

BOISDALE

Life

Issue No. 5

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ON THE AUSSIES

ROGER BOOTLE
THE GREAT FALL OF CHINA

GENERAL SIR PETER WALL
DEALING WITH ISIL

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Monday 16 November 2015

AN AFFAIR IN SEVILLE



Plaza del Triunfo, opposite the magnificent Catedral del Sevilla

You never tire of it. As I lit up a Hoyo de Monteray Epicure No 2 cigar, I was offered a glass of Leonor Palo Cortado sherry. It was love at first sip, with hints of bitter orange, toasted hazelnuts and a remarkably long dry, sensual finish. Not only is this a truly world class wine and a phenomenal aperitif, but nothing in my mind could be a more perfect flavour match for the herbaceous complex flavours, of a great handmade Cuban cigar.

Over the next four days I reacquainted myself with the various styles of sherry, fino, amontillado, manzanilla and oloroso, and promised myself that at Boisdale we would make a concerted effort to reintroduce the distinct and magnificent pleasures of sherry drinking to our customers. Whatever happened to sherry? Were generations of highly sophisticated aficionados of gourmet existence in the 19th and 20th centuries all wrong, or are we today missing out on something really very special? Not only does no aperitif better prepare the palate for food but it is perfect with most first courses and in particular fish and shellfish – it is also outstanding value. We will be holding two comprehensive sherry and tapas tastings with Gonzalez Byass on Tuesday 1st December at Boisdale of Belgravia and on Tuesday 19th January at Boisdale of Canary Wharf (see boisdale.co.uk for these and other event details.) In the meantime, whilst not wanting to encourage you to stray too far from your current relationships, I would recommend a rewarding lifelong affair with sherry. ♦

Ranald Macdonald
 Editor-in-Chief Boisdale Life Magazine
 Founder Boisdale Restaurants & Bars

If you are a hot musician and you need more fans you need look no further than Seville. Virtually every street has a charming old fashioned little shop selling intricate, rather splendidly decorated fans. I can imagine these bejewelled birdwings in the bull ring beating to the rhythm of their hot blooded owners' hearts, wafting scent across the sun-scorched, gore-darkened sand. It is now late October and my wife Kate and I are, as I write, returning from a long weekend in Seville. It is a stunning city. Funnily enough we were moderately keen, perhaps more dutifully curious, to see our first bull-fight – but discovered that the season excludes the cooler months of the year. Presumably this originates from the time of Roman occupation, when gladiatorial games were held to dampen discontent when the unbearable summer heat turned the public mood into a potential tinderbox. The past is alive in Seville. You see it and

feel it everywhere. In summary: the streets of Seville positively drip with orange trees; there are endless wonderful bars and restaurants; awe inspiring history-rich architecture; and perhaps most importantly gorgeous people with lovely manners reminiscent of a long gone era. I fell in love all over again in Seville... with sherry. It all started in Jerez.

I had been invited to a partridge shoot by the Gonzalez Byass family. After the second drive we retired for refreshment to the ranch-style, white painted, beautiful winery (the sort of place where the head honcho of the bad crew lives and operates, from in a classic spaghetti western), sprawling on a hill with panoramic views over immaculate vineyards. Awaiting us were plates of delicious Pata Negra ham, which in this part of the world is inevitably served as far as I experienced, for breakfast, lunch and dinner. As well as in between times, whenever you have a drink (I know what you are thinking!)



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CONTENTS

COMMENT



AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIA WE LOVE YOU!

Tom Parker Bowles
16

THE STATE OF LEBANON

Michael Karam
18

DAMNED IF WE DO

General Sir Peter Wall
22

THE GREAT FALL OF CHINA

Roger Bootle
26

THE FUTURE OF UNIVERSITIES

Mark Littlewood
29

CORBONOMICS EXPLAINED

Jonathan Isaby
31

THE SOMME REMEMBERED

Bruce Anderson
33

IMMIGRATION CRISIS

Nikolai Tolstoy
36

PEOPLE



RYDER CUP LEGEND – SAM TORRANCE

Dominic Midgley
39

IF I RULED THE WORLD

Rachel Johnson
43

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF VERNON W. HILL II

Vernon W. Hill II
44

THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF PUNK – TOYA WILLCOX

Jonathan Wingate
45

THE BIG INTERVIEW PART II – KELSEY GRAMMER

Paddy Renouf
48

BOND GIRLS PREFER BENTLEY

Paddy Renouf
51

BOB HOPE AND THE MISSING UMBRELLA

Michael Gelardi
52

LIFESTYLE



COMPLICATED WATCHES

Timothy Barber
54

THE BOISDALE TRAVELLERS CLUB

Scott Dunn
56

THE PERINI CUP REGATTA

Rory Ross
58

THE GOLDSMITH OF BELGRAVIA

Sarah Edworthy
63

THE BIG RUGBY LUNCH

Harry Owen
64

SMOKIN HOT

Nick Hammond
69

FOOD & DRINK



THE AMBASSADOR

James Buntin
67

A CULINARY WARNING

William Sitwell
70

THE MACALLAN MASTER OF WOOD

Stuart MacPherson
73

A CASE FOR GERMAN WINE

Charlie Miller
75

BOISDALE RECIPES

Andy Rose
77

WINTER COCKTAILS

Boisdale Mixologists
81



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DIARY

THE BALVENIE GAME RESTAURANT SHOOTING CUP FOUNDED BY BOISDALE

IN ASSOCIATION WITH JAMES PURDEY & SONS, LEICA SPORT OPTICS, AND HALLGARTEN, DRUITT AND NOVUM WINE MERCHANTS.

A very special thanks to all the wonderful staff at the West London Shooting School, undoubtedly the finest clay shooting facility in the vicinity of London, who made the unique "3 Feathers" day so memorable. Held on 4 August, the inaugural cup saw only one injury sustained to the unlucky Daniel Kent of Wilton's, but that's another story! One prize not listed below was The Most Appalling Shot of the Day, won by Andre Garret of Cliveden House. An open top double decker bus with a jazz band, caviar and champagne took the entire party back to Boisdale of Belgravia for a spectacular four course lunch, after which Balvenie 21 yr Old Portwood was enjoyed with Cuban cigars on the terrace. See short film of the day and more photographs at facebook.com/BoisdaleRestaurants



The Shooting Party included some of the country's most talented chefs including: Peter Robinson, Vivek Singh, Andre Garrett, Richard Corrigan, Chris Galvin, Mike Robinson, Claude Bosi, Andrew Turner, Jeff Galvin, James Lowe, Mark Edwards, Oliver Gladwin, David Stafford, Fergus Henderson, Valentine Warner, Daniel Kent and Anthony Demetre.



Mark Edwards of Nobu joins Boisdale of Canary Wharf Head Chef, Andrew Donovan alongside Boisdale of Belgravia Head Chef Chris Zachwieja, with Fergus Henderson of St John and Richard Corrigan



Top prize went to Mark Edwards of Nobu, who received a handmade Quail from Kirsten Grant Meikle, Director of Prestige William Grant & Sons



Mike Robinson of The Harwood Arms, was presented a Men's Tweed Fieldcoat for second place, by James Horne, Chairman of James Purdey & Sons



Anthony Demetre of Wild Honey, was presented a Magnum of Nipozanno Chianti 2010 for 3rd place, by Andrew Bewes, Managing Director of Hallgarten Druitt & Novum



Richard Corrigan of Corrigans, was presented a pair of Leica Trinovid 8x42 Binoculars for winning the "Buffalo Challenge", by Jason Heward, Managing Director of Leica

THE PERINI CUP REGATTA 2015

Boisdale Life's Rory Ross attended the sixth Perini Navi Cup. The Perini Navi fleet accounts for 60% of the world market for sailing yachts over £45million. 16 Perini Navi yachts gathered at Sardinia's Yacht Club Costa Smeralda, before the fleet headed out on the open water of Porto Cervo.



(L-R) Sir Russell Coutts, five time Americas Cup winner alongside Milena and Fabio Perini



(L-R) Joey Kaempfer owner of Rosehearty with Burak Akgül, Managing Director of Sales, Marketing & Design at Perini Navi Group



Fabio Perini alongside Andrea Botticelli

DIARY

CELEBRATING 300 YEARS OF MARTELL



(L-R) Ranald Macdonald, Boisdale Life Editor & Chief, with Antoine Firino Martell and Pernod Ricard UK MD Denis O'Flynn



LA RÉSIDENCE DE L'AMBASSADEUR!

On September 24 Martell celebrated 300 years of craftsmanship at The Residence of the Ambassador of France, in Kensington Palace Gardens. Both Benoit Fil, Martell's Cellar Master, and Antoine Firino Martell, one of the descendants of the House's Founder Jean Martell, were on hand to explain the unique spirit of French Art de Vivre. Denis O'Flynn, Managing Director of Pernod Ricard UK introduced the event, which included guided tastings, innovative new cocktails and a bespoke pairing canapé menu created by the chefs at the Ambassador's Residence. The evening ended with a fantastic fireworks display over Hyde Park! #Martell300

CHIVAS 12 "MADE FOR GENTLEMAN" IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GLOBETROTTER

On 1 October Boisdale Life headed to 35 Albemarle St. To see the launch of the new Chivas partnership with renowned English luggage manufacturer Globe-Trotter. The highlight of the show was a Chivas 12 "Made for Gentlemen" by Globe-Trotter Steamer Trunk. One of only two trunks available worldwide at a cost of £12,000 with all proceeds going to the Princes Trust. Guests a "Chivas Sour" and "Chivas Maximilian" – the latter stirred with Earl Grey tea.

www.globe-trotter.com
www.chivas.com



Tasting notes courtesy of Chivas Brand Ambassador, Max Warner



Mixologist at work!



Bremont Marketing Manager, Sophie Laurie



Emma Neff of Campbell Bell Communications



Chester Barrie menswear on display at The Royal Exchange



Chester Barrie Marketing & PR Director, Chris Scott-Gray

CELEBRATING THE RUGBY WORLD CUP WITH LEICESTER TIGERS

On 30 September Savile Row tailor Chester Barrie linked-up with Oxford Properties to hold a celebration of the Rugby World Cup at the Royal Exchange. Chester Barrie is the menswear sponsor of Leicester Tigers, one of England's most consistently successful rugby clubs. Tigers' fans had a chance to see the latest menswear collection and hear from a number of players past and present. At the time all four home nations were still involved, so there was plenty to talk about!

www.chesterbarrie.co.uk



Oxford Properties Groups Sally Saadeh (L) and Joanna Lea (R) with Leicester's Tom Croft



The Tigers: Matthew Tait, Miles Benjamin, Freddy Burns, Tom Croft and Matt Poole

DIARY

GEORG JENSEN MAYFAIR LAUNCH

27 October 2015 – Georg Jensen, the Danish design house, opened its new London flagship boutique on Mayfair's Mount Street. The boutique marked another step in the brand's re-ignition, following closely on the heels of new boutiques in London's Royal Exchange, Westfield's luxury retail hub The Village, and concessions within Selfridges Wonder Room and Harrods. Guests attending included Dame Zaha Hadid, DBE, Ilse Crawford and Tom Dixon.



Georg Jensen CEO David Chu and Dame Zaha Hadid at the flagship launch



MiMi Xu DJ's at Georg Jensen



Alicia Rountree and Donna Air

THE FREEDOM DINNER

On 7 July at Boisdale of Canary Wharf, the annual dinner hosted by Simon Clark of Forest, was attended by over 200 guests. Including representatives from The Institute of Economic Affairs, The Adam Smith Institute, Conservatives for Liberty, Women In Tobacco, The TaxPayers Alliance, The Institute of Ideas, Manifesto Club and Liberal Vision. The Freedom Dinner's primary goal is to oppose the government intrusion on lifestyle freedoms such as eating, drinking and smoking. This year's event saw Oscar and BAFTA award-winning film producer Stephen Evans (pictured) as the keynote speaker.



Iconic film producer Stephen Evans

REBECCA FERGUSON

The best voice to have come out of Simon Cowell's talent contest X Factor, Rebecca Ferguson celebrated the works of Billie Holiday at Boisdale of Canary Wharf on 16 September – with hits including That Ole Devil Called Love, Summertime, Lover Man and God Bless The Child. Rebecca sang to the packed house, with the audience treated to a rich, tender and soulful performance – top-class!



THE WHISKY EXCHANGE – KARUIZAWA NEPAL CHARITY TASTING

Billed as the most expensive whisky tasting ever staged and despite the £6,000 ticket price, every seat was sold! 3 October saw whisky expert Dave Broom (pictured) present a one-off tasting of five extremely rare Karuizawa whiskies at The Whisky Show. The tasting included an ultra-rare bottle of Karuizawa 1983 (limited to just 50) that all attendees took away with them. Proceeds from the tasting have gone to charities helping those affected by the devastating earthquakes in Nepal. "When we were considering a whisky to raise money for charity, we felt that Karuizawa was the ideal choice given its reputation and legendary status." Sukhinder Singh, Founder of The Whisky Exchange.



Whisky expert Dave Broom

COMMENT

THE STATE OF LEBANON

WORDS BY MICHAEL KARAM



Beirut pictured after the Lebanon war in August 2006. The conflict started on 12 July 2006, and continued until a United Nations-brokered ceasefire went into effect in the morning on 14 August 2006

You probably know Lebanon for a civil war with a mind numbing number of participants; for the kidnapping and lengthy imprisonment of Terry Waite, Brian Keenan and John McCarthy and for Beirut, a once glamorous and thrilling city that became a metaphor for danger and bedlam. You may have drunk its wine?

It's a small country, roughly the size of Wales, with a population of 6 million (it was 4 million a few years ago but we'll get to that in a minute) and 18 official religions and sects. It is a recipe for failure, but 72 years after gaining independence from Post-WWI French mandate, the country, which every now and then appears to punch above its weight, is hanging on... just.

My father's family is Maronite Christian from Mount Lebanon, but were it not for his death in a helicopter crash in Africa in 1990, I may never have returned. I had initially intended to go to Beirut for six months, sort out his affairs, see the country I only remembered through a child's eyes and then continue my life in London. But Lebanon has a way of getting under your skin. Although I didn't realize this when I landed in Beirut in February 1992 to find a country

still punch drunk and traumatized by a civil war that achieved very little except leaving 150,000 dead and hundreds, perhaps thousands, missing.

The conflict started in April 1975, essentially as a battle between Christian Nationalists, who feared the increasing influence of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organization, and the mainly Leftist Sunni groups who backed the PLO's right to biff Israel from South Lebanon. It eventually sucked in a supporting cast, most notably Israel, which invaded in 1982 to chase the PLO out of the country and then hung around in the south until

soon after. The 80's saw the emergence of Shia groups such as Hezbollah and Amal, Christian power struggles, and a final bloody showdown with the Syrians, which drew the whole mess to a close in 1990. Lebanon found itself at peace but run from Damascus.

But the Lebanese, descendants of the Phoenicians – the original wheeler-dealers – are nothing if not resilient and when the guns fell silent, there was a feeling of hope. And for a while things were looking good.

Primarily because Lebanon got a new sheriff in the shape of Rafic Hariri, a gun-

Lebanon has a way of getting under your skin.

2000. Syria too "intervened" in 1976 and essentially occupied the rest of the country until 2005. In 1982, the US and the French sent in peacekeepers but one year later got a bloody nose courtesy of a nascent Hezbollah (the Iranian-backed militant Shia party) and consequently left

slinging billionaire who rode into town on the back of a Croesus-like fortune made in construction, banking, telecoms and media. A Sunni from the southern city of Sidon, Hariri was close to the Saudi Royal family who used him as a mediator during the war. He was even

closer to world statesmen, especially French President Jacques Chirac – that there was no civil war blood on his hands, was a bonus.

When on October 31, 1992 he was nominated as the country's 44th Prime Minister, he used all his clout, not to mention resources to rebuild Lebanon. Proper countries wouldn't have allowed such behaviour but Lebanon isn't a proper country, and without Hariri's decision to expropriate land in exchange for shares in the bombed-out centre of Beirut, the post-war reconstruction process would have been bogged down by typical Lebanese sectarian squabbling or complex inheritance disputes. "H" as we journalists liked to call him, cut through all that. He had a dream: to turn Beirut's rubble into a gleaming shopping and leisure destination for Arab tourists.

Hariri's "build-it-and-they-will-come" strategy got off to a cracking start. The timing helped. After 9/11, Arabs felt self-conscious in their usual haunts across Europe and the US, so the new Beirut which had just come "online", offered everything they wanted without the suspicious looks. Very soon, the media was once again looking at Lebanon and Beirut for all the right reasons.

But not everyone was impressed. Many Lebanese, Christians in particular, felt that Hariri was using his power to further consolidate Sunni influence in the country, while former property owners in central Beirut questioned and still question, what they see as a land for shares swap loaded in favour of Solidere. The company tasked with rebuilding and managing the new Beirut Central District.

But there were bigger rumblings across the border in Damascus. Syrian President Hafez el Assad had cultivated an excellent relationship with Hariri, recognizing



Rafic Hariri was a Lebanese-Saudi business tycoon and Prime Minister of Lebanon from 1992 to 1998 and again from 2000 until his resignation on 20 October 2004. He headed five cabinets during his tenure and dominated the country's post-war political and business life. His wealth grew from less than \$1 billion when he was appointed prime minister in 1992, to over \$16 billion, before his assassination in 1998

the benefits of his international contacts and appreciating his innate business pragmatism. But when Assad Snr died in 2000, Hariri's relationship with his son Bashar soured, particularly when Hariri felt that Syria's domination of Lebanese politics had crossed a line.

Things came to a head in 2004, when Hariri, who had been PM twice since 1992, was effectively sacked by Bashar and he drifted closer to the growing anti-Syrian opposition. He knew it was a move that could cost him his life. On Valentine's Day 2005, while driving from

as he drove to work. Over the next two years, other political and military figures met similar fates, as it became clear that Syria wasn't taking its recent humiliation lying down.

If that weren't bad enough for the new Lebanon, just over a year later Hezbollah literally stumbled into a month-long war with Israel after ambushing an Israeli army patrol in the tense border area. The short but brutal conflict cost the country 1,000 dead, 1 million displaced and \$10 billion worth of damage to the nation's already fragile infrastructure.

The Lebanese, descendants of the Phoenicians – the original wheeler-dealers – are nothing if not resilient.

parliament to his heavily guarded home in West Beirut, Hariri and 21 others, including the former economy minister Basil Fleishman, were killed by a massive bomb, detonated as his convoy drove past the Hotel St Georges on the Beirut seafont.

The Lebanese were used to seeing their leaders blown up or gunned down, but Hariri was a "civilian" and a cut above the warlords and gangsters that make up the bulk of Lebanon's political class. There was genuine anger across all segments of society and exactly one month later, 1 million Lebanese – there was never really any doubt who ordered the killing – gathered in the aptly-named Martyr's Square, a stone's throw from Hariri's urban legacy, to demand an end to Syria's 29-year occupation of Lebanon. Again timing was everything. The call for a withdrawal found massive international support, especially from the US with its substantial troop presence in Iraq, and in one month Syrian army convoys rumbled back over the border crossing at Masnaa.

We were alone and we were euphoric. Damascus had bled the country dry financially and emotionally. But the brave new dawn – one that would see an independent Lebanon finally realise its massive potential as a wealthy and dynamic entrepôt like Singapore or Hong Kong – never really broke.

Damascus still had friends in Lebanon and within weeks the eponymous March 14 political bloc that had been at the forefront of what was being called the Cedar Revolution, suffered the first in a series of assassinations. On June 2 the fervent anti-Syrian journalist and political campaigner Samir Kassir was murdered

In 2008, Hezbollah, which had somehow managed to placate public opinion over its 2006 bungling by fighting Israel to a standstill, was at it again, this time turning its weapons "inwards" and mounting an attempted coup in Beirut. It failed but the incident effected a compromise of sorts. A new President was elected, everyone kissed and made up and for the next four years Lebanon did what it always does in periods of relatively peace: it made money.

Then Syria happened and the country once again went into lockdown. While many Lebanese eagerly awaited what they thought would be the inevitable overthrow of the hated Assad regime, tensions between Lebanon's Sunni and Shia communities increased over who supported who in the conflict – Sunnis by and large support the rebels, while the Shia backed the regime. In 2012, Lebanon's normally party-fuelled summer season fell apart, punctuated by kidnappings, bank robberies, illegal roadblocks and gun battles.

The free spending, and normally blasé Gulf Arabs, for once stayed at home – leaving us Lebanese to consider not only a decimated economy, but also the very real prospect of a descent into another civil conflict. One evening that summer, I turned to my wife and said, "Let's go". I'd lived through three wars, a popular revolution and a failed coup, but the kidnappings and the lawlessness, a hallmark of the civil war terror, indicated a chilling shift.

Over the next two years as we planned our move, Lebanon absorbed hundreds of thousands of refugees who spilled over the border to escape the civil war in their

BEFORE



AFTER



After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following World War I, Beirut, along with the rest of Lebanon, was placed under the French Mandate. Lebanon achieved independence in 1943, and Beirut became the capital city. The city remained a regional intellectual capital, becoming a major tourist destination and affectionately known as "the Paris of the Middle East." Pictured here is the same Square in Beirut prior to and during the civil war

country. Today their number in Lebanon stands at nearly 2 million, equivalent to 50% of the Lebanese population, or Britain taking in 34 million over three years. It is a testament to the Lebanese resilience that the country, which didn't have enough water, electricity, bandwidth and roads for its own people, hasn't imploded.

But we're not out of the woods. The spectre of ISIS and Sunni extremism looms across the eastern Bekaa Valley close to the hub of Lebanon's small but energetic wine industry. Just over a year ago, Lebanon's tiny and underequipped army fought a five-day battle against a

force of 6,000 fighters from ISIS and the marginally less bloodthirsty Al Nusra Front, around the border town of Aarsal that left 19 Lebanese soldiers, 16 civilians and over 50 jihadists dead.

Those fighters are still holed up there, resting and regrouping. Every now and then they scrap with the Lebanese army that is trying to contain them in the forbidding Anti-Lebanon mountain region. The fear is that one day, the group will make a concerted move to push deeper into Lebanon, presumably for a showdown with its natural enemy Hezbollah, which has sent soldiers to fight alongside Syrian government troops.

Back in Lebanon, Hezbollah has spun the only message it can: The party is once again protecting Lebanon's borders, this time from the jihadist bogeyman and its core supporters, as well as an increasing number of the country's Christians, who believe it is the only force that can keep a determined ISIS out. The Sunnis don't like it but there really isn't anything they can do. They don't want ISIS to come galloping over the border, but they will never be happy with the presence of a heavily armed Shia party in their midst. And so once again Lebanon finds itself at a crossroads created by the region's ever shifting tectonic plates.

I will leave you with this: In 1991, one year after the end of the Lebanese civil war, Brigadier General Ghazi Kanaan, head of Syrian intelligence in Lebanon and in reality the most powerful man in the country, uttered these chilling words of caution and encouragement. "You Lebanese, you are shrewd, creative and successful merchants... create light industries. Engage in trade and commerce. Indulge in light media, which does not affect security." Shine

all over the world by inventiveness, and leave politics to us. Each has his domain in Lebanon: yours is trade; ours, politics and security."

