One such tale, by the Brothers Grimm, is called *The Devil's Sooty Brother.* Imagine us sat by the fire, tankard in hand. If not, a cup of tea and an electric heater will do.

A soldier, hungry, disbanded from the army after the war, walks through the woods, and meets a little devil. In European folklore, the woods represent our soul or the hidden part of ourselves and the little devil is a trickster character, an agent of transformational change.

The little devil gave him a job, promising that, at the end of seven years' work, he would be rich and able to play beautiful music. He was taken deep underground, instructed to keep the fires burning under three huge pots, and to sweep the ashes behind the door. He's forbidden to wash, cut his hair or look inside the pots. Years go by, he's sweaty, and the temptation to peek is overwhelming, so he looks inside the pots. One has his old lieutenant, one his corporal and the other his former general. With glee, he stokes the flames hotter to avenge his mistreatment when in their service.

Promise broken, the only wages he gets are the ashes from behind the door which he collects into a knapsack. Walking through the woods, he discovers they have turned to gold. He is rich, flaunts his wealth, has it stolen, recovers it, learns to walk humbly, wins the hand of a princess by playing the flute and finally becomes king of a distant land.

Why tell this tale?

Good question.

It's been a tough time for many. Some men, myself included, have found ourselves wandering inwardly, trying to make sense of this past year. Plans have been broken, relationships strained. Yet the story hints at the true value in our labours may not be that which we were focusing on. Instead it's the ashes of grief and futility swept behind the door which turn to gold. Guard that treasure, carry it humbly as you make music in a new land. S.

'Guard that treasure.'

I'm telling many more of these folktales to explore faith, calling and imagination for the coming year at JIW men's retreat in Bromsgrove 5–7 February. Join me **journeyintothewild.co.uk**



TONY VINO

Tony Vino is a professional comedian who straddles the world of comedy clubs, festivals and churches.

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Enjoy the moment



Growing up means that you are supposed to leave childish behaviour behind. I've think I've largely succeeded, and if you disagree I just won't play with you any more, so there.

Seriously, I think I've developed a modicum of maturity. If I'm offered food that isn't to my liking, I no longer decorate someone's head with it, which does make for a much better experience in restaurants. And I no longer scream a deafening wail in the key of G when I'm upset.

But there's one childhood habit that I've not been able to grow out of, and it's about time.

Sometimes I'd like to suspend it. Extend the life of that spectacular sunset. Stretch that laugh-out-loud evening with friends so that it lasts a week, so I could lob another dozen logs on the fireplace, sip another glass of wine, and savour the warm smiles again and again.

It's always been that way with me. As a child, I would go to the fair, luxuriate in the colliding smells of fried onions and candy floss, and then hop one of those garishly painted roundabouts, the ones with the slightly off-tune organ and the clashing cymbals. But as soon as the ride edged slowly into motion, and I'd wave goodbye to Mum for the twenty seconds it took to go around once, I'd edge into worry: how much time had I got left to enjoy this experience? Would the scowling chap with the ponytail and bad tattoos who was controlling the ride give me my full quota of time to enjoy being astride the wooden horse with impossibly large teeth? As soon as I began the experience, I whittled away about it coming to an end, all too soon. The 'merry' on my merry-go-round was spoiled because I was preoccupied with fear that it would go round too quickly.

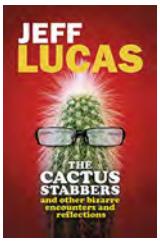


There comes a point when planning for the future becomes preoccupation with it, or when nostalgia for what was ruins our capacity to celebrate what is. I don't want to daydream through my days, mentally elsewhere. I want to be fully present and be in the moment, now.

Jesus was a popular party guest. He was there, asking questions, listening, noticing. The whole incarnation story says this: God saw. He came. And He stayed, by His Spirit. And now, in a way that I honestly can't fathom, we are assured of His full attention. S.

'Extend the life of that spectacular sunset.'

WANT TO READ ON?



Adapted from *The Cactus Stabbers* by Jeff Lucas. Published by CWR.

