

**Anthology
of non-fiction
Transactional
writing**

***The following “glossary” is taken from The Pearson Edexcel AS and A level English Language and Literature Voices Anthology**

Article

News stories and feature articles are the staple forms of journalism. An article is a particular section or item in either a printed or broadcast text that forms an independent part of a publication or programme. News stories are immediate and focus on a subject of current interest. Their aim is to be informative and economical as they have limited space. Feature articles discuss an on-going issue and present the views of the writer. They are longer and more detailed than news stories and often include visuals. This category is broad and may include written articles drawn from newspapers, magazines, websites or other printed publications or articles taken from the broadcast media.

Autobiography/Biography

An autobiography is a written account of the life of a person, written by that person. Autobiographies are subjective by nature – seeing and filtering events through the perspective of the writer. They tend to have a confessional tone and can include reminiscences and anecdotes. The writer is usually aware of the implied audience as he/she is writing with the intention of publication. Celebrity autobiographies are often ‘ghost’ written, i.e. written by a professional writer who interviews the subject. An autobiographer tries to establish a rapport with the reader on a personal level.

A biography is an account of a person’s life written by a professional writer. The subject is usually a famous historical or present-day public figure. Although the writer is more distanced from the subject there is an element of subjectivity as the subject is presented through one person’s perspective. The biographer selects and organises the material to present the subject in a particular way. This type of non-fiction employs many of the characteristics of fiction, e.g. a strong narrative line, descriptions of locations, events and people.

Diary/Memoir

Diaries and memoirs are personal documents, usually adopting a confessional tone. Diaries are a record of events and may either be very personal to the writer and their life or reflect wider issues, such as diaries of World War I or diaries written by politicians. Diaries are chronological and an immediate record of daily events and observations whereas memoirs are written retrospectively and are often based on diary entries. It might be assumed that diaries are written for the writer only, with a narrow, intimate focus on the writer’s memories, feelings and emotions; however, many diarists do have an objective of eventual publication and some private diaries written by famous people eventually have a public audience and may be useful as historical documents.

Blog

The term ‘blog’ is an abbreviation of ‘weblog’. A blog is a personal online journal in which an individual records opinions, activities and experiences on a regular basis. Some provide a personal commentary on a particular topic or issue; others function as personal online diaries. Blogs can include hyperlinks provided by the writer which may extend their purpose and often have the facility for readers to respond or comment. Although blogs are written texts they share many features with spoken language and they tend to be transitory, i.e. available for a relatively short space of time. The primary purpose is close interaction with the audience and the language features reflect this. Blogs may be planned and drafted or may be more spontaneous.

Podcast

A podcast is an audio or video programme which is formatted to be played on a portable media player. The term is derived from ‘broadcast’ and ‘pod’ in reference to the iPod. It is very much a horizontal media form: producers are consumers and consumers can become producers and engage in conversations with each other.

Interview

An interview is a conversation conducted by an interviewer such as a TV reporter, chat show host, prospective employer or police/court official in which facts or statements are elicited from another. The interview may be transcribed and reproduced or recorded/broadcast. Interviews provide opportunities to comment on the differing language structures and purposes employed by the interviewer to elicit information and by the interviewee.

Radio Drama/Screenplay

Drama is a form of fiction that is typically represented in performance. Drama scripts or screenplays may be drawn from TV, radio, stage, film or documentary. Their language is shaped by their multiple audiences (technical/performer/viewer) and the varied functions served by this language. Drama presents opportunities to explore the language used to construct texts designed for broadcast/performance with a particular focus on the voices of characters or participants and the dynamic between them.

Reportage

Reportage is a first-hand account of, or commentary on, an event. Accounts can be drawn from a variety of sources – broadcast, online, recorded or print-based. Reportage is most commonly, but not exclusively, linked with the media and journalism – for example, outside broadcasts by reporters at the scene of an event. As such they can be linked to interviews and commentaries and are often supplemented by the impressions and experiences of the reporter.

Review

Reviews offer critical, often personal, appraisal of a publication, product, service, event or performance. They may be drawn from online, broadcast or traditional print-based sources and may cover any art form, product or service. Reviews may be favourable or may adopt a more negatively critical approach. Many reviewers employ a humorous style in order to add entertainment value for the reader. Rhetorical and persuasive techniques are frequently features of review writing. Reviews assume shared knowledge of their particular subject and an interest in the genre on the part of their readers.