On October 12 2005, six months after Syria pulled out of Lebanon, Kanaan, by then Syria's interior minister, was found slumped dead at his desk in Damascus with a gunshot wound to the head after apparently committing suicide. The hope is that Lebanon avoids a similar fate. ♦



Michael Karam is one of Lebanon's most respected English language journalists. He has written on Lebanese and Syrian affairs for The Times, The Spectator, Esquire, Monocle and the Beirut Daily Star. His wine writings have appeared in Decanter and Harpers. He is the author of Wines of Lebanon, which won the Gourmand Award for the Best New World Wine Book, 2005. He is also the founding Editor-in-Chief of NowLebanon.com, a current affairs website dedicated to Lebanese democracy formed in the wake of the 2005 Cedar Revolution.



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COMMENT

DAMNED IF WE DO AND DAMNED IF WE DON'T

Now retired Sir Peter Wall GCB, CBE, DL Hon. FREng served as Commander-in-Chief, Land Forces from August 2009 to September 2010 and then Chief of the General Staff, the professional head of the British Army, until September 2014. He had previously served as Chief of Staff of the National Contingent HQ in Qatar, overseeing UK operations in Iraq, from January 2003. In May 2003, Wall assumed the appointment of General Officer Commanding the 1st Armoured Division with the rank of major general, in which capacity he was responsible for the security of Basra in Iraq.

WORDS BY GENERAL SIR PETER WALL GCB, CBE, DL Hon. FREng



Inside the Isil training camps, students receive a mix of military, political and sharia orientation

CHALLENGES TO UK SECURITY

Prior to the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review the National Security Strategy asserted that we would be able to take risks on defence capability until later in the decade, because there were no apparent threats to our security or national interests. That seemed a comforting idea for a Government about to make significant cuts to the defence budget in the face of national austerity. The idea fell down on three counts. First, one of philosophy: history reminds us that our predictive powers are poor and the very point of strong defence, is for resilience against the unforeseen. Second, it weakened the credibility of our deterrent posture, making us seem an easier target. Third it fell down by the consequence of subsequent events.

Two direct concerns for the UK's security emerged in the ensuing years: the assertiveness of Mr Putin's Russia over its near abroad and the advent of Isil. Neither could reasonably have been predicted in 2010; which takes us back to the first count above.

The negative impact of those funding cuts over the past 5 years has been

marked: on Naval and Air Force capital equipment and hence their capability, on operational resilience and equipment in the Army and on delayed investment in some critical defence-wide capabilities in the cyber, surveillance and intelligence domains. The recent Government pledge to spend the NATO minimum of 2 per cent of GDP on defence and security for the rest of the decade is therefore very welcome. It is certainly necessary. If it

achieving consensus across nearly 30 member nations is an Achilles heel that Mr Putin exploits with guile. The EU's economic sanctions have had some effect. NATO's response was initially lethargic but is now more concerted and more coherent, if still rather too conservative for some tastes.

In contrast the Isil problem is of a different order of complexity. Finding a coherent strategy to deal with Isil and the

Removing the key Ba'athists in 2003 caused us real setbacks whilst we were trying to stabilise Basra.

plays out as promised it will be the first real uplift in the defence budget since the Cold War. The challenge will now be to spend the additional money wisely and to apply our novel and reinforced capabilities within a clear strategic vision.

The west has potential responses to Russian nationalism. The EU and NATO are a powerful combination, albeit

far-reaching ramifications of its ruthless but successful shock tactics will be a real test for The West and for the moderate Muslim world working in tandem. The UK is not alone in its patchy response thus far, which has suffered from political and societal drag born from the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns, and the tendency to allow public opinion to drive

foreign policy. There are valid concerns too about the radicalizing effects of recent military interventions on Muslims in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe, not least here in the UK.

Isil, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant formerly known as Isis, then Islamic State, is known more pejoratively as Daesh. It is a product of an extreme interpretation of Wahabism, a puritanical and uncompromising version of Islam. Al Qa'eda, which looks moderate in comparison to Isil, came from the same fundamentalist branch of Islam at about the same time, in the 1990s. Isil draws on resentment at the political failure within their societies, which they associate with moral decline within Islam. Much of that resentment is aimed at Western nations, who are seen to have accentuated that decline.

Isil's extreme violence gives the impression of a secular revolt. Its policies and behaviors are actually heavily theologically based on the "Prophetic Methodology" of Muhammed. They are set in 7th century habits, so they are not recognized by most Muslims. Its aims are well-considered and clearly articulated: to establish an expanding caliphate, astride any national boundaries, to enforce an extreme Islamic state. Expansion will be tempered by consolidation of gains, and if sufficient pressure is applied, upon survival. Isil can certainly be contained; but even then it will pose a significant threat to the stability of the Middle East, and to western interests.

Inadvertently, The West has not helped itself. It has tended to remove or oppose the harsher regimes that were less tolerant of such religious fundamentalism

– for example in Iraq, in Syria, and in Libya, thereby playing into the jihadist's hands. Isil now has many operators and supporters who were on the receiving end of western attacks, such as the Iraqi republican guard and the Ba'athists who had been the backbone of Saddam Hussein's regime. Many of those were in Zarqawi's Al Qa'eda - Iraq prior to joining Isil. (The policy of removing the key Ba'athists in 2003 caused us real setbacks whilst we were trying to stabilise Basra, and may have tipped the balance against

(in that case from the air, with 'no boots on the ground') was out-voted in the House of Commons for the first time in our history. It implied a marginal tolerance in our Parliament of the use by Bashar al-Assad of chemical weapons on civilians, of whom 1400 were reported as dead, probably triggered by a far greater intolerance of messy military interventions likely engender even greater loss of life, which conjured up memories of 'dodgy dossiers'. The lost motion put a political embargo on intervention in

Isil is the product of the internecine struggle within Islam between Sunni and Shia fundamentalists.

us. Anybody with the ability to control the people or run the city was excluded).

Isil's jihadis have been extremely adept at using social media to message their cause and promote fear. Their appeal to the young and impressionable sections of Muslim society has fuelled a 'march to the sound of the guns'. We now have examples of British forces engaging and killing British citizens who have joined the jihad in Syria and Iraq.

ISIL AND SYRIA

The 'Syria vote' during the parliamentary recess in summer 2013 was a momentous one. It was a constitutional precedent in that a Prime Minister proposing military intervention

Syria in particular, which has yet to be put to the test again, although that may be looming in the aftermath of the recent drone strike on the UK's jihadis.

That parliamentary outcome was set against considerable debate, since the Arab Spring and the beginning of the Syria conflict, on what we might be seeking to achieve by an intervention. Were we trying to remove Assad, to achieve partial regime change? Or was our primary goal to stabilize the situation to stem the severe humanitarian cost? The latter would have implied working with Assad, who was already being supported by the Iranians and the Russians, and that would understandably have been very difficult. So we indulged in some tentative support to the moderate opposition, more likely



The razing of the Temple of Bel was just one act of destruction by Isis, which seized control of Palmyra in May. In addition to damaging sites in Syria, Isis has destroyed statues, shrines and manuscripts in the Iraqi city of Mosul, and demolished the ancient Assyrian city of Nimrud

to prolong the fighting than bring an early conclusion. Those questions are firmly back on the table now that the Russians are supporting Assad militarily.

Isil had been operating alongside opposition groups to the Syrian government for some months when in June 2014 it captured Mosul, an important city in Northern Iraq, by defeating a much larger Iraqi Army force. It went on to commit gross acts of genocide and persecution against Christians, Yazidis, Kurds, Shia and fellow Sunnis.

A US-led coalition of NATO and Arab nations embarked upon a strategy to contain Isil's atrocities, primarily through air strikes. There was also a significant independent Iranian air and ground contribution, which probably had the greatest influence on Isil. An illogical legacy of the Syria vote a year earlier, but a measure of its bruising effect on the Government, saw Isil those forces operating in Syria emphatically excluded from the UK's targeting plans. Ironically it is a border Isil's intended caliphate doesn't recognize.

The tragic humanitarian fallout from these conflicts and other crises, including the destabilizing effect of the inconclusive campaign in Libya in 2011, is knocking hard on Europe's southern portals. It is knocking hardest on the conscience of The West, whose governments are making policy on the hoof in the face of public outcry.

THE NEED FOR A STRATEGY

A strategy for the region now has to deal with the increasingly awkward mélange



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of the Syrian conflict, entwined with Isil's destructive ambitions, and refugees and asylum seekers heading into Europe from several different countries and conflicts. Or it has to pick each of those challenges in turn and address it in the context of the other two, and the wider situation in the region. To succeed, any strategy must be a coherent multi-faceted international effort, with clear aims and sufficient resources applied in the right ways, over several years if not decades.

How might a strategy to deal with Isil look? First it needs a clear political goal stemming from broad political recognition across The West, the key Arab nations, Iran and Russia, that Isil is the overriding impediment to security and stability in the region and it needs to be contained then defeated as the priority. That will require the major players to work around their differences on other issues and cooperate in the defeat of Isil; in our case that might mean dialogue with Syria, for example. (It will inevitably, but not before they are sufficiently under pressure, involve a negotiating stance with Isil itself at some juncture). Without a coherent political platform there is little prospect of a workable strategy.

That political platform will underpin a concerted military campaign with regional forces from Turkey, Arab nations and Iran in the forefront, supported where necessary by The West with its technical capabilities and by trainers on the ground in the broad range of skills. Russia would surely be involved in such a coordinated plan. Some elements of such an approach have been in place for almost a year in the form of air power and training teams, but more is needed. Western military expertise acquired in Iraq and Afghanistan will have an important role to play, short of forces employed in a combat role.

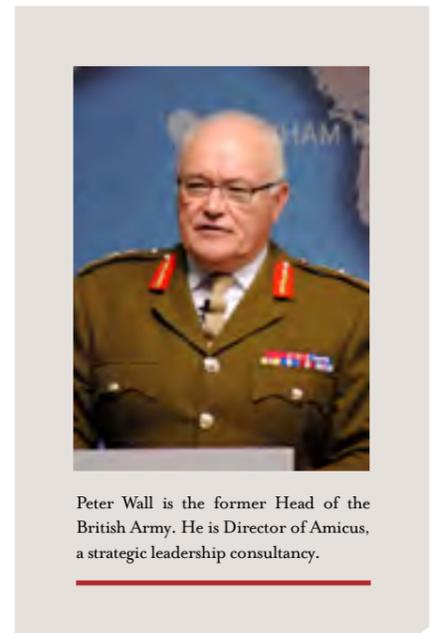
Military action to remove Isil's fighting forces may limit their scope for further brutality. It will not be sufficient to defeat the organisation and its political objectives, and experience tells us that it will serve as a recruiting sergeant for the more extreme jihadis. The legal and moral stance is crucial here: Isil fighters should where possible be captured and put through courts of law. Isil's appeal to potential fighters has to be dampened. It is dominant in the digital and social media space and this must be contested, alongside a broad debate across the Arab world led by elders and religious leaders over the unacceptability of the more extreme interpretations of Wahabism as a basis for terrorism. That is not an argument non-Muslims can make with much credibility.

Western nations do have a distinct role to play in stemming the flow of jihadis from their own communities, including dealing robustly with those who attempt to return. We also need to demonstrate humanitarian compassion and provide solutions for those Muslim refugees so desperately in need of help. Humanitarian support is best focused in the region, and the UK has a strong record already in this respect.

We must continue to emphasise that Western nations respect moderate Islam, and we do not believe that we are in a generational contest with Islam over religious beliefs. Despite its tormenting of The West, Isil is the product of the internecine struggle within Islam between Sunni and Shia fundamentalists. The core social changes needed to eliminate extremist violence have to come from within Islam, and that is likely to take a long time.

For UK and others in The West, our recent experiences of intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan, to deal with threats at source, have been uncomfortable. As an alternative we have been tempted, for a range of reasons, to watch from the sidelines, allowing the consequences to come to us. Defending on the goal line is never easy.

Are we damned if we do intervene, and equally damned if we don't? We have to take the initiative and find a way through that dilemma. A smart strategy led and executed by a broad coalition, with clarity, determination and patience is an answer. The UK, under Mr Cameron's leadership, has a key role to play in such an approach. It certainly won't be easy, but that hasn't stopped us in the past.♦



Peter Wall is the former Head of the British Army. He is Director of Amicus, a strategic leadership consultancy.

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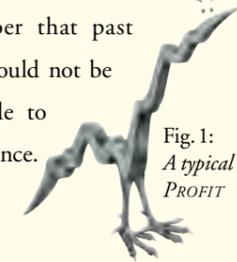


Fig. 1: A typical PROFIT



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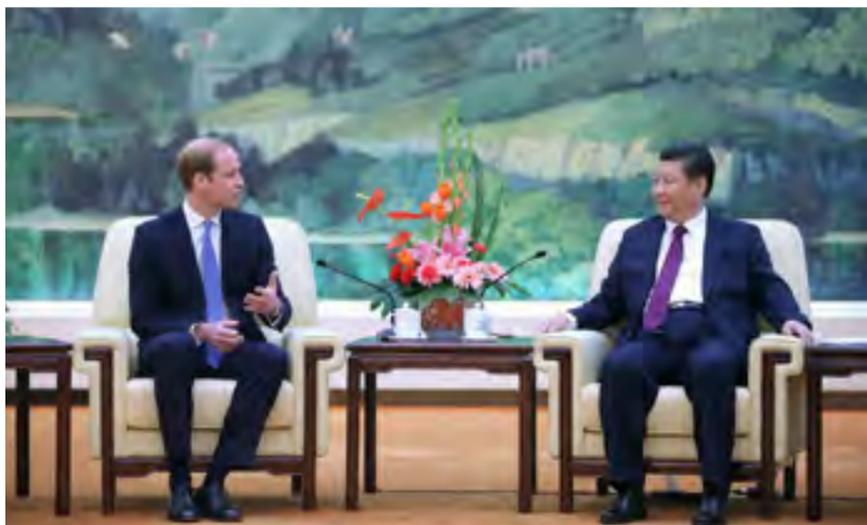
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COMMENT

THE GREAT FALL OF CHINA?

Roger Bootle examines the impact of a recent downturn in the Chinese stock market and questions whether this is in fact, the start of China's continued growth.

WORDS BY ROGER BOOTLE
EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, CAPITAL ECONOMICS



Britain's Prince William speaks with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 2 2015 – the highest-profile visit by a member of the royal family to China for 30 years

China is a sleeping giant. Let him sleep for when he wakes the world will tremble." These words, supposedly uttered by Napoleon about 200 years ago, were prophetic. It may have taken the best part of two centuries but the world is surely trembling now. The trouble is most people don't seem to be able to decide whether they are worried about China taking over the world because it is growing so fast, or about a sharp slowdown in the Chinese economy causing a global recession.

It is certainly true that getting China right is vital to assessing the world economy correctly and therefore the performance of all that we here hold dear – and cheap. In the lifetime of most readers of this article, there have already been two China shocks. First came the emergence of China as a major manufacturing and exporting country. This caused a downward shift to the price level in much of the western world, thereby allowing the inflation rate to be reduced and to be kept low, much more easily than central banks and economists had imagined.

The second shock developed from this. As China's exporting prowess strengthened, she began deliberately to run a current account surplus, that is to say, selling more to the rest of the world

than she bought from it. Thereby sucking demand out of the world economy. In my view, this was a major underlying cause of the policy of cheap money that led to the financial crash of 2008.

The third shock, which is yet to hit, will come when China rebalances her economy towards consumption, thereby unleashing upon the rest of the world a big increase in the demand for consumer goods and services, including tourism. If you missed the two earlier shocks then



For most of human history, China has been the world's largest economy.

you probably misread the world economy over the last thirty five years. If you miss the next one, you will probably misread the next few decades. Mind you, we are not there yet.

So what is there to worry about now? In the summer of this year the financial markets and much of the commentariat were obsessed with the dangers posed by collapse of the Chinese stockmarket. It fell by 40% in less than 3 months, prompting panic in western markets. The performance of the Chinese stockmarket

seemed to be regarded as a guide to the performance of the Chinese economy. It was widely believed that either the fall of the stockmarket would precipitate marked weakness in the economy, or it was itself a reflection of weakness in the economy. Or both.

In reality, both these propositions were profoundly misguided. Before the Chinese stockmarket slide, the market had risen by 150% in 12 months. The weakness in stock prices this summer

represented merely the partial deflation of an earlier bubble. At the end of September, after the market had fallen by 41%, it still stood some 30% above the level of a year ago.

In any case, Chinese stocks are not a significant part of most people's wealth in China. They are narrowly held. So the idea that a plunge in the stockmarket could cause economic difficulties in China is misguided.

Meanwhile, the idea that the weakness of the stockmarket is a reliable reflection



George Osborne meeting with China's Finance Minister Lou Jiwei at the 2015 IMF World Bank Annual meeting in Lima

of what is happening in the real economy is even more fanciful. In the United States the stockmarket has "predicted" something like ten of the last two recessions. There is no reason why the Chinese equivalent should be any more accurate. In practice, in China, as in the advanced countries of the world, the stockmarket and the economy dance to a different beat.

This is not to say that there aren't major problems in the Chinese economy. There are. But we have known about them for a long time and they have next to nothing to do with this summer's weakness in the stockmarket. There are two issues that need to be carefully distinguished. First of all, it is normal for a country's growth rate to decelerate as it moves up the development ladder. When it is very poor, as China was in 1978 when she began to develop, there were easy pickings to be had. All that is required is to start doing some of the basics right, or even half right, and impressive growth rates will follow. Rapid growth will ensue simply from catching up with the standards established elsewhere in the world – both technological and organisational.

When China was at this stage of development it was registering growth rates of 14% - 15% per annum. It was widely believed in The West that growth at this enormous pace was unique. But it wasn't. Both the East Asian tiger economies and Japan registered double digit growth in the early phases of development. And subsequently both slowed down substantially. This is a supply phenomenon. It is all about the growth of productive potential.

Secondly, over and above this, there is an issue about demand. In China there has been a serious danger that there would be a very sharp slowdown of demand. The main reason for worrying about this is the fact that China's GDP is heavily skewed towards investment, that

is to say, spending on capital goods and infrastructure, such as roads, ports and airports. This accounts for about 45% of GDP, a percentage rivalled only by Stalin's Russia. In addition, as noted above, China has tended to run a significant surplus of exports over imports. Reflecting these two large shares, the part of the economy whose share is low and where spending needs to be boosted, is household consumption. It is running at only about 35% of GDP, compared to 60-70% in most western economies.

Moving from here to there, can and must be done, but doing this smoothly will not be easy – hence the worry that China is about to undergo some sort of crash. Yet one of China's major strengths is the room for manoeuvre of the policy authorities. They have ample scope to cut interest rates, inject liquidity, increase spending and reduce taxes. Moreover,



It is normal for a country's growth rate to decelerate as it moves up the development ladder.

with the banking sector publically owned, they even have the power to engage in a Corbynesque policy of instructing the banks with regard to both the quantity and type of lending. Accordingly, even if China does undergo a very marked slowdown, it is likely that the authorities will be able to engineer a rebound.

What of China's "manifest destiny"? For most of human history, China has been the world's largest economy. Things changed markedly with the onset of the Industrial Revolution in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This largely passed China by, with the result that her share of world GDP plunged dramatically. You can readily view China's rapid development over the last few decades as simply the process by which she returns to her rightful place as top dog. Indeed, China may well surpass the United States as the world's largest economy at some point over the next few decades. But if she does, this will only be because of sheer numbers. In regard to GDP per head, and hence living standards, she will still lag a very long way behind.

Sheer numbers also hold the clue to a negative perspective on China's future. Because of the "one child" policy, China's population is already ageing significantly. Before long, it will decline substantially, including the population of working age. This will reduce China's

sustainable growth rate.

In fact, because of this, China may never achieve top dog status, or if she does, she may lose it pretty soon. For India's demographic prospects are much stronger. Furthermore, because she is now much further back on the development path, India can probably look forward to a much higher growth in GDP per head than China.

India also has another advantage. In the early stages of development, having a dirigiste system, untrammelled by the constraints and demands of democracy, may well be an advantage. But later on it surely isn't. Somehow China has to manage the transition to a political system that allows much more freedom of expression. Even if she never becomes a true democracy, she must achieve at least better representation of ordinary people, and full recognition of the rule of



law to which the state, as well as citizens and institutions, is subject.

By contrast, although things may seem chaotic now, India is already a fully functioning democracy with the rule of law entrenched. Added to that of course, she has the enormous advantage of the English language. I wouldn't mind betting that in 40 or 50 years' time, the world's top dog will not be China – but India. ♦



Roger Bootle is Executive Chairman of Capital Economics. The paper-back edition of his recent best-selling book "The Trouble with Europe" has just been published by Nicholas Brealey. roger.bootle@capitaleconomics.com

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COMMENT

THE FUTURE OF UNIVERSITIES

WORDS BY MARK LITTLEWOOD
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS



Protesters wearing masks of David Cameron and Nick Clegg during the student protests over tuition fees in 2010

How things have changed in just twenty five years and how they are about to change further still. It was quarter of a century ago that I started my three-year undergraduate degree at Balliol College. Although I had to rely on the generosity of my parents to cover the costs of my rent, food, beer and cigarettes, the British taxpayer paid the full cost of my education. I was in the first year of those eligible to take out a student loan—initially up to a maximum of about £400 a year.

I departed Oxford three years later, having had the time of my life, accrued debts of just £2,500 and somehow having managed to get an Upper Second Class Honours degree to my name – despite not being a particularly diligent or hardworking student. I didn't have much of an idea of what I was going to do next but I felt well equipped to go and make my way in the world, and I have spent the last couple of decades somehow continually contriving to fall on my feet.

The picture for those pouring out of university today is, to put it mildly, not quite as rosy. It might still be the case that an Oxbridge degree is prestigious enough to help you find your first foot on the career ladder, but you'll need to start climbing that ladder very rapidly. You could well have accrued debts of

£50,000, perhaps more, and you may well face a labour market in which employers are increasingly sceptical about the value of anything you'd learned at university.

To some extent, this was true way back when I was a pimply undergraduate. I was pretty much told on my first day at Oxford university that as long as I didn't do something so spectacularly stupid as to be expelled

Employers today are taking a less indulgent view. According to research undertaken for the Institute of Economic Affairs by Peter Ainsworth, nearly half of all recent graduates are in "non-graduate" jobs and – even five years after leaving university – around a third are still in non-graduate jobs. They are also likely to have an albatross of debt round their necks and a very small chance of being able to get quickly established on the property market.

Many major employers are unmoved. Ernst & Young now say they aren't too fussed about the quality of degree you have secured. If you've sweated your way to a starred first class, this doesn't give you much of an edge on getting into their graduate programme. In fact, they consider that there is "no evidence to conclude that previous success in higher education correlated with future success in subsequent professional qualifications undertaken."

For some, this just shows that we need to have a softer touch on youngsters as they make their way through university. The taxpayer should stump up for their tuition fees, perhaps even their living costs and then subsidise their mortgages when they want to secure their first home.