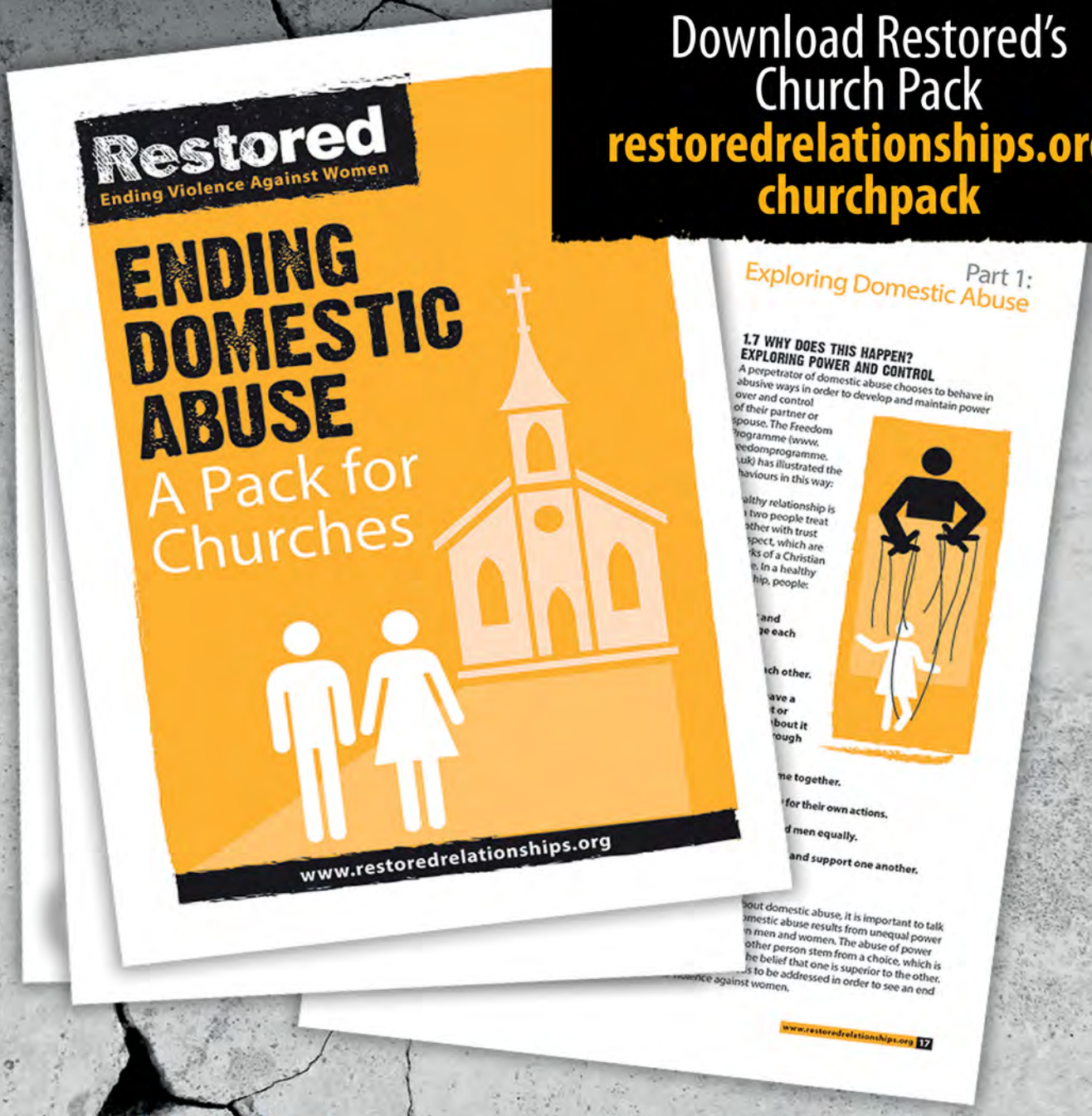


JEFF LUCAS

Jeff Lucas is an international speaker, broadcaster and author of 22 books. He loves to communicate using humour and storytelling. He is a monthly contributor to Premier *Christianity* magazine and writes daily Bible-reading notes, *Life Every Day*. Jeff holds a teaching position at Timberline Church in Colorado and is married to Kay.

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THE LAST WORD
WITH NATHAN BLACKABY



Don't worry... you're not alone

'Nature isn't worried about COVID.'

You are not alone if you are wondering about your job security, health and just what on earth 2021 will throw at you. As we officially close the door on 2020, I think it is essential we don't drop our guard and walk into a potential right hook from this year, one that could floor us.

I think there are some really practical things we can do, and one lesson comes from geese.

Nature isn't worried about the coronavirus; it's still doing its thing – lockdowns or not. Recently, I watched geese flying in a V-shape and it got me thinking about the importance of staying in formation.

Geese fly like this for a few reasons. Like a feathered peloton of the sky that conserves energy, flying behind and slightly above the bird in front, they can stay in formation for hours without dropping to the side or losing the pack. Secondly, they stay in a V-shape to enable lines of sight and communication at all times – a technique adapted by modern day fighter pilots.

I have learnt that I need a framework. When there is uncertainty and a potential for stuff to move on us at the rate and scale it has in 2020, we can quickly feel adrift and without direction, focus and purpose.

For me, and in my work with CVM, we have seen the benefit of blokes encouraging each other, checking in, showing up and being there. Working in a formation, so as mates you have each other's interests at heart, working together for a common goal, with properly functioning lines of communication.

As you charge into 2021, what does your network of mates look like? If you need any help, get in touch with CVM.



NATHAN BLACKABY

Nathan is married to Jennie and they have three children. Nathan loves skipping, boxing, riding motorbikes, and his dog. He has lived in Brazil working with Teen Challenge and enjoys trying to keep his Portuguese going. In his free time he can be found sitting around a fire and eating.

@NathanBlackaby

Don't miss the next issue! On sale 18 February



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