Speech

Public speaking is the process of delivering a speech in a structured way intended to inform, influence, motivate or entertain a listening audience. Speeches may come from a range of sources and contexts: politics, courtroom address/summing up, eulogy and motivational address. Speeches are planned and carefully crafted and rely heavily on rhetorical devices and metaphorical language, although the speaker may shift the style by introducing colloquial phrases to engage more intimately with listeners. Rhythm is crucial in a speech and is achieved by the speaker's use of lexis and structure. Speeches are intended to inspire and motivate the audience in some way therefore their main function is persuasive but they must also include features that will maintain the attention of the audience. You should be aware of the discourse structure, i.e. the shape and direction of the argument.

Travelogue

A travelogue can be defined as a text which documents the places visited by, or the experiences of, a traveller. Typical travelogues convey a strong sense of place and the detailed accounts help the reader to envisage the experiences of travel through the eyes of the traveller. This category covers a broad range of styles and genres and examples can be drawn from broadcast, multi-modal or printed sources. These include journals/diaries (online or print-based), broadcast documentaries, guide books and autobiographies

Autobiography / Biography / Memoir

1. De Profundis, written by Oscar Wilde
2. Mom & Me & Mom, Maya Angelou.
3. Malala Yousafzai - "I Am Malala"
4. A Life in Football: My Autobiography by Ian Wright
5. Michelle Obama's memoir, Becoming
6. Jessica Ennis: Unbelievable – From My Childhood Dreams to Winning Olympic Gold
7. 'A long walk to Freedom'. Nelson Mandela's autobiography
8. Extract from a memoir written by sapper B. Neyland,

Diary

9. Diary extracts from two soldiers
10. Margaret Forster: Exclusive extract from her teenage diaries
11. Extract from the diary of Francis Place describing a morning in London, 1827
12. Michael Palin Diaries, 1969 to 1979 below. The Python Years
13. Extract from the 2013 diary of Alan Bennett

Journal

14. VICTORIA (r. 1837-1901) Queen Victoria (journal/diary)
15. Journals Of Expeditions Of Discovery Into Central Australia
16. Journal of Christopher Columbus, 1492, (Excerpt)

Letters

17. A Letter From Queen Elizabeth To President Eisenhower Dated January 24th 1960
18. Cotherstone Academy Aug. 7. 1822
19. Fyodor Dostoevsky to his brother on 22nd December 1849
20. Restaurant "Romantica" complaint

Newspaper articles

21. Celebrations as last trapped Chile miner is rescued
22. London riots 2011: 'We were getting hit all the time with missiles'
23. Peaches Geldof: Writer and TV presenter dies aged 25 - 7 April 2014
24. Feline first: Gus the cat entered in Australian dog swimming race - Mon 23 Dec 2019 - Alec Smart

Opinion articles

25. Simone Biles: I went from foster care to the Olympics
26. Parkland student: My generation won't stand for this
27. Volcanologist: Why Hawaii's volcano is in danger of going ballistic
28. JEREMY CLARKSON Just leave Greta Thunberg's Extinction Rebellion
29. Arthur C. Brooks, taken from *The New York Times*.
30. Charlie Brooker: 'Too much talk for one planet: why I'm reducing my word emissions'
31. Ian Birrell: 'As gay people celebrate, the treatment of the disabled just gets worse'
32. Tsunami Eyewitness Account by Nat Geo Photographer

Review (book, film, music, food)

33. Book Of A Lifetime: Of Mice And Men, By John Steinbeck
34. Rock Critics Really Blew Their Reviews of Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody'
35. Joker review – the most disappointing film of the year
36. review of Anna Whittham's novel Boxer
37. a review of the television drama The Bridge by Martin Hoyle.
38. Bubala, London: 'Exuberantly vegetarian' – restaurant review - Jay Rayner

Speeches

39. John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address in Washington on January 20, 1961
40. Colonel Tim Collins to 1st Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, in Iraq in 2003
41. Sacha Baron Cohen's scathing attack on Facebook in full: 'greatest propaganda machine in history'
42. Obama gave this speech when presenting Biden with the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction
43. Donald Trump gave the following speech as part of his inauguration ceremony
44. Emma Watson, gave the following speech at the United Nations
45. Mhairi Black was the youngest Member of Parliament in 2016.

Travel writing

46. Michael Palin, Around the World in 80 Days
47. Lonely Planet's Better than Fiction, Marina Lewycka
48. The Old Patagonian Express: an extract from the Paul Theroux travel book
49. Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan, Volume I - (of 2), by Isabella L. Bird
50. Alain de Botton -THE ART OF TRAVEL
51. Bill Bryson's travel book Notes from a Small Island.
52. Charles Dickens' travelogue Pictures from Italy.
53. Sea and Sardinia by the English writer D.H Lawrence, who travelled from his home in Sicily to Sardinia in 1921.
54. Riding the Iron Rooster: By Train Through China by Paul Theroux
55. blog written by George Scott, the assistant editor of RoadCyclingUK

Instructions/Guide

56. How to Survive a Sinking Ship

De Profundis by Oscar Wilde - This is an extract from De Profundis, written by Oscar Wilde during his imprisonment in Reading Gaol and first published in 1905.