But this is to look at the problem in completely the wrong way. We should not be asking ourselves whether we should throw millions of pounds

One of my fellow students at college had an Amstrad laptop... technology so advanced that it was verging on magic.

and as long as I made a modest effort to pass my exams, then the enhanced value to my future career wasn't really based on what I had learned. Rather, it was based on the simple fact that I'd shown myself to be talented enough to get into a good university in the first place. That, apparently, was likely to be enough to secure myself a reasonable career.

of subsidies at college students. We should be asking why modern university is so insanely expensive and why a three-year stint seems to be of such diminishing value in building a successful career and a fulfilling life. The way the world has changed means we should be looking at higher education getting much cheaper, much more intensive and of greater direct



The Old Library, Oxford University – Pre-Raphaelite murals and a William Morris painted ceiling

value to the student.

I was in the last generation of pre-internet university students. My essays were written in fountain pen on A4 lined paper. The background reading for any assignment required going to a library and finding a good, old-fashioned book. Simple fact checking meant reaching for the Encyclopaedia Britannica, not

using Google. To learn from the many great academics at the university, you'd

We should be looking at higher education getting much cheaper, much more intensive and of greater direct value to the student.

have to turn up to a draughty hall, listen to a professor recite a lecture he had given a hundred times before and try your best to take notes in some form of short hand. If you skipped the lecture, you had to decipher the cryptic scrawlings of a fellow student who had crawled out of bed early enough to make it. One of my fellow students at college had an Amstrad laptop. This meant he could amend his essays without the use of Tippex. His rudimentary printer took about five minutes to churn out a single page, but this still came across to the rest of us as technology so advanced that it was verging on magic.

This isn't to complain about how tough things were "back in the day." I had a truly fantastic time. But surely, today's students should be enjoying a much cheaper and more enriching academic experience. Lectures can be watched on YouTube for free. Not just by registered students at a particular establishment, but by anyone on the planet with an internet connection. Jaw-dropping amounts of data, information

and analysis are available within milliseconds online. Although face-to-face teaching time remains important, a good deal of this could probably be done by Skype, linking together pretty much any two places on planet Earth.

We are perhaps getting there, albeit rather slowly. Evidence suggests that online courses can reduce costs by up to 57% and can condense the time a student needs to spend on learning by around a quarter. New technologies ought to enable us to put education on a wholly different scale. We shouldn't need government targets, seeking to steer a certain arbitrary proportion of young people into spending three years of their life living in a draughty hall of residence and much of their days sitting in classrooms or lecture theatres. We should be able to make a truly vast range of educational opportunities available to virtually everyone on the planet with the drive, imagination and ability to engage.

Rather than just asking whether we should lift the legally enforced maximum cap of £9,000 per annum in tuition fees to allow universities to

charge as much as they wish, we should really be questioning why the £100 degree isn't already, readily available. ♦



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COMMENT

CORBONOMICS EXPLAINED

WORDS BY JONATHAN ISABY
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE TAXPAYERS ALLIANCE



Jeremy Corbyn, Labour Party Conference September 2015

It's been an extraordinary few months in politics. The result of the General Election was a shock, but the Labour Party's leadership election was something else.

The British electorate sent Labour a message in May – we do not trust you with the economy. The fact that austerity is not just seen by the public as necessary, but is actually popular, is a bitter pill to swallow for the left. Labour simply has to temper its instinct to tax and spend if they are to become a credible party of government again. Their decision to avoid this self-evident truth and elect a hard-left, 200/1 outsider has baffled the wider public who value competence over ideology.

Jeremy Corbyn & Co have made a fairly dismal start. Whether it's not singing the national anthem or being asked why they believe terrorists who have murdered British civilians should be honoured, it's fair to say the public are less than impressed with the revolutionaries supposedly trying to win their votes.

Their communications strategy (if it could be called that) has been utterly shambolic. Statements are made on the Today Programme in the morning and then contradicted by shadow ministers on Newsnight in the evening. I honestly do not know the position of the Labour Party with regards to major policies such as the benefit cap at the moment.

This lack of clarity coming from HM's Most Loyal Opposition means it's

difficult to know what those of us on the centre-right, and indeed those in the centre and on the centre-left, will be up against for however long Corbyn manages to last. Nevertheless, comments made by Corbyn during the leadership campaign and by his left wing (and left field) choice of shadow chancellor provide the best available clues. Nothing is certain but death and taxes. But if Jeremy Corbyn ever walks through the famous black door of 10 Downing Street you can be certain

Corbyn plans to set up a "National Investment Bank" which will issue debt to be purchased by the Bank of England. Leaving aside the fact that doing so is illegal under European law, government printing of money and purchasing debt directly from itself is a pointless accounting trick. All it's designed to do is conceal the cost of an unaffordable spending splurge. Instead of getting a big tax bill, people pay the price through inflation. Have a look at Venezuela if

Have a look at Venezuela if you're in any doubt as to how this pans out.

that your taxes will be much, much higher. Amid the nonsensical ramblings about private equity, big business and billionaires, Corbyn's manifesto "The Economy in 2020" offers some useful insights into what we might expect from a Corbyn premiership.

First up, is the most headline grabbing measure: "quantitative easing for people instead of banks." Ignore the flowery language, this just means financing government spending by printing money. Regardless of what one thinks about quantitative easing, it's simply wrong to suggest that money was just "handed over to banks" – assets were purchased with newly created cash.

you're in any doubt as to how this pans out.

But the billions in newly minted bank notes would not be enough. Apparently, huge amounts would be raised in tax, just by collecting what's being avoided and evaded - £120 billion of it. To put this number in some perspective, it is more than the total amount raised in National Insurance or VAT.

Sounds too good to be true? That's because it is. The figure has been "calculated" by Richard Murphy, an obscure trade union accountant and is littered with highly questionable assumptions and outright errors. It includes tax that is in fact paid,

investment allowances being used as intended by Parliament and innumerable basic statistical errors.

Besides, the idea that George Osborne through either a lack of motivation or competence is voluntarily forgoing such enormous sums is frankly absurd. If this mythical £120bn bounty was collected annually Osborne could abolish Income Tax for the vast majority of people in the country – a huge vote winner if ever there was one.

Next up is the £93 billion in “subsidies to corporations” John McDonnell, the Shadow Chancellor is to cut. Again, even the most cursory inspection of the figure reveals that the report from which this figure has been taken has next to no basis in reality. To take one example, Capital Allowances are labelled as £20 billion worth of “corporate tax benefits.” Capital Allowances are to statute what

individuals are highly mobile, have highly desirable skill sets and if pushed hard enough would flee to a country with a less greedy government. Just ask Francois Hollande.

Corporation Tax would also go up and the likes of Starbucks, Amazon and Google would be “forced” to pay their “fair share”. Quite what constitutes the government’s fair share of the sandwiches and coffee Starbucks sells is as unclear as is how they would be “forced” to hand over the cash.

But regardless of details, Corbyn doesn’t seem to understand one of the most fundamental principles of tax – it can only be paid by people. A company is merely a legal construct and the burden of taxes it pays in a transactional sense must be borne by somebody. That can either be shareholders through lower returns on their investments, workers through

The idea that George Osborne through either a lack of motivation or competence is voluntarily forgoing such enormous sums is frankly absurd.

depreciation is to accounting. They are the tax system’s way of recognising that to make profits, investment in things like machinery are needed and that the value of this machinery will reduce due to wear and tear. To suggest that taxpayers are funding companies’ purchase of equipment is simply wrong.

This is not a loophole or welfare by any definition I have come across; it is a critical aspect of the tax system to incentivise investment which the UK sorely needs. There is no huge pool of untapped revenue, nor vast expenditures on “corporate welfare.” Presumably, the ensuing collapse in private sector investment would be corrected by the politicians and bureaucrats running the aforementioned “National Investment Bank,” who best know how to allocate resources?

Without question, taxes would rise dramatically. Corbyn has mooted a 7 per cent National Insurance for those earning £50,000 or more and income tax rates of 60 per cent have also been mentioned. But no matter what he says about raising vast sums from high, rather than middle earners, he won’t be able to achieve it. The exchequer is already highly reliant on a very small group of individuals for a significant chunk of its revenues with the top 1 per cent of earners paying almost 30 per cent of all income tax. These

lower wages or customers through higher prices.

Realistically, the only way the government could significantly increase tax revenues would be to broaden the VAT base. Not considering the behavioural impact doing this would have, it is estimated that exempting medicines, food, water services and domestic passenger transport from VAT, “costs” the exchequer more than £25 billion a year. But removing these exemptions would be hugely unpopular for obvious reasons and would hit the poorest hardest.

Corbyn and his comrades seem determined to ignore both the electorate and the lessons of history. The overwhelming evidence of the past century shows that this kind of approach is doomed to end in misery, mainly for the poor and middle classes because the rich are more fleet of foot and would head for the exit doors before May 2020 if a Corbyn win was on the cards. It may well be that many of these extreme policies will be diluted in an attempt to woo voters, but it’s clear that Corbyn subscribes to a discredited and dangerous ideology.

Cameron and Osborne have gone to great pains to get across their stated goal of making Britain a higher wage, lower tax, lower welfare country, but rhetoric is not enough and they need to start

laying out concrete plans for how they intend to achieve this admirable aim starting at the Autumn Statement and Spending Review. The concern is that in the absence of a credible opposition, the Conservative government will complacently plod along or drift leftwards.

There is no need to do this.

The opinion polls have been almost unbelievably bad for the new Labour leader - the electorate has made its mind up on Corbyn and given him an unequivocal thumbs-down. But even before Corbyn’s victory, George Osborne had found the temptation to snatch left wing policies such as the “living wage” too tempting to resist. Few in the cabinet seem willing to challenge a man whose political capital has never been higher.

The TaxPayers Alliance and other groups who believe in free markets, low taxes and the like, have a serious challenge ahead of us over the next 5 years in holding the government’s feet to the fire. The government is still living beyond taxpayers’ means with the annual deficit set to add another £70bn to out £1.5 trillion debt pile. Even if Corbyn’s chances of becoming Prime Minister are slim, the discredited ideas he conveys remain a danger. ♦



Jonathan Isaby is Chief Executive of the Taxpayers Alliance. He was a political analyst in the BBC’s Westminster newsroom until 2003 when he was recruited by the Daily Telegraph. He spent five years on the nation’s best-selling daily broadsheet, latterly writing his own political column, as well as blogging about politics on the paper’s website. This precipitated his move to ConservativeHome.com, which he joined as Co-Editor in November 2008.

@isaby

COMMENT

THE SOMME REMEMBERED

Inspired by Andrew Roberts recently published “Elegy: The First Day of the Somme,” Bruce Anderson has written a very moving and poignant analysis of this monumentally tragic phase of the Great War, examining in particular the motivation and extraordinary courage of a lost generation from a vanished age.

WORDS BY BRUCE ANDERSON



December 1915 – a crowd of young men queuing at the Army Recruiting Office at Southwark Hall, during Lord Derby’s recruitment campaign

This is a profoundly moving book. As always with Mr Roberts, the military history is lucid. He understands how to turn complexities into narrative. But this volume goes further: much further. It is an awed tribute to courage and sacrifice, “The Last Post” transmuted into prose. Andrew Roberts says that he wept while writing his account of the first day of the Battle of the Somme. Many readers will follow his example. Sunt lacrimae rerum – and not only on the battlefield. The title is apt, for our author has not just produced an elegy for doomed youth, but an elegy for a vanished age. The past is another country. That was never truer than in the recruiting figures for the First World War.

For nearly a year and a half, Britain fought that War without conscription, largely because there was no need for it. Friends and work-mates were encouraged to join up together, thus forming pals’ battalions. This was good for morale. The pals sustained each other during the rigours of training. They laughed together. When given the chance, they had a few beers together. Some of them, no doubt, visited the same VD clinic. But after the training, the laughter, the beer and the mademoiselle from Armentieres, they often died together – so that the telegrams

arrived together, bringing darkness to the streets where they had been neighbours.

Long before the Somme, everyone knew that this War would mean a horrifying butcher’s bill. Yet almost two and a half million men rushed to the recruiting offices to volunteer. Were there echoes of Henry V’s dismissal of “Gentleman of England, now abed?” Was it the impact of Kitchener’s poster “Your Country needs You”, one of the most successful advertising slogans of

By the end of the first day of the Somme, the British army had suffered almost twenty thousand fatalities.

all time? All that played a part, but the real recruiting sergeant was the national ethos. These days, “Queen and Country” would probably refer to some new BBC play by a left-wing writer who believed in neither. In 1914, to the great majority of George V’s subjects, King and Country was a secular religion. So when they were told that they were needed, they followed the drum - and not only in Britain.

Our author starts in Newfoundland, three thousand miles across the Atlantic.

When war was declared, Newfoundland had no standing army. The Church Lads’ Brigade and the Catholic Cadet Corps were the Island’s nearest approximation to a military presence. Yet the Governor instantly promised 500 men. By 1 July 1916, a battalion of 801 Newfoundlanders were ready and eager for battle. Within a couple of hours, 266 of them were dead and 446 wounded. At the outset of the War, a happy myth took wings: that British soldiers fighting to halt a German advance had been protected by the Angels of Mons. In July 1916, Newfoundland was visited by an Angel: the Angel of Death. Hardly any family had been spared its share of grief. Yet in most cases, it was grief tempered by stoicism.

“I am [here]... to fight for a great and just cause, for all that Englishmen the world over hold dear... If [I] am called upon to lay down my life, I hope the glory of the cause will fully comfort any who might mourn for me. I must record my admiration for my dear wife’s brave self-sacrifice, devotion and unflinching courage. So far from trying to dissuade me ...she has given me the encouragement and help I always knew she would.” The young Newfoundland subaltern who wrote that survived the day. For the next twenty months he sent similar letters home. Then he was killed.

The citation for the Victoria Cross refers to “most conspicuous bravery... some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice... extreme devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy.” In other words, the soldier’s courage was so reckless that his survival was a miracle. Nine men won the VC on the first day of the Somme, three of whom survived the War. Reading Andrew Roberts’s account, one is compelled to the obvious conclusion: that the VC’s criteria were satisfied by thousands of those British

soldiers who tried to storm the German trenches. It is almost impossible for our generation to comprehend those paladins’ bravery and self-sacrifice. In the armed forces, we still have plenty of brave men, who volunteer for discipline and duty and danger. But two and a half million volunteers for the trenches – that could not happen these days.

There are a number of reasons for this, including the decline of religion. Many of those young men did believe

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that trumpets would sound for them on the other side. Their modern equivalents are not so sure. Equally, we are separated from the slaughter of the Somme by decades of denigration. This started at the top. Douglas Haig, the commander-in-chief at the Somme, distrusted David Lloyd George, who would shortly become Prime Minister. Lloyd George was better at reputational damage.

This took time to have an impact. Haig's funeral in February 1928 was a grand and solemn national occasion. Huge crowds lined the streets of London to pay their last respects. But as the years passed a rancid myth gained credence: that the First World War "chateau generals" were callous incompetents who lived in safety and comfort, well back from the front line, doing nothing to relieve their troops' privations, which were only terminated when they were expended in futile attacks. The most eloquent exponent of this view was Alan Clark, in "The Donkeys." Some German general,

On that basis, and after almost 1,500 artillery pieces had fired over one and a half million shells, thousands of soldiers attacked across open country. Some of them were encumbered by up to 60 lbs of assorted kit. But most of the wire had not been cut. Very few trenches had been destroyed. The Germans, who held most of the higher ground, were able to pour down machine-gun fire on the attackers. By the end of the first day of the Somme, the British army had suffered almost twenty thousand fatalities and twice that number were wounded. In the annals of warfare, it was a disaster. So much fortitude, so much heroism: so little in the way of strategic gain.

In the Boer War, the Afrikaners inflicted huge casualties on British attackers, despite having hardly any machine guns. Churchill concluded that any future European war would have to be a war of movement because it would be senseless to launch attacks across open ground against entrenched positions



Mountains of shell cases on the roadside near the front lines – the contents of which had been fired into the German lines

Above it, they erected a wooden cross, with an inscription. "The Devonshires held this trench. The Devonshires hold it still." That is worthy to rank with "Go tell the Spartans... that here, obedient to their laws, we lie." Housman's salute, echoing Thermopylae, is of a similar quality;

Here we lie dead
Because we did not choose
To live and shame the land
From which we sprung
Life, to be sure
Is nothing much to lose
But young men think it is
And we were young

Those young men deserve an eternity in Valhalla. Failing that, their deeds ought to be commemorated as long as the British race endures. This book makes an enduring contribution to that national memorial. ♦



Bruce Anderson is a political columnist. Formerly a political editor at The Spectator and contributor to the Daily Mail, he also writes for The Independent and Conservative Home.

It is almost impossible for our generation to comprehend those paladins' bravery and self-sacrifice.

possibly Ludendorff, is supposed to have said that the Tommies were "Lions led by Donkeys." In the 1960s, this became the basis for a musical, "Oh! What a Lovely War." That, plus the poetry of Wilfred Owen, helped to convince a large percentage of the British population that they should no longer trust either traditional loyalties or the traditional classes.

The damage to national morale was permanent, even though Mr Clark's scholarship has been impugned in recent years. It seems likely that he invented the "Lions led by Donkeys" quote. A subtler and more rounded portrait of Haig has emerged. He had been a successful cavalry commander and was always ready to consider ways of breaking up the strategic sterility of the Western Front. But in the early summer of 1916, there appeared to be no alternative. The British were under pressure to launch an offensive and take some of the heat off the French at Verdun. Our high command was also in the grip of a dangerous illusion, exacerbated by group-think at senior levels.

The assumption was that a massive artillery barrage would cut the wire which guarded the German trenches and destroy a great number of those trenches.

reinforced by machine guns. He should have been heeded, but his capacity to influence events had been weakened by failure in the Dardanelles: his attempt to find an alternative to stalemate.

The failure of the artillery barrage seemed to prove that at this stage in the history of warfare, defensive techniques had improved at a faster rate than offensive ones. But there is a tragic irony. In the third month of the Battle of the Somme, the tank made its debut. Suddenly, there was a way to attack trenches without suffering thousands of casualties.

It was too late for the fallen of the Somme. Parents were allowed to write messages on the early grave stones. Most of them defy Owen, in that they are virtually English translations of dulce et decorum est pro patria mori - which he castigated as "the old lie." But there is also unbearable pathos. One widowed mother writes of her slain 19 year-old son: "Oh for a touch of a vanished hand and a sound of a voice that is stilled." The Devonshire Regiment suffered casualties on an even greater scale than the Newfoundlanders. The survivors buried the fallen in the trench from which they had launched their doomed assault.

COMMENT

IMMIGRATION CRISIS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

In the first half of the first millennium two mass immigrations ultimately led to two dramatic regime changes. Historian Nicolai Tolstoy outlines what happened.

WORDS BY NIKOLAI TOLSTOY



The 3rd-century Via Tiburtina Sarcophagus depicts the Ludovisi battle of between Goths and Romans. The sarcophagus is now displayed at the Palazzo Altemps in Rome, part of the National Museum of Rome

In the spring or early summer of AD 376 Roman frontier guards on the Danube were confronted by an ever-increasing mass of refugees converging on the opposite bank. Messengers were ferried over, who explained that they represented the Goths, a powerful barbarian people originating from the neighbourhood of the Black Sea. They explained that their people were fleeing in terror before the inexorable advance of a terrifyingly destructive race from the East, who wrought terror and destruction wherever they passed. This was the first occasion that Europe learned of the remorseless advance of the Huns.

The Goths' desire to settle within the bounds of the Roman Empire arose from a dual desire to achieve asylum beyond the formidable defences of the Danube frontier, and to gain access if they could to the Empire's wealth. To the Romans they offered the prospect of acquiring a mass source of labour: in particular the prospect of providing hardy recruits for the Roman Army. When their request reached the Emperor Valens, it gained a favourable response. Both Valens and rich Roman landowners and industrialists were privately attracted by the opportunity this afforded of maintaining the government's armed forces, while placing the authorities in a position to divert taxes paid by the provincials into their own pockets.

A further element of corruption is said to have affected the policy of senior officers advocating unrestricted immigration. Paedophilia and sexual licence had penetrated the establishment, to an extent that the terrified fugitives were seen as an inviting source of beautiful boys and attractive women. Valens himself was inexperienced in the arts of government, weak and posturing. Gothic leaders, apprized of these circumstances, foresaw an inviting opportunity for extending their career of rapine, to the rich provinces of the hitherto impregnable Empire. In order

likened the swarming irruption to ash-clouds emanating from Mount Etna.

In response to government orders, the Roman fleet on the flooded Danube was diverted into ferrying across the clamorous refugees, whose number was believed at the time to amount to some 200,000 souls. In fact, their extent was pronounced too great to calculate. During their perilous crossing, numerous refugees were drowned. Exulting inwardly at the supine policy of the imperial authorities, many Goths secretly brought with them arms for future use against their hosts (their vast number in any case precluded



Regrettably, those who know no history are all too frequently doomed to repeat past disasters.

to obviate the resentment of the subject population, Valens gave orders that Goths were to be distributed far and wide among their unwilling hosts, whose oppressed taxpayers were compelled to provide them with food and land. Ammianus Marcellinus, a senior military officer and able observer of events,

any means of conducting an effective search). Prescient Roman officers who raised objection to the heedless policy were severely punished by the government. Diversion of the Roman navy and frontier guards to supervision of this mass migration provided opportunity for a further great Gothic tribe to invade Roman

territory. Crossing over on rafts, they increased Gothic strength to the extent that their leaders saw an opportunity to realize their policy of occupying the wealthiest regions of the Eastern Empire. Later, it became known that the Gothic leaders had all along planned to force their admission, were it not to be granted freely.

Their gathering military strength, combined with harsh treatment by officials of the ill-advised imperial government, led inexorably to a Gothic uprising. Although the Goths deluded Valens and his advisers into believing that they had espoused the Christian values of the Roman Empire, they had secretly retained their warlike pagan faith. Their aim was to expropriate the largely defenceless inhabitants, and convert territories east of the Adriatic into a Gothic kingdom. In strongholds established in the marshes of Macedonia, the Goths conducted military preparations to which the authorities were only belatedly alerted. When the Emperor eventually attempted to suppress their revolt by force of arms, he suffered a terrible defeat (in which he himself was killed) at the battle of Adrianople in 378. This disaster led to continuing Gothic triumphs, which saw their armies overwhelming the Western Empire. In AD 410 they sacked Rome itself, and in ensuing years conquered much of what are today France and Spain.

Predictably, ever-accurring hordes of barbarians crossed the undefended Roman frontiers to participate in the destruction of Europe. In 396 St Jerome lamented the fact that for twenty years and more the blood of Romans has every day been shed between Constantinople and the Julian Alps. Scythia, Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Dardania, Dacia, Epirus, Dalmatia, and all the provinces of Pannonia [Hungary], have been hacked, pillaged and plundered by Goths and Sarmatian, Quadians and Alans, the Huns and Vandals and Marcomanni – the Roman world is falling.

It might be expected that the authorities would have profited from the grim lesson provided by Valens's ill-considered acceptance of the overwhelming hosts of the Goths in 376. Regrettably, those who know no history are all too frequently doomed to repeat past disasters. Valens himself was reputedly a man of scant culture, greedy for material wealth, contemptuous of due legal process, and endlessly fearful of being superseded by one of his close colleagues.

Rome's remotest province, Britain, had for centuries lain under the protection of a powerful Roman army and fleet, which for generations kept barbarian intruders

at bay. However, these did not survive the confusion ensuing on the sack of Rome and barbarian conquests in Gaul. Britannia had hitherto been one of the wealthiest, as well as secure, dioceses of the Empire. It would surely have been possible for the Britons to have organised effective military and naval forces of their own? Immediately on the departure of the last legions in AD 409, they did

the country, but more truly to conquer it". At first, the settlers justified their employment by warring against the northern barbarians. It was not long, however, before they began complaining that the subsidies they received from British taxpayers was insufficient to their needs. In the meantime, they covertly sent for large numbers of their countrymen to cross the sea and join them in their



The Roman fleet on the flooded Danube was diverted into ferrying across the clamorous refugees, whose number amounted to some 200,000 souls



indeed succeed in repelling an invasion of Saxon pirates from across the North Sea.

Regrettably, it seems that thereafter they came to rely on a vain hope that Roman power would revive. What followed is described by Gildas, Britain's first historian, who wrote at a time when elderly survivors could draw on memories of the disaster that ensued. In the early 440s the Picts and Scots overran the largely undefended north as far as Hadrian's Wall. Such local garrisons, as were still maintained in the Wall forts, had become run down by a government unwilling to commit itself to measures adequate to meet the perennial threat, which now became likely to spill over into the wealthy region south of the Wall.

Britain was ruled at the time by her first recorded independent leader, a king named Vortigern. It seems that he had allowed the defences of the realm to become run down to such an extent, that the country was powerless to protect itself. He and his council accordingly made the momentous decision to invite the very Saxons who had been expelled a generation earlier to settle in Britain. Regardless of the distress of local inhabitants, the pirates were granted extensive territory in the east of the country, where they were entrusted with the task of ensuring its defence against the Picts and Scots. Heavy taxes were imposed on the native Britons (annonae and epimenia), designed to provide the mercenaries with requisite sustenance. The Britons only learned later that, like the Goths in Thrace, the Saxons had crossed the sea with the intention of occupying the entire country in perpetuity. In Gildas's words, they came "as men intending to fight for

conspiracy. It speedily became clear that their intention was to take by force what they could not extract voluntarily. So inadequate were the country's enfeebled defences - moral, as well as military - that what Gildas termed the fire of divine vengeance blazed from sea to sea. The land was plundered, towns and cities sacked and destroyed, and the inhabitants slaughtered without mercy.

Britain had entered what are termed the Dark Ages: dark, partly because relatively little is known of what passed during the destructive wars which followed, and partly because of the overall collapse of civilization. The fundamental problem lay not with the barbarians per se, among whom deserving individuals had long been acceptable to the Roman authorities – many, indeed, rising to occupy the highest offices of state. The overwhelming problem proved to be the supine acceptance of vast numbers beyond what Britain's economy and society were capable of absorbing peaceably.

Nothing in history repeats itself precisely. Nevertheless, there exist exemplary factors that repay study. It would be pleasing to think that our current rulers are, unlike Valens and Vortigern, far-sighted statesmen, conversant with European history and culture.♦

Nicolai Tolstoy is an Anglo-Russian novelist and historian. He has just completed a book on The Mysteries of Stonehenge.

PEOPLE

RYDER CUP LEGEND: SAM TORRANCE

Sam Torrance OBE (born 24 August 1953) is a professional golfer and sports commentator. He was one of the leading players on the European Tour from the mid-1970s to the late 1990s, with 21 Tour wins. Torrance was a member of European Ryder Cup teams on eight occasions, from 1981 to 1995 consecutively and on the winning teams in 1985, 1987, 1989, and 1995. He was the winning non-playing captain of the European Ryder Cup team in 2002.

WORDS BY DOMINIC MIDGLEY
INTREPID JOURNALIST AND AWARD WINNING AUTHOR

Turn up at Boisdale Belgravia to be told that Sam Torrance has already arrived and is waiting for me on the top floor. The scene that greets me as I bound up the stairs to the cigar terrace is a clear sign that we are in for a convivial afternoon. Torrance, one of Scotland's greatest living golfers, is sitting at a table for four nursing a pre-lunch glass of the house red and puffing on a roll-up (Golden Virginia, since you ask). Opposite him is Boisdale Media MD Harry Owen sipping a pint of Asahi, while on Owen's right is the proprietor Ranald Macdonald himself, holding forth, a glass of claret in one hand and a Cohiba in the other.

Interviewing a charismatic celebrity can be tricky at the best of times but when the subject is in the company of two equally garrulous and entertaining individuals we move into herding cat's territory.

Torrance hasn't changed much since the day he became a national hero in 1985 for sinking the putt that allowed Europe to beat the US in the Ryder Cup for the first time in 28 years. As befits a man who is still playing on the senior tour at the age of 62, he has kept the weight off and while his trademark moustache is more grey than black, he remains instantly recognisable as the man who celebrated with arms aloft on the 18th hole at the Belfry all those years ago.

Dressed in a tartan jacket and white shirt he raises his glass in welcome and, with wine front of mind, recalls a four-ball tournament he once played

in Bordeaux, where each hole was sponsored by a different Chateau. "I gave the hotel manager a cheque for five grand – I've never spent five grand on wine in my life – and said, 'You pick it – just red,' and I got 35 cases of this magnificent Bordeaux."

Macdonald started life as a wine

when the family owned 24 per cent of General Motors, to one of several golf courses the Duponts owned in Delaware.

"I'd never held a golf club in my life. She gave me an iron of some sort and told me roughly what I had to do and I hit it and I got a hole in one. This is absolutely

true. She had a gold tie-pin made up with the letters S-W-A-N-K on it."

Fortunately, Torrance – whose second big claim to fame is that he is one of only two men to have sunk the winning putt in a Ryder Cup as a player and gone on to be a winning team captain – comes back strongly, with the celebrity-laden tale of his finest ever round.

"It was at Bathgate outside Edinburgh where [fellow Scottish golfer] Bernard Gallagher's from," he explains. "It was their centenary and Bernard asked me to play in the pro-am to celebrate. We're playing at one o'clock in the afternoon and so I get the morning flight from Heathrow, with Bernard, Bruce Forsyth and Ronnie Corbett, who was going to be my playing partner. The flight was delayed and we didn't get to the course until

12.30. As there was no time to go and practice and hit balls, I went to the bar and had three pints of Guinness.

"So I go on to the first tee feeling very happy. It's a par five and I hit a lovely drive, a good second into about eight feet, miss the eagle, and then tap it in. I ended up shooting 58, 13 under par. Very few people break 60 ever. It all came about through having three pints and being totally relaxed and not caring.



Sam Torrance on the cigar terrace at Boisdale of Belgravia

merchant and, with Torrance straying on to his turf, he clearly feels entitled to repay the compliment. "You probably won't believe what happened to me when I first picked up a golf club," he says. "It was 1979, I was 16-years-old and I was taken by a Dupont heiress



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I've tried it many times since but never got the same result."

At his point our waiter arrives with half a dozen quail-egg Scotch eggs and after demolishing those, we head downstairs to the Macdonald Restaurant for lunch. On the proprietor's recommendation, Torrance orders haggis as a starter and lobster for his main course.

Having positioned myself opposite my subject, I finally have his undivided attention and I attempt to bring a little structure to the process. So let's start at the beginning. The son of the golf pro at Rossendale Golf Course in Manchester, young Sam was just five when he picked up a golf club for the first time and was soon showing signs of being a serious talent.

"The course at Rossendale was a nine-hole course and when I was nine I shot 39," he says. "It was quite incredible and my dad wouldn't believe me. In fact, he gave me a bollocking for lying. I started crying and he said, 'Come on then,' and took me to the first tee. We play the nine holes and I did it again. He said, 'I believe you now'."

Torrance left school at 13 with no qualifications but by now he was so handy with a niblick that he didn't need any. Four years later at the age of 17 he got a job as an assistant professional at Sunningdale and within two years announced his arrival on the European tour by winning the Rookie of the Year title in 1972.

Over the next 26 years he won no fewer than 21 tour events and played

in the European Ryder Cup no fewer than eight times. None of those appearances sticks out in the mind so much as that famous victory in 1985. "Yeah, that was a huge night," Torrance admits. "In those days they used to have the victory dinner which no one wanted to be at because if you'd won you couldn't gloat, if you'd lost you just wanted to get out of there. But after that was finished my celebration was four days long. On the Sunday night we went all night until five or six in the morning and everyone was thrown into the pool fully dressed. On the Monday morning I met a very dear



Having beaten the Americans for the first time in 28 years, the celebrations were epic... epic.

friend of mine called John O'Leary for brunch at 11am at the Belfry. We had six bottles of champagne and then we left in a car to go to London. I got dropped off at a friend's house in Woburn on the Monday night and stayed up all night with his mates."

"The next morning I flew to Spain, and then comes the best part, I met all my mates on tour who hadn't been involved in the Ryder Cup but had been

watching it avidly. As we'd just come back having beaten the Americans for the first time in 28 years, the celebrations were epic... epic. That was the Tuesday night. The Wednesday was the pro-am, and then we're off again on the Wednesday night till 4 o'clock in the morning in Madrid. At that point I said, 'That's it I can't get any more in'. Unbelievably, I made the cut that week – it was probably the best performance of my career!" By now, Torrance had met the woman of his dreams, the actress Suzanne Danielle, who was a household name in the Seventies and Eighties thanks to appearances on



The winning putt at The Belfry in 1985, the winning captain 17 years later – ten Ryder Cup campaigns and seen here with Paul McGinley at Gleneagles in 2014 – Sam was Vice Captain and it goes without saying they won again, defeating the USA by 16½ points to 11½.

shows such as Doctor Who, The Mike Yarwood Show and perhaps most memorably in the title role in Carry On Emanuelle. She had joined the pro-am circuit after making a hole in one at Turnberry with virtually the first ball she ever shot.

"We first got together at the Four Stars, which was a charity pro-am type event at Moor Park," recalls Torrance. "What a tournament that was for us pros – Telly Savalas, Dickie Henderson, Bruce Forsyth, Jimmy Tarbuck, they all played – the crack was amazing. And they had this celebrity tent and we could get in because we were players and this was where Suzanne and I swapped numbers.

"We just hit it off and got engaged in 1987 on Concorde. I put it down to altitude and Champagne. I said to her, 'What would you say if I asked you to marry me?' She said, 'Ask me,' so I did. We used a rubber band from the wee rose that sits on your plate – and, no, she hasn't still got it." The couple married at Skibo Castle in 1995 and went on to have a son and two daughters. They have spent the last 25 years living in the Home Counties suburb of Virginia Water in a house on the Wentworth Golf Course.

Things could have gone a lot differently if his American opponent Ronnie Black had not holed a lengthy putt during the first play-off hole at the Southern Open at the Green Island



The Belfry 1985 Sam celebrates with the Ryder Cup winning team: Tony Jacklin (Captain), Manuel Piñero, Ian Woosnam, Paul Way, Seve Ballesteros, Sandy Lyle, Bernhard Langer, Sam Torrance, Howard Clark, José Rivero, Nick Faldo, José Maria Cañizares, and Ken Brown

Country Club in Columbus, Georgia, in 1983. If Black had missed, Torrance would have qualified for the US tour and spent the next three years playing his golf across the pond.

"It was a short par 4 and he plugged his first ball in the front bunker short of the pin at the front of the green," says Torrance. "I put my second maybe 40 feet past the hole. He came out of the

surprise. Rather than citing the moment he sank that putt at the Belfry, he says it was winning the Ryder Cup in 2002 as non-playing captain.

The most intimidating aspect of his role was not picking the team or deciding on the playing order but making speeches at the opening and closing ceremonies. "I'm a heckler, I'm not a speechmaker and I was terrified of



We got engaged in 1987 on Concorde. I put it down to altitude and Champagne.

bunker 39 feet past the pin. I play my putt. It's stone dead. I've got a four. He has to hole his or I've won and I'm thinking, 'Hey, I'm going to win in America'. For a kid that is a lifetime ambition. But he holed it and beat me on the fifth extra hole."

"I look back on that and think, 'Thank f**k! I've loved my life. It was the week before the Ryder Cup and I came back to Europe, won three times, finished second in the money list and my career just evolved from there."

Ask Torrance what he considers to be his greatest moment of his golfing career his response comes as something of a

having to do that," he confesses. "I had the podium I was going to be standing at delivered to my house a week before the Ryder Cup. I had it put in my office and I would lock the door and stay in there three hours every day rehearsing my speeches into a tape recorder. I had five speeches to make and I could have said them backwards by the end of that week. The more you put in the more you get out. I really wish I had learned this a long time ago."

Torrance joined golf's senior tour at the age of 50 and after 12 years and 11 tournament victories appears to be entertaining thoughts of retirement.

Musing on his performance in the Travis Perkins Masters at the beginning of September, he says: "It was okay. I was 28th. I had a nine in the last round on a par four so it wasn't good. I don't know how long I'll carry on playing. The long putter [Torrance's putter of choice] gets banned at the end of this year. Whether I have the will and the love and the desire to find another method I don't know. I'm pretty relaxed about retiring; we'll just see what happens."

Asked about the current crop of contenders, he reckons that Tiger Woods can make a comeback and thinks the jury is out on this season's wunderkind Jordan Spieth. "He's had a great year but he's missed the cut in the last two events," he says. "Spieth is a fantastic golfer with great hands and the heart of a lion but let's give him time let's see where he goes. He was number one in the world for a week. Someone like McIlroy to me is a different entity. He's an absolutely magnificent swinger. You can't learn genius. I think you're born a genius. You can make yourself into great but you're born a genius."♦

Follow Sam Torrance @torrancesam



Dominic Midgley is a feature writer for the Daily Express and a former Deputy Editor of Punch. He has also written biographies of Roman Abramovich, the Russian oligarch who owns Chelsea FC, and the late billionaire financier Sir James Goldsmith. His English teacher at school once wrote below one of his essays: "Waffle, fumble and padding: more of the first and the third and less of the second than most people!"

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PEOPLE

IF I RULED THE WORLD

Rachel Johnson is an acclaimed Editor, journalist, presenter and author. Daughter of former Boisdale Life contributor Conservative MEP Stanley Johnson.

WORDS BY RACHEL JOHNSON

It's ghastly not being in a position of power.

When my mother had a retrospective the other day, the organizer – and a big shout out to Nell Butler! – said to my bro, “If you were Mayor of London, where would you have the show?”

Without missing a beat he replied, “Well I am Mayor of London and the best place to have it is the Mall Galleries.” And so it came to pass. Do admit – think how intoxicating.

The closest I have ever come meanwhile, to office, is when I was a member of our communal garden committee. We would meet to discuss whether we needed to renew the play bark under the swings or whether the willow needed pollarding with all the passion and intensity of Jeremy Corbyn debating the crisis in mental health with his comrades from Old Labour. I didn't stand again when my term of office expired, even though I am insatiably ambitious. Knowing thyself and all that I know, I lack that necessary component in my makeup, which means I am prepared to give up my life in order to further my ambitions. I will only go so – i.e. not very – far thanks to this self-limiting complex of selfishness and pleasure-seeking in my personality.

So I'm not like my older brother who would reply “World King” when friends of my parents chucked him under the chin and asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up (I released that nugget into the public domain a few years ago and now when people ask me whether Boris wants to be Prime Minister when he grows up – only kidding! – I fend them off by drawling, “No, he's far more ambitious than that.”) So when people ask me “Why don't you be an MP too? It's not as if there are too many Johnsons in Westminster hahaha” I give them a wintry smile.

One, they have no idea what they would be getting because with super-powers I would be a radical world king. Possibly more radical even than any of my economically-conservative, socially liberal bros – with the possible exception of Leo, a blue-thinking eco-entrepreneur rock star who looks like a cross between Michael York and Jeff Bridges.

But where were we? Oh yes. If I were “World King” I would be tempted to spend quite a lot of time banning things so let's look at those – from private education, to eating meat more than once a month, to making sure there were more orange ones in a tube of Smarties and white tennis balls at Wimbledon.

Of course, my liberal inclinations dictate I would prefer people to stop doing bad things on their own but this doesn't seem to be happening of its own accord so in no particular order:

1. Private education underpins almost



Rachel Johnson's new novel *Fresh Hell* is out now #RachelSJohnson

all that is wrong with British society. Although our public schools are some of the finest institutions in the land they entrench inequality and immobility, and they should be phased out.

2. Eating meat is bad for us, the animal kingdom, and the blue planet. My daughter has become a vegan after watching a documentary called *Earthlings* but I can't give up bacon and burgers entirely. Let's settle on once a month.

3. Guns and the arms trade would be made illegal. Stuff the third amendment. In the US, thirty Americans per million

are murdered by guns every year, which is not surprising given there are 89 guns per 100 head of population. It's a joke – and not a funny one.

4. I would ban all mobiles and tablets in school and revert to pens, paper, chalk, blackboard, and libraries.

5. I would remove the part of the female brain that minded when men slept with other women, or women slept with other men of course. Just think how much happier that would make the whole world. All problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone but many of women's emotional problems and torment stem from their inability to be unfeeling brutes when the men they love don't stay on the porch.

6. I would make half of all Smarties orange and the tennis balls at Wimbledon white again, as above.

7. I'd make all men take a year off to look after their children from age 18 months.

8. I would rewrite planning laws so that if a pub closed it could only reopen as a pub, or at least an independent retailer. Ditto a butcher, baker, candlestick maker but above all, bookshop. And it couldn't be a coffee shop, a charity shop, a betting shop or a chain store. I would slap national heritage status on all street markets, farmers' markets and pannier markets.

9. I would cancel the High Speed Line which is not only going to ruin the nature reserve of Wormwood Scrubs, rip the heart out of the countryside, but will make my father's house in Camden unsellable for a generation. My two brothers in power can't possibly say this but as I carry no brief for any party I can.

10. I would make it a law that every seven years your marriage is dissolved without fault on either side and it is up to both of you to renew your vows. After 21 years of marriage you are given a seven-gun salute and considered to have done your duty, and if you choose to stick, that's fine, but if you want to twist, that's fine too.

In case readers are wondering, my husband and I agree on point 10 but I thought it prudent to ask him to give me the three things he would do if he ruled the world. He is Creative Director of the National Trust so you might imagine he would say something about tearooms, paint colors and the coastline but no. “I'd improve the weather said my husband. I'd make everyone 50 per cent randier. “What's the third?” I asked. He said there was no third thing.

I rather admire his realistic poverty of ambition. ♦

PEOPLE

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF... VERNON W. HILL II

Vernon W. Hill II is the founder of Metro Bank UK – the first new bank in Britain since 1840 – and Commerce Bancorp in the United States. Hill founded Commerce in 1973; it became the fastest growing bank in the US before being sold in 2007 for \$8.5 billion. Here, he describes an average day in the life of promoting “Retailtainment” – the art of creating moments of magic so that every customer leaves his bank with a smile!

WORDS BY VERNON W. HILL II

My wife Shirley and I commute to Britain every month with our Yorkshire terrier Duffy (Sir Duffield II actually – check out his twitter @SirDuffield). We spend half our time in Philadelphia and half in London in our apartment on Park Lane.

First thing I do every morning is read the newspapers and see what’s going on, what stupid idea some government has come up with that morning. In America, I get up at 6 am because it’s 11am here and I’m behind the curve already. I take the Wall Street Journal, the Philadelphia Enquirer and the New York Times. In Britain, I read the Times, the Telegraph, the FT, the Mail and City A.M. I love Forbes; it’s the best business magazine in the world because it has an entrepreneurial bent. It talks about people who are creating businesses, changing things. I don’t go to the gym. I don’t do power breakfasts. I have tea and a short breakfast and get off to work. I can’t bring myself to ride the tube – that’s too un-American. I come to Holborn in a car.

Metro Bank opened in 2010 with a full-scale, across-the-board product for business and consumers. We’re actually a bigger commercial bank than we are a consumer bank because the British banks mistreat the business customer worse than they treat consumers. When you walk into Metro, you get a consistent brand message – very much like Apple. Our ethos is about building fans, not customers. We’ve taken the mundane no-growth business of banking and turned it into a fun growth business. We call ourselves a power retailer. The fact the executive offices are above the store is a message.

We run the identical bank model we ran in the States with Commerce. My job is to install, instil, enforce and improve our model and my day is an endless number of things that fit in those categories. A high percentage of my time is spent meeting potential new business

and private banking clients. In America, banks are much more embedded in local communities and I like that; we want to know our clients. I talk to our investor community, interview recruits and go to training classes to tell them what it means to be Metro. And I track the figures – the growths, deposits and new account numbers. Every day.

I spend half a day a week picking new sites. We will have 40 stores open in London by the end of 2015. I personally approve every site. We look at demographics and the traffic, but it’s 75 per cent my gut instinct. For No 1, at Holborn, I didn’t even stop the car. It



Vernon and Shirley Hill, with their Yorkshire terrier, Sir Duffield II

was obvious.

Everything we did in America works better in London. The British public have embraced our philosophy of service and convenience. We have just marked five years, and we’ve had 100 per cent growth a year, five years running. Bankers here are so far removed from the public. We have this policy called Dogs Rule. We want you to bring your pets in. We want to know their name; we give them a treat. On certain weekends, we microchip

dogs. Duffy II tweets every day and his followers tweet back. It’s created an emotional attachment. People take it to mean, if you love my dog, you must love me.

I believe we are a retailer, not a bank and retailers have to make the experience fun and personal. We try to do that every way we can. The big banks have shut down all their safe deposit boxes. I can’t build them fast enough. You see our coin counting machines? Nobody else has them, they’re free, and you don’t have to bank with us to use them. In America, they were used six million times a year.

If you were a retail executive in one of the big five banks here, and you went to your committee and said, “We’re getting beat up by Metro. We need to put in these coin machines. We’ll need to invest ten million.” The committee would say, “What’s the return?” And you’d say, “No, no, they’re free. We just make more friends.” Well, that’s the end of your career. It takes the entrepreneur at the top. I could never prove to you mathematically that having Magic Money Machines helps us grow our brand, but I know it does.

I am here 8am to 6pm, then Shirley and I will go out to dinner with clients or groups. When I leave, I have a chuckle.

As in America, our ATM machines are in the foyer where it’s dry, safe and warm. Londoners would rather we put them outside in the wall where it’s wet, cold and not safe. Now we do both! I’m still going to try to convince you to come inside, but the outside machines get three times the volume...!

I get asked all the time, “What is the hardest thing about working in Britain?” My joke is, “To get them to stop saying no.” We have a rule at Metro Bank that states that all team members can say “Yes” to a customer, but they must check with their supervisor before saying “No”.◆

PEOPLE

THE HIGH PRIESTESS OF PUNK

Toyah Willcox is one of a select group of mononymous stars that includes Madonna, Elvis and Elton – people who are so famous that everyone knows exactly who they are at the mere mention of their first name. She talks to Jonathan Wingate about punk, the enduring power of Quadrophenia and why she’s always looking for an exit sign.

WORDS BY JONATHAN WINGATE
MUSIC JOURNALIST, AUTHOR AND BBC PRESENTER

By her own admission, Toyah Willcox always felt like an outsider. Born with a twisted spine, clawed feet and an underdeveloped left side, she had to be put in a plaster cast for the first six months of her life and wore one shoe two inches higher than the other. She was also a tomboy who was severely dyslexic and had a lisp, so it’s no surprise that she was relentlessly bullied at school.