I want to get to the point when I shall be able to say quite simply, and without affectation that the two great turning-points in my life were when my father sent me to Oxford, and when society sent me to prison. I will not say that prison is the best thing that could have happened to me: for that phrase would savour of too great bitterness towards myself. I would sooner say, or hear it said of me, that I was so typical a child of my age, that in my perversity, and for that perversity's sake, I turned the good things of my life to evil, and the evil things of my life to good.

What is said, however, by myself or by others, matters little. The important thing, the thing that lies before me, the thing that I have to do, if the brief remainder of my days is not to be maimed, marred, and incomplete, is to absorb into my nature all that has been done to me, to make it part of me, to accept it without complaint, fear, or reluctance. The supreme vice is shallowness. Whatever is realised is right.

When first I was put into prison some people advised me to try and forget who I was. It was ruinous advice. It is only by realising what I am that I have found comfort of any kind. Now I am advised by others to try on my release and to forget that I have ever been in prison at all. I know that would be equally fatal. It would mean that I would always be haunted by an intolerable sense of disgrace, and that those things that are meant for me as much as for anybody else – the beauty of the sun and moon, the pageant of the seasons, the music of daybreak and the silence of great nights, the rain falling through the leaves, or the dew creeping over the grass and making it silver – would all be tainted for me and lose their healing power, and their power of communicating joy. To regret one's own experiences is to arrest one's own development. To deny one's own experiences is to put a lie into the lips of one's own life. It is no less than a denial of the soul.

This is an extract from *Mom & Me & Mom*, an autobiography by the African-American author, poet, dancer, actress and singer, Maya Angelou.

By the time I was twenty-two, I was living in San Francisco. I had a five-year old son, two jobs, and two rented rooms, with cooking privileges down the hall. My landlady, Mrs. Jefferson, was kind and grandmotherly. She was a ready babysitter and insisted on providing dinner for her tenants. Her ways were so tender and her personality so sweet that no one was mean enough to discourage her disastrous culinary exploits. Spaghetti at her table, which was offered at least three times a week, was a mysterious red, white, and brown concoction. We would occasionally encounter an unidentifiable piece of meat hidden among the pasta. There was no money in my budget for restaurant food, so I and my son, Guy, were always loyal, if often unhappy, diners at Chez Jefferson.

My mother had moved into another large Victorian house, on Fulton Street, which she again filled with Gothic, heavily carved furniture. The upholstery on the sofa and occasional chairs was red-wine-colored mohair. Oriental rugs were placed throughout the house. She had a live-in employee, Poppa, who cleaned the house and sometimes filled in as cook helper.

Mother picked up Guy twice a week and took him to her house, where she fed him peaches and cream and hot dogs, but I only went to Fulton Street once a month and at an agreed-upon time.

She understood and encouraged my self-reliance and I looked forward eagerly to our standing appointment. On the occasion, she would cook one of my favorite dishes. One lunch date stands out in my mind. I call it Vivian's Red Rice Day.

When I arrived at the Fulton Street house my mother was dressed beautifully. Her makeup was perfect and she wore good jewelry. After we embraced, I washed my hands and we walked through her formal, dark dining room and into the large, bright kitchen.

Much of lunch was already on the kitchen table.

Vivian Baxter was very serious about her delicious meals.

Malala Yousafzai - "I Am Malala"

'I Am Malala': Excerpt of the Prologue

The ride to school was quick, just five minutes up the road and along the river. I arrived on time, and exam day passed as it always did. The chaos of Mingora city surrounded us with its honking horns and factory noises while we worked silently, bent over our papers in hushed concentration.

By day's end I was tired but happy; I knew I'd done well on my test. "Let's stay on for the second trip," said Moniba, my best friend. "That way we can chat a little longer." We always liked to stay on for the late pickup.

For days I'd had a strange, gnawing feeling that something bad was going to happen. One night I'd found myself wondering about death. What is being dead really like? I wanted to know. I was alone in my room, so I turned toward Mecca and asked God. "What happens when you die?" I said. "How would it feel?"

If I died, I wanted to be able to tell people what it felt like. "Malala, you silly girl," I said to myself then, "you'd be dead and you couldn't tell people what it was like."

Before I went to bed, I asked God for one more thing. Can I die a little bit and come back, so I can tell people about it?