“I went to an all girls public school in Birmingham, and I hated it,” Toyah recalls. “I hate anything that confines me. I found school incredibly claustrophobic and I find family life incredibly claustrophobic, so in a way, being a musician suits me, because virtually every musician I know is the same. I think I have always felt like an outsider. It’s always frustrated me, but I’ve come to accept it.”

In 1976, two weeks before they released their debut single, Anarchy in the UK, the Sex Pistols played a show at Bogart’s nightclub in Birmingham. For the first time in her life, Toyah felt like she had found something she could identify with, a movement and an attitude that made her feel like she wasn’t alone in the way she viewed – and was viewed by – the outside world.

“Up until that point I’d been making my own clothes and dying my hair all different colours, thinking there was no one like me in the world. I walked into that club and there were 300 kids who were doing exactly the same thing as me. It says a lot about morphic resonance... these things happen because they need to happen. The Pistols were very bad tempered and they walked off about four times during the show, but it was very exciting. It gave us meaning, it gave us a place and it gave us an identity. When punk came along I knew I could belong to something. I just thought – I can do this. I can learn to do this. If I was

thinking I could do it better, that was just youthful arrogance.

“Like everyone else of my generation, I had trouble conforming,” she continues. “I think that’s why punk was such a success. I don’t fit into anyone’s system and I feel trapped when anyone tries to encompass me. Luckily I found a man (King Crimson guitarist, Robert Fripp) that I’ve been married to for 30 years



Toyah Willcox had four Top Ten hits, including “I Want to Be Free”

who’s exactly the same. We always like to see the exit sign in every situation. I’m not really good with relationships. I’m a nomad. I like to go where I want when I want, without attachments. I don’t really like permanent connections at all.”

It was while she was studying at the Old Rep Drama School in Birmingham that she was spotted by a director who

happened to be searching for “a girl who had to look different, sound different and be able to sing” to star alongside Phil Daniels in the BBC play, Glitter. Toyah’s character, Sue, was a singer who dreamed of appearing on Top Of The Pops.

In the summer of 1977 she moved down to London to work at the National Theatre, where she was soon introduced to director, Derek Jarman, who was about to start shooting Britain’s first punk film, Jubilee. Toyah went over to Jarman’s Fulham flat for tea, and he offered her a starring role on the spot, tossing the script at her and telling her to pick whichever part she fancied. She chose to play pyrotechnic punk, Mad, mainly because the character had more lines than anyone else.

“From the moment I met Derek, that was it...I never looked back,” Toyah says. “It was amazing to work with him, because he just didn’t compromise on anything. The whole film-making process was very anarchic. We’d shoot a scene and he would just say – Do what you want. Of course, he had a whole team of egocentrics on the set, so we just ran amok. I was really poor, so Derek always made sure that I had the bus fare to get to his apartment so he could make me lunch.”

Jarman called on Toyah again for his next film, casting her as Miranda in his production of Shakespeare’s The Tempest. She was then asked to give Johnny Rotten a few acting lessons to prepare him for a screen test for the starring role in Franc Roddam’s much-anticipated film adaptation of The Who’s Quadrophenia.

“Johnny screen tested for the lead role that Phil Daniels played, and I screen tested for Leslie Ash’s role. I was a bit worried about the explosive personality that one kind of knew was potentially there,

but Lydon was an absolute gentleman. I turned up at his flat off the Kings Road, and the Slits were all unconscious on the floor along with a few other quite famous punk rockers.

“I gave him a few acting lessons, but I didn’t really have to give him anything, because he was actually a very good natural actor. He was superb at the screen test, but neither of us got those roles. Johnny apparently didn’t get it because of his reputation, so the film couldn’t get insurance if he was in it.”

When it became clear that the call from Roddam was not going to materialise, Toyah decided that she wanted a starring role in *Quadrophenia* and she was quite prepared to literally bang on the director's door to get what she came for.

"I heard nothing from them, so I turned

and this was before we even had a record deal. That's how exciting the music industry was back then. Unbelievable. It was probably one of the most exciting periods of my life."

In April 1979 Toyah released their debut single, *Victims Of The Riddle*, which stayed at the top of the

Fuck knows where all the money went, but it didn't go on me and it didn't go on the band.

up at Lee Electrics in Wembley and started banging on Roddam's window," she chuckles. "Come on, you owe me this. I got Lydon through that screen test for you. Give me a part. Roddam called me into his office, where he was sitting with Phil Daniels, and he said if I could do the snogging party scene with Phil, I could play Monkey. Well, I already knew Phil, because I was in my first television play with him. So we did the scene and I got the part, but the truth is, I did have to really push for that part."

Is she surprised how iconic *Quadrophenia* has become over time? "The funny thing is, the press reviews were not kind, but over the decades this film has grown and grown, and I think it deserves that, because it means so much to a lot of people. I mean, in a few weeks I'm appearing at a *Quadrophenia* convention in Blackpool. All of the cast have grown into accepting what it is and appreciating that it's still around. It was wonderful, life-threatening chaos for me. My main memory is of complete exhaustion, because I was filming *Quadrophenia* in the daytime and *Quatermass* in the evening. At the same time it was also extremely exciting because Roddam was so exciting to work with as a director.

"I remember one lunchtime saying to Sting – I'm just off to do a showcase for a record company," Toyah recalls, still sounding endearingly excited at the memory nearly 40 years later. "When I went back on set I was able to say to Sting – I'm now a signed artist. It was inevitable, because the band (who were called Toyah) were causing riots wherever we played. We had 2000 people turning up to venues with a capacity of 300. The police used to have to get us out of town wherever we went,

independent charts for almost a year. After a run of indie singles that failed to trouble the Top 40, she finally burst into the nation's consciousness when *It's A Mystery* was released on Valentine's Day 1981. Toyah dived headfirst into the spotlight and quickly took over the airwaves with *It's A Mystery* and *I Want To Be Free*, a perfectly judged mix of punk, pop and new wave.

"I'd been dreaming about singing on *Top Of The Pops* since the age of seven, so that whole period was absolutely exhilarating. There's no other way to describe it. It was everything I ever wanted."

Toyah rounded off an incredible year with an unforgettable performance on the Christmas edition of *Top Of The*



Toyah played a role in the 1979 film *Quadrophenia*, which also starred Phil Daniels

Pops and an *Old Grey Whistle Test* show at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, which was broadcast live on BBC1 on Christmas Eve and watched by 12 million people. She bounced around like Tigger and looked like she had just beamed down from another planet – a cross between Boadicea and Lady Gaga.

"The image was all very deliberate. I had a team that designed my hair, my makeup and my clothes. We designed everything together. I collect books on cultures that keep their indigenous identities like Kabuki theatre and the

Maasai people. We lifted a lot of stuff from them. Apart from people like Siouxsie Sioux and Poly Styrene, there were very few women around in music in the early 80s. Then it suddenly became all about women. So yes, I was a Boadicea figure on stage. Was I proud of it? God yeah... absolutely."

"I actually didn't originally want to release *It's A Mystery*, because it's a song about vulnerability and I had worked very hard creating this strong female image. I thought it was too feminine, and it wasn't part of the path I was trying to carve, but it's a song that has defined me for 37 years. *I Want To Be Free* was actually written in a maths class. I just couldn't fit into the system, so I felt like I'd wasted the whole of my teenage years in school. It's a song of defiance. It has actually been adopted as a song of freedom in prisons all over the world."

At the height of her commercial powers, Toyah was selling millions of records, yet she was taking home barely enough money to get by: "We sold 75,000 records a day for a whole year, yet I was living on £30 a week. I only recouped last year. Tell me – how does that work? I'll give you the record company's telephone number and you can ask them. Fuck knows where all the money went, but it didn't go on me and it didn't go on the band.

"I bought my first house out of the success of my third album, *Anthem*, but since then I've built a multi-million pound fortune. I'm a bloody good businesswoman. I make money from live performance and from positioning songs in films and television, but I've also got a property empire and I'm bloody good at stocks and shares."

"My work is an absolute joy, and I am totally dedicated to it, but I don't like doing one thing all the time. I like to have freedom of movement in everything. I'm always very excited about the next project. I only get about three or four hours sleep a night, so I rejuvenate myself by being solitary. I'll travel back from a show and then go into the office until 4am. I'm working seven days a week. According to my band, I have no off switch."

So what does she do to unwind? "There is no relaxation," Toyah laughs. "What are you talking about? I've been in the office since 6am, I've got interviews all day, I've got a hit film out and I'm recording the music for a major international film for next year. There is no downtime."◆

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PEOPLE

THE BIG INTERVIEW - KELSEY GRAMMER PART II

WORDS BY PADDY RENOUF
EDITOR-AT-LARGE, BOISDALE LIFE

The interview takes place over a two hour car journey from Kelsey's farm in the country to his apartment in New York. In the first part published in the last edition of Boisdale Life Kelsey spoke of the tragedy in his life and how he has been able to come to terms with it. In the second part of our exclusive interview with Kelsey Grammer, our Editor at Large, Paddy Renouf continues his car journey across upstate New York, this time exploring the work and motivation behind some of Kelsey's best-loved characters.

PR – So, how many Frasier's do you think you did in the end?

KG – It's probably 500 and something combined Cheers and Frasier's, 264 episodes of Frasier and 267 of Cheers.

PR – And it never became a little mundane or a perhaps a touch routine?

KG – Yes, routine, but it was a good routine which we settled into, especially on Frasier – Cheers was a bit more like trying to tame the whirlwind! But on Frasier everyone was on the same page.

PR – You must surely feel blessed at times, you're well paid, doing something you love that is a success, you have achieved recognition in every sense...

KG – Clearly it has been a wonderful blessing. I think the nature of Frasier helped, he was an amiable tortured buffoon really – but in the end you liked him! He was so human and vulnerable, always trying to get ahead and always trying to find love – it was his search for love that endeared him to everyone.

PR – So I have to ask, just how much of Frasier is you?

KG – Well he came from my imagination but also the collective imagination of the writers as well. You know Christopher Lloyd, not the actor but the writer who ran our show and is now on Modern Family, well he was kinda the Frasier guy. There was also a great collaborative ethic there – we would sit down every day and do a run-through, comparing rehearsal notes and there was always a sense we could figure something else out if something wasn't

working. But I never really went to the writer's room, some actors go over and bother the writers, I think you should isolate each of those processes.

PR – So you didn't get too involved in the writing?

KG – No, unless I was on stage and we were talking about what wasn't working and I might make some suggestions. But it was always their job, you know, that's their job! I never thought it was appropriate to interfere.

PR - I imagine there are some stars that aren't quite like that?

KG – There's plenty that aren't!



Kelsey Grammer as Dr Frasier Crane broadcast by NBC the show had 11 seasons and ran from 1993 to 2004

Earlier in the journey we had talked at some length about the trauma of losing people close to you, Kelsey lost his father and sister to brutal murders and two half-brothers in a diving accident.

PR – I read somewhere that when someone you love dearly dies, you haven't lost them you just carry them with you.....

KG – That's certainly true, even on stage I'm always invoking their memory. You have musing moments when you perform. You are functioning on so many different levels, well at least I am. I don't find a slavish obedience to the text and to the character during the time I'm playing

it is appropriate. I find the wanderings of my mind and flipping in and out of past, present and future feeds the character that you are playing. And then your line comes and you do your job, but really you are also on a great personal journey throughout the play. On stage you suddenly think of someone's face – you know I have had remembrances of my entire family doing this play, it's really fun.

PR – Well its particularly poignant in Finding Neverland – you dig deep and that comes across clearly.

KG – Thank you. Yes it's fun too – and Hook is fun to play, a bit more of a turn! But he is the author's mouthpiece who says “if you don't risk everything you are going to get nothing”.

PR – I like the fact that Bond producer Barbara Broccoli's company is called EON, which means Everything or Nothing

KG – That's cool...!

PR – I've got a wonderful quote here from the great dramatist, Molière – “The greater the obstacle, the more glory in overcoming it.”

KG – That was all part of Moliere's history – he was under a very oppressive government at the time. There was such control of the language that writing was a huge challenge. He got away with murder and

with great style – delivering all that social invective with irony, was really something.

PR – Do you agree that ultimately there is growth to be had from coming through such adversity?

KG – I believe you have to live fully and embrace all things. You are on a course in life where it flows in you, and around you, at all times. You are always connected to it and preparing for something that may or may not happen. “Life goes on with you or without you” – that's George Harrison right?

PR – You've got some range there....

KG – Yeah right, Moliere to Harrison! I'm sort of hashing this out, but you can imagine any number of things happening and when you actually get to them they are simpler, usually more beautiful and far more challenging than you ever thought they would be. They are more



Kelsey Grammer in the role of Commander Tom Dodge, for the 1996 film Down Periscope

painful, more rewarding and you can be in the most horrible place in the world for a long, long time and still survive. I mean gosh, ask the Holocaust survivors – I don't know how they did it. But you get up every day and that's all you can do. Auden's line is another of my favorites, “If I peg away at it honestly every day and have luck, perhaps by the time death pounces his stumping question, I shall just be beginning to understand the difference between moonlight and daylight!” It's terrific!

PR – Would you agree that the minute you have chosen to do what you really want to do, it's a different kind of life – if you are doing spiritually, emotionally and financially what you want to do, the universe conspires to help you?

KG – I've always thought that. That's was in the Castineda books, the adventures of Don Juan echoes a lot of the same sentiments. It says the same thing in the book of Matthew, “knock and it shall be opened unto you” – it's pretty simple. It's all about asking for what you want, because you know, that's

It's all about asking for what you want,
because you know, that's why you came!

why you came!

PR – Is there anything you would say to the 18 year old boy you were?

KG – I'd say; why on earth did you suffer so much? I suffered for years thinking I wasn't attractive, you know, too this, or too that... I guess that's a young man unaware of things? There

was a girl who stuck with me for years and I was once walking down the street with her, I was just so happy and she turned and said to me “you're ugly”... and I believed her!

PR – I saw a picture of you at the farm and you were a handsome lad!

KG – Maybe I needed that self-effacing insecurity to help navigate through what I was going to have to go through. I always bought-into the idea that every human being should be addressed as if they are of the greatest value, as if they are royalty with titles as long as your arm. People should be

honored with that moment of attention that recognizes them as a person of value – that meeting each other is an important moment for both of us. Then everybody

Frasier was an amiable tortured buffoon
really – but in the end you liked him!

walks away feeling good rather than feeling bad –if you see the best in people, honestly, that's what you tend to get back.

PR – So the obvious question – can you imagine yourself doing another prime time TV series?

KG – Well my company is developing several shows right now and any number of them I might be willing to perform in. It all depends if the material is right and the role is challenging or something I haven't done before. I'm a little more focused on that, I certainly wouldn't take on a role like Frasier again because you know, I did that! There are so many more possibilities out there now, it's more likely to be a drama although there are two comedies that appeal to me, both

and feel whole, I really enjoy it.

PR – Is there a role yet that you'd love to play?

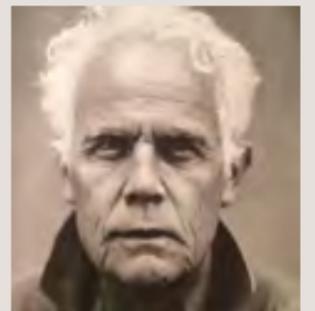
KG – Well of course there's a Lear in me... there is something extraordinary about acting. The foundation of preparation in acting is observation of life. So what enhances your chances of being an actor is that you can do it anytime, so long as your life experience is rich enough to feed a characterization. In other words, actors can be born in their fifties. Sir Cedric Hardwick I believe started when he was 50 and one of the first roles he got was the horrible shit in the film 'The Hunch Back of Notre Dame', and what a performance!

PR – And your favorite films?

KG – There are several, The Searchers with John Ford and John Wayne, To Kill a Mockingbird is one of my favorites, the Sound of Music another, Julie Andrews was an early crush of mine!

At this point we pull up a block away from the Lunt Fontanne Theatre and Kelsey hands the keys to the car park manager. The journey and the interview are over and we return to simply being good friends.◆

If you would like to experience the depths of London for a day with Editor at Large, Paddy Renouf – please email paddy@boisdalelife.com



Paddy Renouf is a raconteur and culturalpreneur and has a successful business looking after some of the worlds rich and famous. In his spare time he paints in watercolors and oils. His portrait the 'Flâner' has been hanging in the National Portrait Gallery.



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PEOPLE

A BOND GIRL IN A BENTLEY

Paddy Renouf asks Carole Ashby (Octopussy and A View to a Kill) what it really meant to be a Bond Girl. Q of course gave Bond a wide variety of vehicles with which to battle his enemies. Ian Fleming chose the 1953 Bentley Convertible as James Bond's personal car in the novels.

WORDS BY PADDY RENOUF
EDITOR AT LARGE, BOISDALE LIFE MAGAZINE

I met Carole Ashby a few years ago when Barbara Broccoli brought her to meet me at the American bar of the Savoy (yup...I could explain but I might have to kill you) and this time I collected her in a Highland Green Bentley T2 (1978) which I have used as an everyday car (well, on and off) for about 15 years. She appeared on our screens as a Bond Girl 29 years ago and Carole Ashby is still what you would simply call stunningly sexy - and she is dressed to kill; she is also gregarious, mischievous and fun. She slips into the soft polished leather seat beside me. As we glide away from Sloane Square I ask my first question: "So, Carole, how did it all start?"

"Well, the year was 1986, I had just come back from a world tour to my little flat in Parson's Green and I was doing my laundry, emptying the cat litter and just as I was thinking it was the end of my life and all the excitement had gone... the phone went. This voice said 'Hi Carole, its John!' I said 'John who' and he said 'John Glenn' (Editor's note: Director of five Bond films). Then he said 'Carole, look, have you got big tits and can you whistle?' I said, 'I've got medium sized tits and can whistle badly' (Carole played the enchanting Whistling Girl in the Eiffel Tower scene in A View to a Kill). He said, 'Well, I am at Pinewood and we are just doing the casting. There is a cameo role called Papillion and you'd be perfect. We'd love to have you - do you want to do it or not?' I of course said, 'Are you serious, I'd LOVE to do it.' He said, 'Right, we'll send the car tomorrow, you've got the job.... and we'll dub the whistling!'"

Over lunch at Boisdale of Belgravia I began by showing Carole a picture from the set of Octopussy and asking what memories this conjured up. "It brings back happy memories, Roger Moore was so charming and funny and has still got huge charisma. Mary Stavin, who is fabulous, was this beautiful Swedish girl

and was also Miss World... She was the daughter of a strawberry farmer and I was the only child of two academics. We were both 'brought back to the team' for A View to a Kill. It was so lovely. The first film was fabulous but to be invited onto a second one, knowing what we knew, was a privilege."

I asked: "Do you keep in touch with any of your Bond contemporaries?". "As Bond girls we were very well looked after and there really is a sort of union between us all - we are a little team. A gang of us met in Oslo recently doing interviews, from Britt Ekland to Mariam D'Arbo. This weekend

"What impact did it all have on your career Carole - has life after Bond been kind?" "Yes, the whole experience led me on to do more acting. I got roles in Allo Allo, Bergerac, Minder and Inspector Morse... this old buzzard is on most of the shows on UK GOLD. I had been on Sale of the Century for three years and we ended with 24m viewers - unheard of nowadays!"

Our attention turned to cars for a moment, Bond having had such an intimate relationship with Bentleys, Astons and Jaguars over the years. I admire Aston Martins, but in Ian Fleming's novels James Bond's personal car was a grey Bentley convertible. Carole agrees there is a sense of occasion in a Bentley ride... indeed, every time I take it out for a spin, even to buy a packet of cigarettes. The smell of chocolate, leather and cigar smoke, the dappled sunlight across the far-reaching bonnet all add to the pleasure - the Bond films truly capture this feeling. One of my great "Bond moments in life" was driving a brand new Bentley Arnage from between the salesman's desks in Jack Barclay's and out into the Berkley Square, tyres squealing as I negotiated the showroom floor. And what of the new Bond film - are the guardians of the legacy steering the right course? "Barbara Broccoli is



Roger Moore, Carole Ashby (top-right), Gillian De Terville, Carolyn Seaward, Mary Stavin and Tina Robinson - Octopussy (1983)

there will be thirteen of us in Blackpool - Roger Moore is also coming and doing his 'one man' show. I haven't been to Blackpool since I appeared with Les Dawson, judging Miss UK for God's sake! So its great fun, the girls are great, there is no animosity between us - we are part of a team that has had great experiences. Honor Blackman is still stunning. Ursula Andress is the ultimate ICONIC Bond girl, she epitomizes a Bond girl, I met her years ago at a BBQ, stunning."

her father's daughter with her mother's beauty. Cubby knew it was all in safe hands when it was taken over by Barbara, particularly after he'd seen Goldeneye. For me what came out of it all was that it was more than being in the movies, it was meeting Barbara - she was a little younger than me but more mature; it gave me a special friendship that is lasting forever. (Barbara Broccoli's first Assistant Director role was on the set of Octopussy). I am excited to see the next Bond movie and I think it's going to be even better than the last one. It's been such a life enhancing career and a great privilege to have been part of Bond, on a personal as well as a professional level."◆

PEOPLE

BOB HOPE AND THE MISSING UMBRELLA

WORDS BY MICHAEL GELARDI
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF BOISDALE ENTERTAINMENT

In the early eighties I had the privilege of staging and co-producing The Bob Hope Classic Royal Gala Shows for three years running, together with one of our greatest British comedians, Dickie Henderson, who was a friend of Bob Hope and also became a good friend of mine.

The shows, staged at the prestigious Grosvenor House Hotel in London, were always sold out with hundreds of celebrities and the “crooks and the great” of British and American industry and government. As well of course as a royal patron in the gracious person of HRH Princess Margaret, who adored Mr Hope, as well as her Bells whisky – which we were always happy to have on her table ready and waiting.

The show was a live event of course, but also a major TV special, produced by us firstly with ITV's legendary director, David Bell and then by the great James Moir, Head of BBC Entertainment.

It was always a somewhat stressful show to produce, as we had to build an elaborate set with full light and sound for TV overnight. Bob would then arrive with his “guest stars” the following morning. When between Bob, Dickie, the TV director and myself we programmed the evening and put on the only show on TV as popular as The Royal Variety Show – out that same night!

The artistes all worked for charity, the NSPCC and Bob Hope's own charity, and the show was personally funded by a charismatic businessman by the name of John Spurling.

The numerous stars on the shows, hosted of course by Bob himself, included such great American comedians of the time as Don Rickles and Jonathan Winters; Hollywood actors, Tele Savalas and Foster Brooks, British comedians Jimmy Tarbuck, Bruce Forsyth and of course Dickie Henderson. Indeed even a US President, Gerald Ford joined in as well as a host of other great names. Some of the world's greatest golfers, including Tony Jacklin, Jack Nicklaus and Bernard Langer also hosted tables around the room for the lucky few who paid enough to charity. Most of these huge names had come also of course to play in the prestigious Bob

Hope Classic Golf Tournament, which ensued the following day.

I was personally also in charge of booking the European musical star talent for the show, amongst which were Petula Clark, Lulu, The Nolan Sisters and the legendary Charles Aznavour. None of whom played golf but all came out of deference to Bob Hope, and of course to be part of a Royal Gala show.

Aznavour whom we flew on Concorde from LA to appear in the show, was a special coup of which I was very proud. However, one of my most enduring memories, out of the many incidents back in the day of these shows, was Charles desperately wanting a Bob Hope Classic golf umbrella. Which he noticed was put into other celebrities' rooms but not his, as he was not a golfer. Charles complained about



Bob Hope and Jane Russell in spoof western *The Paleface*. Bob Hope died aged 100 at his home in Toluca Lake, California (May 29, 1903 – July 27, 2003).

this to me before he left the next day back to LA, and a few days later his manager called me demanding that Charles please at least be given a “parapluie”. Particularly as he had not charged his usual \$75,000 fee and had travelled some 11,000 miles to do the one show. I reiterated that this should not be a problem and again called up Dickie Henderson who was in charge of the tournament merchandising. Dickie said “no problem, it will be shipped to him” and I didn't hear any more, until several weeks later I got another call from Charles' manager – “Ou est Le Parapluie? Charles is still asking” he asked anxiously,

“he collects them and wants this special one for his collection.” I called Dickie again immediately, only to have to hear the terrible truth – he sheepishly owned up “THERE ARE NO MORE Bob Hope Parapluies!” I had to break the news to his distraught manager who cried “How can I tell this to Charles, that he flew all the way to London and performed a big live TV show completely gratuit – and you cannot even give him a parapluie?!! – ‘e will be not be ‘appy!” My reply was, “I'm so sorry, Leon, but that is all I can tell you and I guess it's your job to tell him! Au revoir et bonne chance” I quickly retorted and put the phone down.

Several years on, with the umbrella incident well behind us. I had occasion to book Mr Aznavour again for a show at The Savoy, this time on full fee. I went with the limousine to the airport, as I usually did with major stars, to welcome him personally and show him into town, to his hotel suite. I greeted him and he, being a great man but a slightly stoic Armenian, said very little. At first I did not think this too unusual and we got into the limo. After a while I began to feel the rather stony silence was more than stoicism and it was becoming distinctly uncomfortable. All the way into London there was no conversation I could make with him at all, until we were arriving at the entrance to The Savoy, when he broke the unbearable atmosphere. Charles

leant over and took my hand – “Michael” he murmured “La Parapluie?!” I was of course lost for words and broke into a sweat with embarrassment. Then his face cracked into a smile “It's alright Michael. In this ride you have had punishment enough. Now we can be friends again. I will forgive you and we will have a great show tomorrow night!” ♦

Michael Gelardi is Managing Director of Boisdale Entertainment. Sound, Vision & Experience: the one stop shop for all your entertainment requirements.

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ENTERTAINMENT

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NOVEMBER 28, 2015



ELVIS
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STATUS QUO
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WORDS BY TIMOTHY BARBER
EDITOR OF QP MAGAZINE, THE UK'S LEADING WATCH TITLE



Eight years in the making, Vacheron Constantin have created the most complicated watch ever made, named the Reference 57620

The Swiss watch industry's two most august grande maisons (though you could include Audemars Piguet to make up a historical "big three") Vacheron and Patek operate side by side at the pinnacle of the market for classical watches. Vacheron can claim seniority by age – in fact, it can do so over every other brand in Switzerland, being the oldest continually operating watch firm. Remarkably, 2015 has been its 260th year in business.

Patek Philippe is a mere stripling at 176 years old, but in the wristwatch era has been by far the more inventive of the two, pioneering many of the most desirable complications and building a portfolio of landmark watch designs over the course of the 20th century that have seen it become the most collectible name in wristwatches. Its auction prices are eye-watering, and its power as a brand formidable – its two-week takeover of the Saatchi Gallery earlier this year pulled in over 40,000 visitors.

Much of that goes back to its achievements in the early part of the 20th century, a period of extraordinary creativity for Patek Philippe, during

which its crowning achievement was brought about by an American banker named Henry Graves. He commissioned the "Supercomplication", a pocket watch of such complexity that it took eight years to create, and contained 24 horological complications, more than any previous watch. In 1989 Patek Philippe went even further, with a watch containing 33 complications. But that's child's play compared to what Vacheron Constantin unveiled this autumn. Reference 57620 (crazy watch, crazy name) has a total of 57 complications, several of which are unique including Hebrew calendar functions, a multitude of astronomical indications, and complex chronograph, alarm, perpetual calendar functions and much more.

Like the Henry Graves watch, this was a bespoke piece developed over several years for an American collector. He will have shelled out a fortune to possess what becomes, instantly, one of the most important and outstanding timepieces ever invented. Will it ever be topped? Don't bet against it. But as a statement of Vacheron Constantin's pure horological muscle, of a kind that

may well influence the wider perception and after-market value of the brand, it's a huge score.

It's not the only one Vacheron Constantin made this year, however. In fact for me, the question as to what the most special wristwatch of the year would be was over, case closed, in the early days of January. It was then that Vacheron took the lid off the Harmony Collection, a series of haute horlogerie chronographs, plus a dual time-zone piece, in a cushion case shape that was wholly unexpected and quite delightful. It was a shape Vacheron had used for a chronograph it produced back in the 1920s, reborn here as something truly luxurious – smoothly curving, free of corners and edges, polished to a mesmerizing gleam, and utterly beguiling.

For the Harmony collection Vacheron Constantin devised three brand new hand-wound, haute horlogerie chronograph movements. Chronographs are the one area where Vacheron has been a little on the back foot in the modern era, since the old system of using movements designed by specialist chronograph companies gave way to

brands adding this most complex of engines to their own list of in-house specialisms. Patek Philippe itself got there only a few years ago; and in its trio of Harmony movements, developed over several years, Vacheron has placed itself firmly at the top table of chronograph manufacturing.

The first of the three is a gorgeous single-pusher chronograph with a "pulsometer" dial, as used a long time ago by medics for measuring a patient's pulse. The second is also a single-pusher, this time with a magnificent tourbillon escapement that enacts its "whirlwind" dance in the heart of the dial.

But the true star of the show, of which only 10 are being made over the next couple of years at a price of well over £250,000 each, is an ultra-slim split-seconds chronograph. A split-seconds is a chronograph with two stopwatch seconds hands, which "split" from each other to deliver two readings at once, say to time two different runners in a race. It is considered one of the pinnacle complications in watchmaking, so finicky is it to achieve, but Vacheron's version, with a splendidly finished movement visible thanks to an ingenious peripheral winding rotor, is glorious to behold.

Slimness being another mark of ultimate horological craftsmanship, the watch is also a hair's breadth slimmer than the previous record-holder in thin chronographs. You don't need me to tell you who makes that...◆



Timothy is a writer and editor specialising in fine watches, currently editing QP magazine, the UK's leading watch title. He regularly contributes to the Financial Times, Daily Telegraph, Wired, Esquire and City AM.

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BOISDALE WATCH CLUB – DECEMBER 7TH 2015

EXCLUSIVE INVITATION TO BOISDALE LIFE READERS FREE CHAMPAGNE & CANAPES RECEPTION

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BOISDALE OF CANARY WHARF 6.30PM
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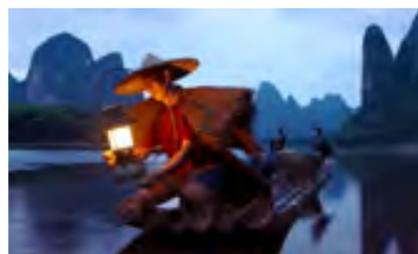
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THE PERINI CUP REGATTA 2015

WORDS BY RORY ROSS
LUXURY LIFESTYLE GURU

The Yacht Club Porto Cervo is the most startlingly beautiful and chicest yacht club in the world. This makes it a fitting home for the Perini Cup, a biennial regatta exclusively for Perini yachts. In September, the 6th Perini Cup regatta set sail.

Perini? It is a luxury yacht designer/builder in Viareggio, Italy. A Perini yacht is an unforgettable sight: very large and strikingly handsome. In

rooms, and suites of bedrooms, not to mention toys, RIBs, tenders, diving gear and submarines.

The cost? If you need to ask, you can't afford one. Almost all the owners of the 59 Perinis so far built are billionaires. Given the price tag – estimate 2 million Euros per metre length – and time taken to build these floating palaces, “One sale per year is a good result for us,” says Burak Akgül, Managing Director of Sales,

The blood flows and the testosterone charges, you can't put a monetary value on that. This is about emotional capital.

their lines and silhouette, Perinis look like classic giant yachts. But whereas sailing yachts of circa 50 metres would ordinarily require massed hands to work the winches and manage the huge loads on the sails, a Perini dispenses with all of that. As many functions as possible aboard a Perini are mechanised and automated. The ‘crew’ is largely shrunk or displaced by buttons and computer screens. This frees the interior for sumptuous accommodation, sitting rooms, bars, swimming pools, dining

Marketing and Design at Perini Navi. For the rest of us, the pleasure of Perini is essentially voyeuristic, with occasional heavy petting if you're lucky.

For the Perini Cup, all 59 Perinis were invited. Sixteen turned up: seven to race; eight to watch. The field highlighted the Perini back-catalogue: from Elettra (25m) the very first fledgling Perini launched in 1987, to the most recent sloop-rigged Perseus Cubed (60m) and her ketch-rigged sibling Seahawk. Although Perini is chiefly celebrated for its yachts, it has produced three motor boats, including Exuma, which arrived at Porto Cervo from a four-year circumnavigation, complete with an amphibious jeep in her hold for exploration purposes. The owner was looking forward to his next cruise: an exploration of the waterways of Russia. Pride of the fleet was the magnificent three-masted ship-rigged Maltese Falcon, the largest Perini at 88 metres.

The regatta opened with a glittering cocktail party. Milena Perini, beautiful wife of Fabio Perini, likened the 16



The Maltese Falcon – charters from \$575,652 a week plus expenses

yachts to “our daughters,” adding, “It is so emotional to see them showing their beauty and charm... It is a delight we never get used to.”

As racing yachts go, Perini are a bizarre anomaly, somewhat like filling a Formula One grid with Rolls Royce motor cars. Built for comfort not speed, Perini are only competitive when raced against each other. The Perini Cup therefore represents a three-day Have Yacht love-in for privateer owners who fancy a bit of racing.

On Day One, I boarded P2, an attendant Perini, to watch the competing fleet – Clan VIII, Seahawk, Roseheartly, The Maltese Falcon, Jasali II, Elettra,

and Perseus Cubed – set sail. We nosed out of Porto Cervo and joined seemingly a flock of minutely choreographed giant butterflies as they readied to start.

“There is no prize money,” says Jonathan Kline, captain of P2, mistily. “When you have big boats racing 40

is in fact derived from machines that roll loo paper in industrial quantities; I should think that the same intelligence might likewise give Messrs Andrex and Kleenex an uncommon flush of pride. The Maltese Falcon and the humble loo roll are cousins!

Perini is passionate. He cannot sleep at night for trying to work out how to control an 88-metre boat with one finger.”

A Corinthian spirit suffused the inaugural Perini Cup in 2004. At each succeeding Cup, owners have upped

metres apart, and the blood flows and the testosterone charges, you can't put a monetary value on that. This is about emotional capital.”

The Perini brand sprang from the dreams of Fabio Perini, 75, an Italian designer and engineer. He wanted to create for himself a vessel that wrapped the elegance of a yacht with the control, space, comfort and privacy of a motor boat. After years of fruitlessly consulting yacht designers and shipyards, Perini decided to design and build a yacht of his own invention. Taking a large axe to crew numbers, he introduced ingenious mechanical ideas lifted from his day job making machines that roll tissue paper. It may come as a surprise to owners of Perinis to learn that the high-precision labour-saving technology that animates their multi-million Euro superyachts

Purists dismissed Elettra, the debut Perini, as a joke that reduced sailing to a matter of pushing buttons. Others, however, glimpsed a vision of ‘armchair’ yachting that was both luxurious and thrilling. Perceptions have since shifted in favour of Perini. Far-sighted owners have turned to Perini, bringing with them celebrated yacht designers like Ron Holland and Philippe Briand. Today, a Perini is sufficient to elate and satisfy the most excessive vanity, being synonymous with eye-catching elegance, outrageous ambition, daring imagination, sporting prowess, ego-gratification and technological savvy.

“Perini is one of those Italian accidents,” says Carlo Traglio, whose jewellery brand Vhernier sponsors the Perini Cup. “I'm not saying they are the best yachts, but they are crazy! Fabio

their games. This year, eight full-time professional sailors took part. Joey Kaempfer, owner of Roseheartly (56m), which Rupert Murdoch recently sold with its Christian Liaigre interior, hired Chris Draper, the Olympic medallist; Paul Cayard, the America's Cup yachtsman; and ‘Juggy’ Clougher, a Sydney-Hobart race winner. The competitive spirit extends beyond the racing. A sidebar contest to the main regatta is the Cocktail Competition in which each yacht produces its own cocktail to be judged. The owner of Jasali II flew in a barman from the Ritz Hotel.

Superyacht racing is now the rage among Have Yachts. It began with the Nantucket Bucket in 1986, then the St Barths Bucket in 1995 and the Loro Piana Superyacht Regatta in 2008. Meanwhile, superyacht design evolved

The first Perini – The Elettra



“The sea filled the dining room windows”

to accentuate performance and sailing prowess as well as comfort. Colour swatches and soft furnishings gave way to considerations of winch-power, anchor weight, water ballast and so on.

Day Two. Boarding the 88-metre Maltese Falcon, I stepped into a world defined by soothing wide-radius arcs and cambers, costly hallmarks of the Have Yacht aesthetic. The Maltese Falcon renders that aesthetic on a massive scale. To look up from the foot of one of her 58-metre masts is like peering up at a skyscraper. When the Falcon heels, the world seems to tilt from its axis in genuflection.

Mr Li Jian, CEO of Seven Star Bay marina in Shenzhen, had chartered the Falcon for the regatta. Mr Li' was a Perini Cup virgin until he was invited aboard Helios (45m, 2007) during the 2013 Perini Cup. This year, smitten, he went for glory and took the Falcon for a week. High season charter rate: Euros 385,000 per week, excluding extras and tips. He probably funded it from the back of his sofa.

China is the Holy Grail of the yacht industry, more so since sanctions on Russia and the low oil price have

effectively frozen out the oligarchs. Designers, shipyards and brokers have been beating at the door of China for years, but, for complex reasons, the Chinese have barely responded. “It will be a long process to get the permissions from the Chinese government to build marinas and yacht clubs,” says Li. “They are willing but it will take years. The biggest challenges are limitations of understanding and cultural differences.”



Perini Cup Regatta Racing

“Our market is very Euro-centric,” says Burak Akgül. “The US has not yet produced the interest that one might expect, despite the strong dollar. Other US-dollar-driven markets, like in Asia, are not really producing the interest that we may have imagined, but they are producing interest.”

The regatta closed with a storming

If there is one thing more fascinating than a Perini, it is the owner of a Perini.

finish. The first three boats crossed the line within two minutes of each other. One guest aboard Rosehearty breathlessly described how, “The sea filled the dining room windows,” as the crew pushed her to her tipping point.

If there is one thing more fascinating than a Perini, it is the owner of a Perini. Though all were publicity shy, I met Bertram Rickmers, the German shipping magnate; a Belgian food tycoon; Ennio Doris, founder and CEO of Mediolanum SpA, the Italian financial group; and Joey Kaempfer, founder of McArthurGlen, the creator and designer of designer outlet malls.

As the fleet dispersed, thoughts were already keeling towards next year's superyacht regatta season. “We are booking flights, villas and restaurants for the St Barths Bucket in March,” said David Evans, captain of Clan VIII which took second place. “More fun beckons early next year!” ♦

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Jefferies

THE GOLDSMITH OF BELGRAVIA

WORDS BY SARAH EDWORTHY

Like the dangerously beautiful Sirens of mythology who lured sailors towards their rocks, the enchanting pieces in the window of De Vroomen at 59 Elizabeth Street mesmerise with their boldness. A striking mandarin garnet domed ring. A vivid madeira citrine and enamel bangle. A necklace of large, flat, sea-green tourmalines – all subtly different in shade and shape – set in gold. Each exquisitely crafted item emits a powerful force-field of desirability.

“People who come to me want to make a statement,” says Leo de Vroomen, who this year marks his 50th year in London, and his 13th in Belgravia.

“They love the presence of a piece of jewellery; they’re not people who say ‘look at how my diamond sparkles.’ They buy the jewellery and then they buy the clothes to show off the jewellery. If you wear a beautiful necklace, you let it do the talking. A piece of jewellery will last 100 years, whereas a dress is subject to fashion.”

De Vroomen started honing his personal style of jewellery in the 1960s and his passion has not dimmed. “Feel the metal – soft, wonderful!” he says, showing me a magnificent gold bangle created with the ancient technique of repoussé.

The process of shaping metal by delicate hammering from the reverse side is something that he and his wife Ginnie have made a trademark.

“I have a collection of gemstones,” he continues, pulling out a tray. “I buy a stone because I fall in love with a stone. I don’t necessarily know what I’m going to make with it, but it talks to me. See, this could make a beautiful pin. Or someone might want it as a pendant. Look at the amazing colours in this citrine.”

Clients can invest in a ring or necklace, brooch or bangle, from the collection or collaborate in the design process. “I might show a client a special tourmaline and they’ll say it would be great in a ring. I’d ask if they’d like heavy gold or minimal,

and then we start designing. They sit with me and look at the drawing; it becomes their personal piece of jewellery.

“That’s what I am about: to get women to think about jewellery in a more creative way. The word value comes into jewellery a lot and it is always about the materials – the intrinsic value of the piece.

his workshop, doing a bit of soldering, putting bits of metal through the rolling mills. He could see I loved it and asked if I’d like an apprenticeship with one of his suppliers. That’s how it started. I did three-years training and I was lucky. The manufacturer saw that I had some talent and put me with their top craftsman so

I learnt hand skills for making individual pieces as well as machinery techniques for mass production.”

After National Service and a year in Switzerland to learn German, Leo came to London to add English to his repertoire. It was the Swinging Sixties and he, again through luck, found himself working alongside David Thomas, a contemporary jeweller, who got him a teaching job at the Central School of Arts and Crafts.

“This is the most important element of the De Vroomen story,” he smiles. “I was helping a student who wanted to make a bangle in silver in a beautiful, organic shape. The tutors and I all discussed how she could make this. Model it in wax and cast it? ‘No,’ I argued. ‘It will be a horrible, heavy lump of metal.’ I had been working with David on repoussé, so I helped this student experiment. In the process, repoussé became my obsession as well. Between the two of us, we made this amazing bangle. How do I have this

bangle here? I married the student!”

Leo and Ginnie’s complementary styles – his clean, architectural shapes and her softer, organic vision – resulted in collections sold to retailers and galleries around the world, including Tiffany & Co, Bergdorf Goodman and Asprey’s, and won them accolades galore. In 1974 and 1986, they were awarded the prestigious Diamonds International Award; in 1991, an exhibition at Goldsmiths’ Hall recognised the De Vroomen style.

Fifty years on, De Vroomen has a legion of regular clients – and still those windows in Elizabeth Street call out to the as yet uninitiated. ♦

devroomen.co.uk



Leo de Vroomen behind the Macdonald Bar at Boisdale of Belgravia – pouring a pint of Guinness into a handcrafted sterling silver pint pot.

Well, the intrinsic value of this bangle is that it weighs 50g and you can look at the price of gold and work out its ‘value’, but it also has design, craftsmanship, personality, all those other things that a gram of gold doesn’t have.”

Leo was born in the Netherlands and discovered jewellery making through happenstance. “I was not a great scholar but loved making things with my hands. One weekend I went to The Hague with a friend to visit his uncle who was a jeweller. We were let loose in

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THE BIG RUGBY LUNCH

On September 29, Boisdale Life invited a team of rugby greats to lunch – under the pre-text of discussing the impending Australia vs. England pool game. Guests included 1991 World Cup winning captain of Australia, Nick Farr-Jones; the All Blacks drop-kicking legend and 1987 World Cup winner Zinzan Brooke; former France 7's and Wasps flanker Florent Rossignaux; Scotland and Melrose fly-half Craig Chalmers and last but not least Scotland and Quins scrum-half Hugh McHardy.

WORDS BY HARRY OWEN
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF BOISDALE MEDIA

I make no apologies for being slightly self-indulgent here. My business partner and editor of Boisdale Life, Ranald Macdonald ensures his passions are reflected in the contents of the magazine – from jazz, to cigars and whisky. So as a long-time resident of Twickenham and avid rugby fan, I took the opportunity mid-Rugby World Cup to follow his example and host a Big Rugby Lunch at Boisdale of Belgravia.

As you read this, New Zealand have won the Rugby World Cup and of course hindsight is a wonderful thing. Hence the opening remark on the imminent England game from Nick Farr-Jones, who brilliantly analysed that “England are going to dominate Australia in the scrum”. Well we all know how that turned out.

Our gathering was born out of various conversations in Twickenham's West Car Park (sadly missing-in-action during World Cup year), where I was lucky enough to meet Eden Park clothing Ambassador, Florent Rossignaux. Some

begins telling me about the corporate outings he's been involved in throughout the World Cup and its build up.

Needless to say every four years, great players like Zinzan are asked to commentate, host lunches and dinners and generally amuse us mere mortals with tales from various rugby tours. He explains what isn't quite such fun are the FIGJAMS – perhaps sensing I'm about to become one. For those who don't know, a FIGJAM is rugby code for “Fuck I'm Good, Just Ask Me” – a term used between fellow professionals to notify each other of their presence at events. Although in this case I'm the only potential FIGJAM in the room! I duly shut-up about my exploits for the 3rd XV on the pitches of Wellington College and let the (sometimes heated) rugby debate flow.

Conversation begins with family and the future generations of rugby players, Zinzan or Zinny as he is known, Nick and Craig Chalmers have 14 children between them – Craig's second son Ben



Florent Rossignaux and Zinzan Brooke on the terrace of Boisdale of Belgravia



Craig Chalmers and Nick Farr-Jones

complete sense for all gathered to order the haggis starter. Hugh McHardy offered to do the toast that swiftly developed into a spontaneous rendition of O Flower of Scotland. A hearty song in the midst of a busy restaurant followed, with plenty of “and stood against him... against WHO!” Leading Ranald Macdonald to observe, “I was remarkably impressed a Frenchman, Australian and New Zealander insisted on singing all three verses of O Flower of Scotland... I was less impressed by the quality of their singing!”

Noggins of Glenfiddich finished, we turn our attention to the meat of the conversation – the rugby – for which this group by and large, were pioneers of the professional game. I began by asking Nick whom he had enjoyed playing with, “I was lucky to play with some greats and look, if I had to name names they would include Mark Ella, Andrew Slack, Michael Lynagh and I was fortunate enough to play with David Campese who arguably won us that RWC in 1991 – we were lucky to play in a great era.” Nick adds, “South Africa disappeared in about the early 1980s because of apartheid and



Post lunch selfie with Zinzan Brooke

plays for Bordeaux and he believes that in the context of the modern game his son “knows far more about rugby than I do!” Nick Farr-Jones proudly shows a picture of his two daughters aged 24 and 22. Cue Zinny, “Your wife is clearly stunning!” Appropriately the topic of family brings us firmly into Boisdale territory, with Nick explaining his grandfather was a Burns, “He was a great mentor to me, a real athlete and so much so, that after my first ever test in Murrayfield in '84, I wore a kilt to the after-match dinner that night. We Aussies have mixed backgrounds.” It therefore made

I just missed out on the professional rugby era – I was the last of the lucky ones!

may know Florent better for owning the Red Room, a bastion of pre and post-match drinking that used to exist in Richmond... but more of that later.

So it is, in the midst of these convivial, if somewhat disorganised rugby relationships that results in my explaining to Zinzan Brooke, just why it is he has ended up in Boisdale of Belgravia. Fortunately we had some common ground, with his son having just started boarding at my former school, Wellington College. I'm on the cusp of regaling him about my own time at Wellington when Zinzan promptly

we had to fill that void for New Zealand – South Africa was always their great rival. So we stepped up to the plate and had an aligning of the stars, which meant we could compete aggressively with them until the end of the 1990's, Zinzan and I crossed a bit then.”

Zinzan recalled, “It was the Super 6's, then Super 10's, 12's and now 15's that filled the void and really nurtured and helped Australia – 1992 was the turning point when you had Auckland, Canterbury, Wellington, Fiji and from Australian, Queensland and New South Wales. Super 6's launched my career at 21 and got me into the All Blacks. I scored four tries against Fiji at Eden Park and was meant to play Canterbury that weekend – then Mike Brewer pulled his groin and I suddenly found myself in the World Cup squad!” Nick had a similar introduction mostly playing football at Sydney University in the early 1980's before being spotted and asked to try his hand at rugby. “In '83 the year before I

We sponsor France, Ireland, England and Italy for formal suits, and we provide Romania, Georgia, Fiji, Japan and Canada with chinos and blazers. We are individually dressing about 60 to 70 members of squad and backroom staff.” As it turns out modern rugby requires an enormous amount of fabric – Eden Park uses around five rugby pitches of fabric to kit out the nine teams they are supporting at this year's RWC!

Attention turns back to the games at hand, leading Nick to reflect on how relationships on the field might look off it, “Coach and captain is critical – it's like CEO and Chairman. Personally I think Michael Cheika (Australia coach) and Stephen Moore (captain and hooker) are very good! Steve Hansen (New Zealand Coach) Richie McCaw (captain and flanker) is solid – they are more like father and son.” Nick adds, “Cheika will squeeze the Wallaby lemon, it's just whether that lemon has enough drops in it! England has a better scrum than

the dark horses.” Zinzan Brooke picks New Zealand, “All Aussies really just want to be Kiwis!” So it leaves me to congratulate Richie McCaw and New Zealand for winning the 2015 Rugby World Cup. Half the fun of following any sport is the debate, discussion, banter, opinions, predictions and ultimately the bragging rights. Lunch had all of that in spades and it was a privilege to spend time with five great characters of the game. I think I even managed not to become a FIGJAM. Roll on the Big Boisdale 6 Nations Rugby Lunch! ♦

For interest the Big Rugby Lunch included: 9x Haggis Neaps & Tatties accompanied by a noggin of Glenfiddich 15yr old, plus 5x 9oz Rib Eye Steaks, 3x Lobster Ravioli and 1x Poached Salmon, all washed down with Boisdale House Claret and Asahi.

Fuck that, 50 points mate,
the game was over!

played my first test, I was playing second division for Sydney University. I grew up playing soccer; it's not like New Zealand! In fact I only saw my first live rugby game in 1983 at Sydney Cricket ground, Australia v Argentina. I just missed out on the professional rugby era – I was the last of the lucky ones!”

Indeed all the ex-professionals around the table have forged successful careers outside of rugby. Craig Chalmers made the transition from playing to coaching and now works for two major security companies. Hugh McHardy, or Huge Bacardi, as he is affectionately known owns Huge Events, a company specialising in unique corporate hospitality experiences. Zinzan is CEO of Number8 Group, specialising in providing skilled construction labour to major projects. Nick, as well as being Chairman of the New South Wales Rugby Board, is also a Director of Taurus Fund Management. After coaching, Florent had great fun being a restaurateur in Richmond before the pink bow-tie of Eden Park came calling. Florent explains, “There are some challenges to making bespoke suits for over-muscled physiques! For example, England have a very nice V shape whereas the Welsh have much bigger backs and shoulders – they are all hitting the deltoid machines!

Australia and I was in Marseille in 2007 – let's just say it began and finished there” (A reference to the RCW quarter finals where England dominated Australia at the scrum and in the breakdown).

“Zinny have you had a good look at our scrum?” prompts Nick. Zinny of course has had a good look at the scrum, “Mario Ledesma has completely sorted that out”. The renowned former Argentina hooker had definitely sorted the scrum out for the England game – with David Pocock and Michael Hooper particularly playing their part. Craig Chalmers has a different take on Australia, “Cheika is going to play the same game he did with the Waratahs – it's just wide, wide – get Israel Folau with the ball one-on-one”. Zinny is as ever quick with a retort, “Do you not think Lancaster and Farrell have had a look at that Craig!? They will just put a man on it and shut him down.” This leads to a fairly heated debate on New Zealand's performance against Namibia with Craig advocating there was perhaps more in the tank. Zinny's response: “Fuck that, 50 points mate, the game was over!”

So as lunch comes to an end we moved to the big question, who will win the RWC 2015? Nick Farr Jones nominates New Zealand. Florent Rossignaux opts for France or Ireland. Craig Chalmers thought “Ireland are

EDEN PARK



EDEN PARK was launched in 1987 and is best known for its menswear collection. Founding President, Franck Mesnel, chose the company's distinctive name in memory of the first ever Rugby World Cup final (in which he took part), at the Eden Park Stadium in Auckland.

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LIFESTYLE

THE AMBASSADOR

All modern day luxury brands require one key employee – an individual who champions the product and basically lives and breathes the brand – they fulfil the all-important role of Brand Ambassador! Often distinctive in their style and forthright in their views, Boisdale Life each month will ask The Ambassador to shed some light on this unique responsibility. Our first candidate is The Balvenie Whisky Ambassador, James Buntin.



Fan of cheese and handmade suits - James Buntin, Balvenie Whisky Ambassador

Let's get it out of the way... what's your favourite Whisky – your answer cannot include the word Balvenie!

Memories and sentimentality are two things that are hugely connected when it comes to whisky and for that reason I would have to say Glenfarclas 25 year old, as that was the last whisky I had with my Father before he passed away.

Where is home and work?

During my career as a whisky ambassador I have lived in many countries and some amazing places but for the moment I'm hanging my hat in the vibrancy that is Notting Hill – much of my time is spent travelling, with frequent visits to the distillery in Dufftown, a burgh in Moray, Scotland.

Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner – where do you like to eat?

If you like to start your day with a big fry up, the best breakfast in London has to be Mikes Cafe in Notting Hill. La Fromagerie in Marylebone is my favourite for lunch, where the menu changes weekly. The food is always fresh and tasty – they also have a great shop with a massive selection of cheese. I enjoy a good steak at Gauchos, you will often find me in the Tower Bridge restaurant, the staff are excellent and it's simply just

a really nice place to have dinner.

(Editor's Note – I guess we deserved that for not letting you mention Balvenie!)

Food pairings play a big part in The Balvenie – what cheeses should we all be buying?

If you know me, you will know that I like nothing better than pairing the Balvenie with different types of food, and cheese matching is one of my greatest passions. Matching works the best with really good-quality cheeses, so as a rule cheeses that have been handcrafted – my current favourites include the Ticklemore from Totnes, Devon accompanied by the Balvenie 12 yr Doublewood and an Idiazabal from Navarre in Spain, its unpasteurised ewe's milk from the Latxa breed indigenous to the mountain – great with Balvenie 17 yr Doublewood.

What other luxury goods brands do you admire?

That's a really good question... what is luxury? I admire any brand that has the heritage and conviction to produce goods that have been handcrafted by passing down knowledge and craftsmanship and thus keeping traditions alive. Someone once said to me that when you create something by hand you not only put blood, sweat and

tears into it, you also add a heartbeat.

James you are always impeccably dressed, where are the suits from?

I do try to my best (!) therefore I like Scottish handmade suits from Walker & Slater and anything from Harris Tweed.

Do you prefer to be the host or the guest?

Got to be the host, as I love nothing more than taking people on a journey through different experiences!

What's the best party you've been to this year?

This is a difficult question and so hard to choose but I have to say the events that stood out for me this year would be the Balvenie Shooting Cup with Boisdale and the Cigar Smoker of the Year with Arnold Schwarzenegger.

What's your most extravagant purchase?

A very, very rare bottle of single malt whisky which cost me just shy of £2,000 – I am very happy to say is no longer with us thanks to an evening with some very good friends.

Finally, what's the biggest perk of the job?

Easy, having unlimited access to casks of the finest and oldest single malt whiskies in the world. ♦

SMOKIN' HOT!

WORDS BY NICK HAMMOND
CELEBRATED BON VIVEUR AND SPECTATOR
CIGAR WRITER OF THE YEAR 2013

Autumn cigars are a pleasure unalloyed. Woodsmoke, leaf mould and the hint of melancholy in the air, all lend a helping hand to both palate and pondering at this time of the year. Recent forays to Europe

have allowed me the chance to sample new cigars to the market, while favorite London haunts have resurfaced some old friends.

I hope the below gives all you cigar-incentivized some food for thought!

The 100 point scoring system explained:

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15 points for construction

10 points for combustion

60 points for flavour and finish

5 points for value for money

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THE REAWAKENING

2016

Davidoff Escurio Petit Robusto

NB - 3 ¼ ins x 50 Ring Gauge
RRP TBC

I smoked this one at the racecourse in Dortmund, Germany, at the European launch of the latest Davidoff line. It's described as a mix of sweet and spice, with Brazilian Cubra and Mata Fina leaves amongst the blend but it starts with a strange, musty flavor. It soon mellows into another excellent short smoke to rival the recent Davidoff Nicaragua Short Corona, with tons of smoke and flavor and a clean, white ash. It could become a classic.

TOTAL PTS **90**

Dunhill Heritage Toro, NB - 5 ins x 50 Ring Gauge

RRP around £17

Another newbie worth checking out from Dunhill. After the bankable success of the 1907, this is another strong performer, with a sweet and sour edge that's hard to put a finger on, but tasty nonetheless.

TOTAL PTS **88**

Partagas Maduro

NB - 5 1/8 ins x 52 Ring Gauge
RRP around £19

An interesting smoke this, with an old favorite marque cloaked in dark Maduro wrapper leaf. It smokes very well, with smooth and elegant flavors, but still feels like many of its secrets have yet to reveal themselves.

TOTAL PTS **89**

Montecristo Edmundo

NB - 5 1/3 ins x 52 Ring Gauge
RRP around £18

Aah, the heartwarming Edmundo. I don't think I've met a serious cigar man who doesn't love these. A great, great size in the hand and the familiar woody tang of good Montecristo leaf was abundant from this specimen smoked beside the sea in Dorset. A must stock in the humidor.

TOTAL PTS **92**

Por Larranaga Sobrasalientes

NB - 6 ins x 53 Ring Gauge

RRP around £22

This buttery smoke from last year's UK Regional Edition program smokes easily with a light body and creamy flavors. If it's this good now, I can't help wondering what it will be like in say, a further two or three years. If you have a box, hide them away.

TOTAL PTS **90**

Ashton Symmetry Robusto

NB - 5 ins x 50 Ring Gauge,

RRP TBC

I was gifted this cigar at the InterTabac trade show in Dortmund as I passed the Ashton booth and have since had the chance to smoke a couple more. The powers that be are very pleased with it – so am I, with some reservations. It's immensely accessible with its medium body and flavor and it's a good, satisfying stick. It won't rock your world but it will make a very good accompaniment to whatever leisure pursuit does.

TOTAL PTS **87**

Punch Punch

NB - 5/8 ins x 46 Ring Gauge

RRP £17

I always seemed to have draw issues with these in the past, so they were never a staple in the Hammond repertoire. I'm pleased to say that my hazy memories have been shoved clean out of mind with this excellent example of Cuban artanship at its best. The cigar accompanied a boat ride along the Loire River and as water slipped languidly by, it issued mellow notes of spicy, full-flavored delight.

TOTAL PTS **91**

Joya de Nicaragua

Cuatro Cinco Toro Extra

NB - 6 ins x 54 Ring Gauge,

RRP TBA

Juan Martinez of Joya slipped this one to me as I interviewed his father, Dr Cuenca, for a fascinating take on vintage New World tobacco. The Cuatro Cinco hasn't found its way to these shores yet, but it should be because it's very good. Joya are renowned for hard-hitting, spicy Nicaraguan sticks, but this is a straight bat medium with a ton of flavor. I would be interested to see what a year in cellophane would do to these.

TOTAL PTS **89**



GASTRONOMY ON A CLIFF

WORDS BY WILLIAM SITWELL
EDITOR OF WAITROSE FOOD MAGAZINE



Britain is on the verge of gastronomic greatness. We are teetering on the cliff of a delicious revolution. Small producers are making cheese, pies, wine and ale, farmers are breeding exquisite herds of beef cattle and restaurants are being launched daily. Chefs descend on London from around the world to learn at the stoves of our great cooks. The well-watched TV shows all involve food and the internet is rammed with food bloggers and

No beast or fish, no vegetable or herb should be raised then slaughtered to simply be placed into a thimble.

foodie instagrammers. Frankly we are pretty close on this one. But a few things are holding our nation back from being a country of fully-fledge culinary glory. And I know what those things are. Fix them and the world is our oyster.

alicemacdonaldillustration.co.uk

TASTING MENUS

These should be shunned. One can't ban these things – we can't even ban sugary, obesity-inducing kids' drinks – so consumers should refuse them. They deter from what is at the heart of good food: simplicity. Tasting menus are too long, there's not enough of each dish either – so you find yourself in the strange position of feeling full but not sated. You have tasted and eaten but have not truly dined. No beast or fish, no vegetable or herb should be raised then slaughtered to simply be placed into a thimble. And the more dishes you eat, the less you remember. Tasting menus tend to be more about a chef's desires to show off than anything else. So dismiss them as you would already: square plates, slate plates, wooden chopping boards, cloth caps and urinals (all of which have been used to serve food in but not serve the cause of British food culture.)

ARE YOU A SHAVEN-HEADED FACE OF VISION EXPRESS?

If you are: then that's terrific. You are a hero and you have helped make British food famous. Your snail porridge is wonderful; your recreated dishes from British history are a delicious triumph. Your restaurant The Fat Duck is a revelation, your restaurant Dinner is fabulous and your Meat Fruit starter an example of how your partnership with chef Ashley Palmer Watts and his months of experimentation in your food lab in Bray is a triumph. But if your name is not Heston Blumenthal do not try to be clever with powders, do not experiment with dragee pans, gellan LT11 or rotavapours, do not attempt to

lightly dust eight lobsters with Activa RM, vacuum pack them and place them in a 60C water bath. Do not attempt to mix salt with chocolate or caramel; do not sprinkle popcorn over scallops. And especially do not try to do this if

you are the chef of a small country pub whose locals dream of nothing more than watery ale, pork scratchings and sausages and mash.

MASTER THE BASICS

I had lunch in a pub in London's Baron's Court recently: a fancy place, quite quirky décor and a nice looking menu on a blackboard. My pal and I ordered saffron risotto and a pork sandwich. The risotto was a dreadful instantly heated concoction with a gloopy sauce around the edges – the rice hadn't taken on the stock and was undercooked. The pork was in two triangles of the cheapest bread, toasted and a little soggy in the middle. It shamed the concept of British food culture. Risotto may be Italian, but a chef in this country should know how to make a good one, slowly stirring, working in the stock, letting the rice take on that perfect consistency. There is no excuse for using cheaply bought, pre-sliced sandwich bread. Those two dishes could have been utterly wonderful. But chef clearly hadn't learned, or couldn't be bothered to administer, the basics. There is only one thing worse than bad fancy food and that's bad simple food.

Do not sprinkle popcorn over scallops.

TURN OFF THE TELLY

And the laptop, the phone and the tablet – unless you're using it to cook a recipe. How many people say they don't have time to cook? Don't blame bad chefs for a sagging food culture. If you're watching TV, a box set or YouTube clips, try powering down and then start kneading some dough. Really, watching Breaking Bad might tickle your emotions but making bread could change your life. It will also taste great and strengthen your forearms and wrists. Then go a step further, get some starter dough, some yeasty culture, then before you know it, you have food culture in your very own home. Above all, make time to cook.

SHAVE

There's a lot of bearded nonsense going around at the moment. And a lot of aficionados of beards don't just not shave. They nurture these facial manes, they condition their hairiness and they brush it. Then comb and clean it and

check there are no lost woodcocks in there. But the problem is, this all takes time. Mighty fine beards actually take up more time maintaining than a simple daily shave. And as a great deal of people with these new thick beards are working in the food industry – be it chefs or managers

red. Next time you see a sommelier ask him or her, what their role in the post apocalypse camp would be? If they say they've got a great wine cellar then that's fine. Wine is confusing enough without having to talk to a man with a bunch of silver grapes on his lapel about terroir.

There's a lot of bearded nonsense going around at the moment.

– that time is eating into the time they should be spending in good food study. So having switched off the TV be rid of the beard and then start kneading.

BE FREE OF GLUTEN FREE

Of course I am completely appreciative of the needs of coeliacs and others with serious intolerances, but the gluten free badge has now been grabbed by too many who – quite frankly – could do with a good dose of cheap and heavy wheat-based flour. And as gluten-free produce has gone from a cult product for uber-health fanatics to mainstream so its core meaning becomes lost. Given the constraints of large-scale supply too many gluten free products are now swimming in just the sorts of substances that those who buy gluten-free products are hoping to avoid. Journalist Joanna Blythman recently surveyed a number of gluten-free breads and found the likes of E464 hydroxypropyl methylcellulose (a treated wood pulp used in cement) and E415 xanthan gum (a gluey substance developed to soak up the residue from drilling oil) among others on the list of ingredients. So while it may be gluten-free, to make it gluten-free it might have rather more scary ingredients. None of which help to create a simple, warm and genuine food culture.

SEE A SOMMELIER? KILL HIM!

Easy one this. But with just a few exceptions, sommeliers are not really necessary. They just know way too much and when they are talking about wine you just end up doing far too many nods. It would be like going to the garage to get your car fixed and in addition to the mechanic there's another guy who steps out and starts talking gobbledegook about crankshaft position sensors, front gross axle weights or sequential fuel injection. You want your car to stop doing that weird hum, and you want a nice glass of dry white, and then a meaty

EAT AT MEAL TIMES

That means breakfast, lunch, a spot of tea and dinner, in that order at 8, 1, 5 and 8. Anything else and you slide into lazy brunchy type idleness where avocados are thrown about willy nilly. Proper meals at proper times enables cooks to serve proper food and for you to eat appropriate portions, without the need for snacking and along with the idea that you eat more in the morning and less at night. A good food culture needs a structured timetable of food events. That way your body can digest good food, you exercise appropriately, and we can happily wolf down tasty local and seasonal dishes, converse with other and strive towards world peace (and global food domination).◆



William Sitwell is a writer, presenter, Masterchef judge and editor of Waitrose Kitchen magazine. His first book, "A History of Food in 100 Recipes" was published by Harper Collins in 2012.

@WilliamSitwell

BERONIA.
THE LAND BEFORE RIOJA.

COMPETITION



Bodegas Beronia is quintessentially Rioja. Its wines are defined by the region and the soils in which the vines are grown, and its name is linked to the history of the area. During the 3rd Century BC, what is known today as La Rioja Alta, was inhabited by the 'Berones', a Celtic tribe who called the area Beronia. Bodegas Beronia was founded 40 years ago by a Gastronomic Society, known locally as a Txoko (pronounced chock-oh).

Win a mixed case of 12 Beronia wines

All the wines in this case have received awards from the international wine and spirit competition and international wine challenge

To enter the competition just answer the question below:

What is the Spanish name given to the gastronomic societies of Northern Spain?

Email your answer to social@boisdale.co.uk or enter via www.facebook.com/BoisdaleRestaurants

The mixed case of wine includes 4 bottles of each of the award winning Beronia wines below:

Beronia Crianza 2010 IWSC Silver medal

Beronia Reserva 2009 IWC Gold medal

Beronia Gran Reserva 2006 IWSC Gold medal & Rioja trophy winner

 Beronia Txoko UK

 @BeroniaTxoko



Terms & Conditions: To enter this competition you must be 18 years old or over at the time of entry. Competitions are not open to employees (or members of their immediate families) of Boisdale or Beronia (or any subsidiary). No purchase necessary. Only one entry per person. You may enter via Facebook on the applicable competition page, or email your answer to social@boisdale.co.uk. No responsibility can be accepted for entries that are lost or delayed in which are not received for any reason. The judges' decision will be final, and no correspondence will be entered into. By entering the competition you agree to receive further information from Boisdale and Beronia. The prize is non-transferable or exchangeable for cash or any other prize. Should the advertised prize become unavailable, we reserve the right to offer an alternative prize of equal or greater value. Incorrectly completed entries will be disqualified.

THE MASTER OF WOOD

We ask Stuart MacPherson, the Macallan Master of Wood, what exactly the role entails?



Let's begin with the obvious – what is the roll of a Master of Wood and how did you become one?

I oversee the supply and management of The Macallan's casks, I was appointed the title back in 2012. Before The Macallan, I was working with the Clyde Cooperage group in Glasgow where I started my apprenticeship as a cooper in 1979 – I stayed with the group until 2012 and during this period I latterly became our cooperage manager. I split my time between Scotland and Spain. Even though The Macallan is distilled and matured in Scotland, our new casks come in from Spain.

Describe the different woods you source for your casks?

The Macallan uses European and American oak, seasoned with sherry, which gives that whisky its distinctive flavour profile. We only use European and American oak in the production of our casks. The Macallan has invested a considerable amount of money into their wood program and continues to do so annually.

Where does your search for wood take you?

The oak grown in Spain have a more open grain with high tannin content, which imparts the flavours we seek in shaping the character of The Macallan. The process from acorn to bottle starts

in the oak forests of northern Spain where we fell the trees, saw and air-dry the oak staves before shipping the staves to the south for further air-drying to reduce the moisture still further. The casks are built by the coopers of Tevasa cooperage in Jerez de la Frontera and then seasoned with dry oloroso in one of the sherry bodegas of Jerez. We also source oak from America which is felled and shipped to Spain to follow the same seasoning process.

What range of different previously conditioned casks do you buy for The Macallan?

The Fine Oak range is bottled from a triple cask combination of European oak sherry casks, American oak sherry casks and American oak, seasoned with premium bourbon whiskey, giving a more complex style. The American oak bourbon casks are imported from premium bourbon whiskey distillers and filled with The Macallan "new make" spirit in Scotland.

People in the trade talk of the cask being 60% of the flavours and complexity of a malt whisky – what would you guess is generally the percentage contribution of the cask in terms of flavours to the final bottled product?

The majority of the flavors and characteristics of whisky are picked up by the casks in which they are matured.

The influence of wood accounts for up to 80% of the final flavor making it the singularly the most significant factor in shaping the character. For this reason alone, wood is vital.

Are you still learning?

You're always learning, always focused on a certain aspect or role but generally speaking you could be in the industry all your days and not know everything.

Name your favourite whisky experience?

For me it's about enjoying a drink in good company. There is nothing better than sitting in a bar in Jerez (Cádiz) Spain with our suppliers who have crafted the casks that create The Macallan and appreciate the part they played in the life of the whisky – from the beginning to the end. It's truly a full circle experience.

What does the future hold for the casks of The Macallan?

The Macallan's oak maturation casks are the single greatest contributor to the outstanding quality, natural colours and distinctive aromas and flavours of The Macallan. To ensure the future of The Macallan we will continue to uphold and invest in this robust wood policy.◆



Stuart MacPherson, The Macallan Master of Wood.

themacallan.com
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your journey

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A CASE FOR GERMAN WINE

A recent visit to Germany's extraordinary wine country persuaded Charlie Miller that it's no place for vertigo sufferers

WORDS BY CHARLIE MILLER, JUSTERINI & BROOKS



A breath-taking view of the German vineyards.

As you stand at the Sundial (Sonnenuhr) on Fritz Haag's Braunberger Juffer vineyard, with the Mosel River immediately at its foot, you suddenly appreciate the extraordinary lengths to which winemakers will go to practice their craft. The vines are planted, teetering in many cases, on inclines of 60-70%, while the loose broken slate top soil adds to the treacherous feel of the footing. These vines are all tended and harvested by hand, both because machines struggle to cope but also because the grape selections are so precise as to require 5 or 6 visits by the pickers over numerous weeks of the harvest season – each time taking only the grapes in the ideal stage of ripeness to fulfil the requirements of a particular cru. And it seemed to me that these pickers, who return year after year, need to have nerves of steel, as well as great understanding of the vines, to do this job. Either that or a strong rope to stop them ending up in the river below.

German wine making is at once extremely simple – the whites are almost all from the Riesling grape, and complicated, with the same vineyard being harvested numerous times at various stages of ripeness to achieve different styles of wine – Trocken

(dry), Kabinett, Spätlese, Auslese (increasing sugar levels whilst retaining freshness), and on to Beerenauslese, Trockenbeerenauslese, and Eiswein (by which point the berries have shrivelled to raisins and the juice is more like honey). Get beyond the terminology however and you open up a world of the most thrilling wines, wines that are still underappreciated in the UK but can match so effortlessly different occasions and food pairings. Take for instance the dry (trocken) wines of Emrich Schönleber in the warmer Nahe, a tributary to the South of the Rhine. Those fractionally warmer conditions bring a tropical fruit character to a Riesling that starts and finishes bone dry, fresh, and mineral. Try this with shellfish, or oyster, it is stunning. Alternatively try a Spätlese such as that of Hanno Zilliken in the cooler Saar valley. This is picked later, when sugar levels are higher, and the finished wine has low alcohol at 7.5% abv, making it a lunchtime winner. That residual sugar brings a richer, fuller expression to the wine, whilst still possessing the steely, crisp poise of cooler climate winemaking.

German wine has had its perception problems over the years, perhaps because of the complicated terminology, perhaps

because of distant memories of cloyingly sweet Liebfraumilch that predominated in the 1970s. Perhaps memories go back still further, and I was surprised how often the war was mentioned by the vigneron themselves. It seems that everyone suffered from the conflagration of 1945; Zilliken's medieval cellars were destroyed when the Allies knocked out the Saar bridge; American officers pushing into Germany set up HQ at von Schubert's former monastery and developed a taste for his wines, although of all people it was the French who really ransacked and made off with all the historic vintages; and we discovered that there are no bridges over the Rhine itself around Geisenheim, legacy of the German army's decision to blow them up to stall the Allied advance. The move gained them a couple of days' respite but the bridges remain absent seventy years later.

Finally, don't believe that it's just Burgundy that produces world class Pinot Noir. Known locally as Spätburgunder, the vineyards of Assmannshausen on the Rhine itself are planted to nothing else, originally brought here by monks from the mighty Clos Vougeot. August Kessler is the pioneering figure who began making reds of international acclaim and his Spätburgunders carry a silky weight, texture, spice and structure that stand apart from other regions.

There is so much to discover from this rather misunderstood wine country, the sheer wealth and variety of conditions that shape the wines themselves and hard graft that goes into it. The stupendous beauty of the surroundings, with its great rivers, forests and vertiginous banks of vineyards. And a final thing, the winemakers themselves are the most welcoming, generous, and humorous that we deal with. Well worth considering if you're planning a trip! Prost! (Cheers!)◆

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KRIS ZACHWIEJA
HEAD CHEF OF BELGRAVIA

RAVIOLO OF CORNISH MONKFISH WITH HEBRIDEAN LANGOUSTINE SHELLFISH BISQUE, CONFIT TOMATOES, WILD SEA GREENS

MONKFISH MOUSSE

400g clean monkfish meat
1 slice white bread, crust removed
20ml milk to soak the bread above
2 whole eggs
10g salt
½ bunch tarragon
380ml double cream
2 lemons, zest only

LANGOUSTINES

500g large Hebridean langoustines (you could use cooked crayfish tails or even prawns as a substitute)

SHELLFISH BISQUE

1kg crab, shell on
20ml rapeseed oil
¼ tsp saffron powder
10g unsalted butter
1 large onion, peeled and chopped
50g carrots
4 cloves garlic roughly chopped
1 fennel bulb, chopped
20g tomato puree
100g tinned plum tomatoes
40ml white wine
20ml Noilly Prat
1l strong fish stock
50g galangal
20g ginger
A small handful kaffir lime leaves
2 sprigs tarragon
500ml double cream
Salt, pepper, cayenne pepper, lemon juice to taste



FOR THE MONKFISH MOUSSE

Put all the ingredients into a food processor apart from the lemon zest and double cream. Blitz together until smooth for about 2 minutes, ensuring it is kept cold at all times. With the processor on full speed slowly drizzle in the fridge-cold double cream until fully incorporated. Pass through a dram sieve to remove any lumps. Fold in the lemon zest.

Pipe 80g of the mousse onto one disc of pasta and wash its edges with a little beaten egg then position the remaining pasta disc over the top, pinching the edges together and sealing up each raviolo.

COOK THE LANGOUSTINES

Plunge the langoustines into a large pot of boiling water and simmer for 30 seconds. Remove with a slotted spoon and immediately submerge in iced water. This will prevent them from overcooking.

Visit boisdale.co.uk for the ravioli pasta recipe. If you don't have time ready-made lasagne sheets are the simple alternative to making pasta at home. You will need to cut out large 10cm discs with a pastry cutter.

FOR THE SHELLFISH BISQUE

Sweat the crab shells with the rapeseed oil then add the vegetables. Add the tomato paste, followed by butter and once the mixture starts bubbling. Deglaze with the Noilly Prat and white wine and then reduce by half.

Add the tinned tomatoes and fish stock. Bring to the boil and skim. Add the herbs and spices and cook for 30 minutes. Pass the stock through a sieve and reduce. Add cream and reduce further until achieving desired consistency. Season to taste with salt, white pepper, lemon juice and cayenne pepper. Keep warm.

TO SERVE

Poach the ravioli in salted simmering water for 3-4 minutes until the mousse and pasta have set and cooked through - the ravioli should feel firm and springy between your fingers when lightly pressed. Using a slotted spoon, place the ravioli on absorbent paper.

In a pan melt a tablespoon of butter. Once the butter starts to bubble add whole langoustines and fry for about one minute then add the warm ravioli to coat it in butter. Place the ravioli on a warm plate, spoon over the langoustine tails pouring the warm bisque over the top.

In the restaurant we garnish this dish with wild herbs or foraged sea greens.



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ANDREW DONOVAN
HEAD CHEF AT BOISDALE OF CANARY WHARF

ROAST CURRIED GROUSE

FROM SCOTLAND'S RUTHERFORD ESTATE, SPICED LENTIL & COCONUT DAHL, POPPADUM, CUCUMBER CHUTNEY

CURRY PASTE

200g galangal
200g fresh ginger peeled
100g turmeric root
300g banana shallots peeled
50g peeled garlic
2 lime leaves
4 lemongrass sticks
30ml lime juice
200g red long chilli
50ml sesame oil
50 ml soy sauce
20g toasted fennel seeds
4 star anise
4 black cardamom

DAHL

500g of red lentils
20ml of extra virgin olive oil
1 white onion, diced
1 fennel, diced
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
2 lime leaves
300ml vegetable stock
400ml coconut milk
2 star anise
2 black cardamom
200g baby spinach leaves, washed
40g curry paste
50ml to finish dahl



FOR THE CURRY PASTE

Put all the ingredients together into a food processor and blend until smooth.

GROUSE

Separate legs from the body of the grouse leaving the crown whole. Remove the wishbone from the crown. Rub both the legs and crowns with plenty of the curry paste and leave to marinate overnight.

Place the legs and the crowns in separate vacuum bags. Cook the legs in a water bath for 12 hours at 85 degrees Celsius until they are tender. Cook the crowns the same way using these parameters for 25 minutes at 60 degrees Celsius.

When both are cooked, plunge into an ice bath to cool down.

TIP: Make sure you're not overfilling the bags to ensure they cook evenly.

Panfry the crowns in a little olive oil for 3 minutes on each side, add 2 legs to the same pan and warm through for a further 1 minute.

FOR THE DAHL

Using a heavy bottom pan, add a little ghee (clarified butter) and warm until it starts to bubble. Add the vegetables, garlic and the spices, followed by the lentils.

Add the stock and simmer until tender then add coconut milk. Reduce it right down until it has a creamy base of a dahl.

At the very end add the spinach leaves, lime juice to taste and a final seasoning if required.

TO SERVE

Panfry the crown in a little olive oil for 3 minutes on each breast, add 2 legs to the same pan and warm through for a further 1 minute. Carve the breasts free from the carcass.

Place some of the dahl in the centre of each plate with both breasts and legs on top, finish with some fresh poppadums and fresh coriander.



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SAM NJUGUNA
HEAD CHEF AT BOISDALE OF BISHOPSGATE

'BLACK FACE' LAMB

MALTED PARSNIP PUREE & YOUNG TURNIPS, ROAST CUTLETS, CRISPY SLOW BRAISED SHOULDER, MINT JELLY

THE BRAISED LAMB SHOULDER

½ boneless shoulder of lamb
1 peeled white onion, roughly chopped
1 peeled carrot, roughly chopped
1 leek, roughly chopped
2 garlic cloves, chopped
4 tbs cooking oil
2 sprigs thyme
2 sprigs rosemary
1 tbs tomato puree
250ml red wine
2 litres lamb stock

THE LAMB CUTLETS

4 portions 2-bone lamb racks
Olive oil
Sea salt & freshly ground black pepper
1 sprig chopped rosemary

The Parsnip Puree designed to accompany this recipe can be found at boisdalelife.com



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FOR THE LAMB SHOULDER

Trim the lamb shoulder of any sinew and excess fat (your butcher can do it for you). Season with salt and black pepper, roll up into a cylinder shape, and then tie with a kitchen string.

Place a wide heavy based pan on high heat and add the cooking oil. When the pan is hot, quickly seal off the lamb on all sides to a good golden colour. Remove and transfer into a tray. Using the same pan, add the chopped vegetables and herbs then sweat for about 5 minutes to soften, stirring often to avoid catching and burning.

Add the tomato puree and cook for a further 2 minutes, followed by the red wine. Let the wine come to the boil and reduce down until you have a couple of tablespoons remaining. Pour in the lamb stock and allow to come to the boil (skim away any fat that rises to the top).

Return the lamb back to the pan and ensure it is submerged in the stock. You can add more stock if needed. Cover the pan partially, bring to the boil then turn down to a simmer. Continue to cook for 1 ½ hours.

TIP: You can also braise in the oven at 160

degrees for the same amount of time until the meat is very tender.

Once cooked, leave it to cool in the cooking liquor for about half an hour.

Remove the lamb from the pan, take off the string and tear the meat apart with your hands and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper if required. Strain the cooking liquor into a cooking pot and reduce on low heat until thickened to a sauce, skimming constantly.

Check and adjust seasoning. Reserve the sauce until later.

Roll out a double sheet of cling film on the kitchen counter and spoon the lamb along one end to make a log. Roll the lamb up tightly in the cling film and leave to chill for about an hour and a half.

THE LAMB CUTLETS

Heat a heavy pan on high heat, season the lamb racks with the salt and pepper and rub in the chopped rosemary. Seal all sides quickly to a golden brown. Lower the heat and carry on cooking, turning on all sides every two minutes, until all sides are done. Leave to rest in a warm place.

The Russian Mule, AS IT SHOULD BE

The *Russian Mule* is a take on the classic Moscow Mule - but only a Russian Mule is made with *Russian Standard Vodka*. A drink sensation that is too good to miss.

GLASS

Russian Standard copper mug.

ICE

Cubed.

INGREDIENTS

50ml Russian Standard - Platinum or Original.
Half a fresh lime. 100ml high quality ginger beer.

GARNISH

Un-squeezed lime wedges.



Please drink responsibly

DRINKAWARE.CO.UK for the facts russianstandardvodka.com

WINTER COCKTAILS

BOISDALE OF BISHOPSGATE MIXOLOGIST: DAN DAVIES

WINTER HUNTER

INGREDIENTS

25ml Drambuie
15ml Kings Ginger Liqueur
(The King's Ginger liqueur was specifically formulated by Berry Bros. in 1903 for King Edward VII to be enjoyed in his new horseless carriage - a Daimler)
15ml Creme De Caco
30ml Hot Water

METHOD

Mix all ingredients in a cocktail shaker and garnish with a flamed orange zest. Serve with 2 squares of Valharona chocolate. Serve in a whisky glass.



BOISDALE OF CANARY WHARF MIXOLOGIST: JAMIE MEEHAN

SMOKE & ORANGE

INGREDIENTS

50ml Talisker Whisky or other smoky whisky
10ml Cinnamon Syrup
(you can make your own syrup at home using water, brown sugar, cinnamon and vanilla extract)
Dash of Orange Bitters

METHOD

Stir all ingredients in a whisky glass and garnish with orange zest.



BOISDALE OF BELGRAVIA MIXOLOGIST: JANA HAJNA

WARM UP

INGREDIENTS

35ml Sailor Jerry spiced rum
20ml Cherry liqueur
15ml Amaretto
10ml Orange juice
40ml Pineapple juice
A few drops of lemon juice
Dash of Orange Bitters

METHOD

Shake all ingredients over ice and strain into a whisky glass filled with ice. Garnish with a slice of orange or glacé cherry wrapped in lemon skin.



BACK PAGE

WHAT MAKES ME LAUGH

This month it's the turn of Daily Mail columnist Peter McKay
("The most dangerous man in England" – Tatler Magazine)

WORDS BY PETER MCKAY



Some Like It Hot – the iconic American comedy film set in 1929, directed and produced by Billy Wilder, starring Marilyn Monroe, Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon, seen above as Josephine and Daphne

Practically anything is the answer. I'm easy to amuse. Jesus Christ never seems to have laughed, although he might not have had much cause.

François VI, Duc de La Rochefoucauld, a brilliant 17th century French author of maxims, memoirs and letters, is believed to have rationed himself to "one laugh a year." Reading today, some of the Duke's maxims make me laugh. For example: "Men are not only subject to losing all recollection of kindnesses and injuries done them, they even hate those to whom they are obliged and cease to hate those who have harmed them. The effort of repaying the kindness and avenging the evil seem to them a servitude to which they are unwilling to submit." (Oscar Wilde was more succinct: "No good deed goes unpunished.")

Laughing was a serious matter in the Duke's day. It still is in Germany, allegedly. A Goon Show sketch ended with the solemn, heel-clicking declaration: "The German sense of humor IS NO LAUGHING MATTER!" Perhaps there was less to laugh about in the past. Or it was reluctance to open one's mouth because of bad or missing teeth? "The increasing affordability of sugar and tobacco meant that, by the 18th century, people's teeth were worse than they'd ever been, while dentistry improved to meet the commercial opportunity", says Marie Antoinette biographer Jonathan Beckman in a review of a 2014 tome "The Smile Revolution in Eighteenth Century France".

"Comedian" Russell Brand seems to possess a full set of teeth but is he funny? He specializes in "observational" humor with a Leftish tinge. Not funny to my mind but he might be to other, particularly younger, viewers and listeners. What about his contemporaries? A recent Top Ten of British Comics included: Russell Howard, Jimmy Carr, Ricky Gervais, Michael McIntyre, Dara O Briain, Rowan Atkinson, Lee Mack, Frankie Boyle, David Mitchell and Sean Lock. With comments from fans ranging from "Absolute genius" to "He is the all-time greatest comedian to ever walk on this planet."

Humor doesn't always survive dissection or discussion. As the comments by fans suggest, it sometimes dies of being admired. I think I've seen all of the above and would grade them from quite funny to not at all funny. But it's probably generational – they're all much younger than I am and probably view the world differently.

On the other hand I find the American standup comic Chris Rock very funny. Yet his anarchic appeal is chiefly to the young (Check out his YouTube video "How not to get your ass kicked by the police!")

Comedy is the new pop music, we're told. Comics you've never heard of make millions from sold-out shows, CDs and books. They're aggressive, in-your-face and don't play the fool for laughs. They and their fans probably despise formulaic old comedy shows such as Are You Being Served? It was written by David Croft and Jeremy Lloyd, with its long running joke about sales assistant, Mrs Slocombe and

her pussy. Or the cheaply-made Carry On films.

Yet the jokes written for them decades ago remain amusing today while witticisms heard now are likely to perish within the year. The adaptation of Hilary Mantel's Wolf Hall about Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell impressed many but who will remember anything about it a year from now? On the other hand, those who saw 1971's Carry on Henry will always treasure Sid James as Henry quizzing Kenneth Williams as Cromwell. Particularly their exchange about a French beauty Henry lusted after, Marie of Normandy:

King Henry VIII: What about her face?

Thomas Cromwell: I am assured, sire, it is the fairest in all Normandy.

King Henry VIII: What about her... [Indicates hourglass figure]

Thomas Cromwell: The fullest in all Normandy, sire.

King Henry VIII: Has she been chaste?

Thomas Cromwell: All over Normandy sire.

The American author and critic Louis Kronenberger (1904 –1980) said English humor was superior to that of his countrymen. We used it to prosecute our faults while Americans deployed jokes to excuse poor behavior. We were also more willing to laugh at our own misfortune, which to Americans would be seen as unbecoming and a sign of weakness, he said. He cited a remark made by Wilde at one of the lowest moments of Oscar's life, as he was being paraded with other prisoners during a rainstorm in the courtyard of Reading Gaol.

When a warder told a complaining Wilde to be quiet - he was now "a prisoner of Her Majesty". Oscar replied: "If this is how Her Majesty treats prisoners, she does not deserve to have any."

No American would understand that as a joke, said Kronenberger. It would be above their heads. I don't think that's still the case. Jewish Americans in particular have a taste in humor which is as dark as our own. I never think of Groucho Marx without remembering his mock-indignant line: "Those are my principles, and if you don't like them... well, I have others."

Another exception to the Kronenberger rule is Some Like It Hot, the 1959 film comedy written by East European emigres I.A.L Diamond and Billy Wilder. All about two musicians (Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon) who witness a gangland massacre, before dressing as women and smuggling their way into a Florida-bound female orchestra – I must have seen this at least 20 times. Yet I still find jokes I missed, or didn't catch, because I was still laughing at the one seconds before! ♦

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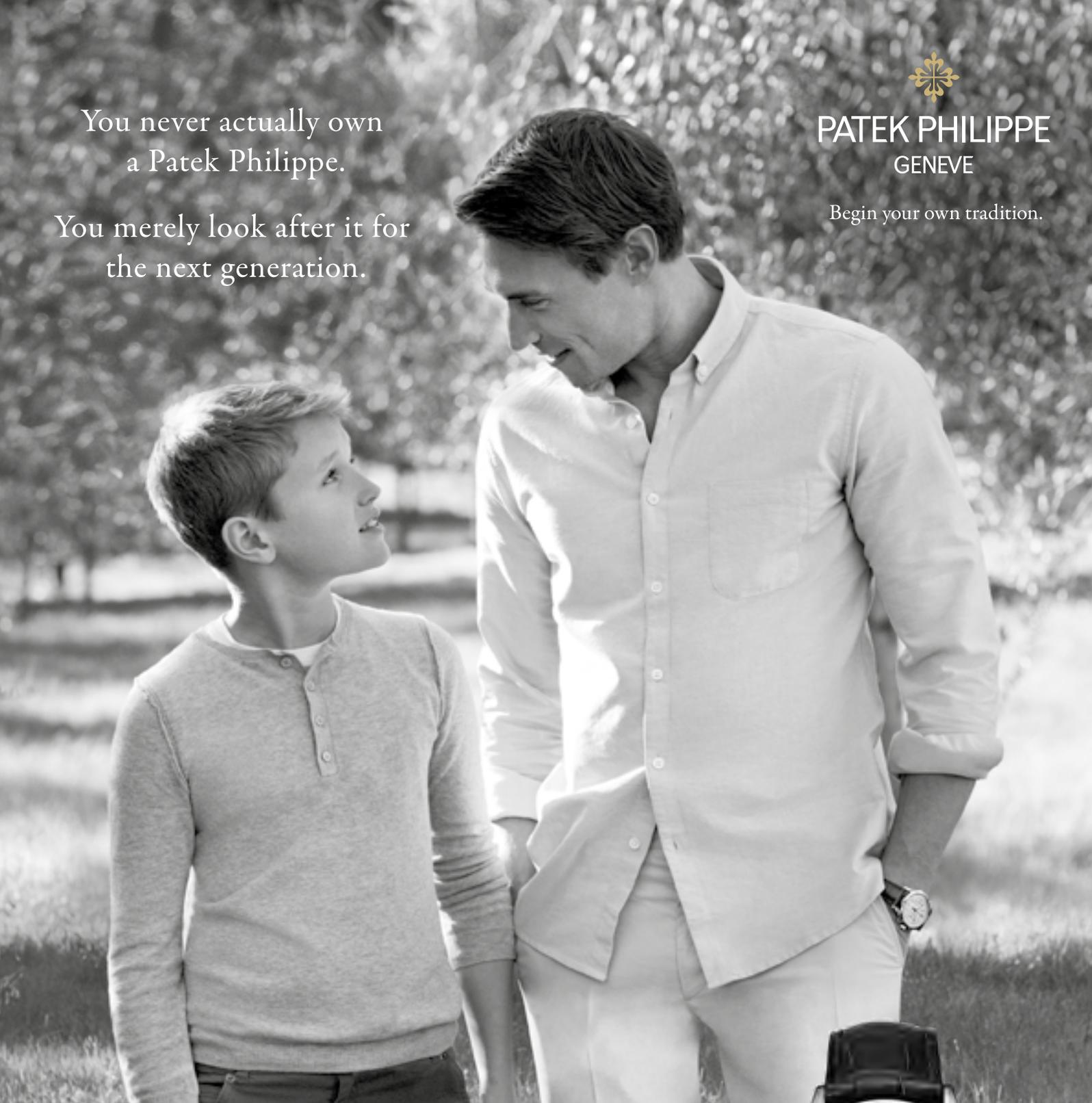


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