But the next day had dawned bright and sunny, and so had the next one and the one after that. And now I knew I'd done well on my exam. Whatever cloud had been hanging over my head had begun to clear away. So Moniba and I did what we always did: We had a good gossip. What face cream was she using? Had one of the male teachers gone for a baldness cure? And, now that the first exam was over, how difficult would the next one be?

When our bus was called, we ran down the steps. As usual, Moniba and the other girls covered their heads and faces before we stepped outside the gate and got into the waiting dyna, the white truck that was our Khushal School "bus." And, as usual, our driver was ready with a magic trick to amuse us. That day, he made a pebble disappear. No matter how hard we tried, we couldn't figure out his secret.

A Life in Football: My Autobiography by Ian Wright

Getting the call that told me 'You're in the England squad' was surreal. Five years previously I'd been playing Sunday morning football and going to work every day. Now I was being considered as one of the best couple of dozen English players. Yes, I was scoring goals at a regular rate for Palace, but getting asked to represent your country is the pinnacle – it's every footballer's dream. After a player gets that call, he'll be sent a letter confirming it, which is when it really hits home, because then you get to see all the other players in the squad written down. Shilton . . . Lineker . . . Barnes . . . Waddle . . . Everybody was there on that list, and although I knew those guys would be in the squad, I could hardly believe my name was in there too. Why I didn't keep that piece of paper is beyond me.

It was for a friendly against Hungary in September 1990 and the England camp was at Burnham Beeches in Buckinghamshire. After dinner on the first day, we had to go and get the training kit. I went straight back to my room with mine and tried it on! I remember just walking about in the room wearing it and looking in the mirror.

Of course, I didn't sleep properly that night because I couldn't wait for the next morning and going out for training. Breakfast couldn't come quick enough. The warm up couldn't come quick enough. Everything couldn't come quick enough.

Then there I was, running alongside Gary Lineker and John Barnes, watching people like that in training – I was part of the England set up! The only cloud in that sky was Steve McMahon: he was really horrible to me on that first day. I was really nervous taking part in training, because even though I had been picked for an England squad I was still not far away from feeling that I was not going to be good enough in any situation, and he went out of his way to be nasty.

On that first day, we were playing in a six-a-side game and they'd picked three teams, but what happens in those games is if you lose the ball you have to go in the middle and chase it. Of course, I lost the ball quite a few times because I was so nervous and when I did McMahon really laid into me, loudly saying things like, 'For fuck's sake, who are these players?' and, 'How can players like this get into the England squad when they can't even keep the ball?' Naturally that didn't make me perform any better, and he carried on.

Bryan Robson quietly told me to take no notice of him, and while I appreciated that support, it didn't make that game any easier. I guess McMahon just thought it was the sort of thing he could get away with because I was at Palace at the time when we weren't particularly fashionable, while he was part of that Liverpool side that was winning everything.

Michelle Obama's memoir, *Becoming*

It sounds a little like a bad joke, doesn't it? What happens when a solitude-loving individualist marries an outgoing family woman who does not love solitude one bit?

The answer, I'm guessing, is probably the best and most sustaining answer to nearly every question arising inside a marriage, no matter who you are or what the issue is: you find ways to adapt. If you're in it for ever, there's really no choice.

Which is to say that at the start of 1993, Barack flew to Bali and spent about five weeks living alone with his thoughts while working on a draft of his book *Dreams from My Father*, filling yellow legal pads with his fastidious handwriting, distilling his ideas during languid daily walks amid the coconut palms and lapping tide. I, meanwhile, stayed home on Euclid Avenue, living upstairs from my mother, Marian, as another leaden Chicago winter descended, shellacking the trees and sidewalks with ice. I kept myself busy, seeing friends and hitting workout classes in the evenings. In my regular interactions at work or around town, I'd find myself casually uttering this strange new term – "my husband". My husband and I are hoping to buy a home. My husband is a writer finishing a book. It was foreign and delightful and conjured memories of a man who simply wasn't there. I missed Barack terribly, but I rationalized our situation as I could, understanding that even if we were newlyweds, this interlude was probably for the best.

He had taken the chaos of his unfinished book and shipped himself out to do battle with it. Possibly this was out of kindness to me, a bid to keep the chaos out of my view. I'd married an outside-the-box thinker, I had to remind myself. He was handling his business in what struck him as the most sensible and efficient manner, even if outwardly it appeared to be a beach vacation – a honeymoon with himself (I couldn't help but think in my lonelier moments) to follow his honeymoon with me.

You and I, you and I, you and I. We were learning to adapt, to knit ourselves into a solid and for ever form of us. Even if we were the same two people we'd always been, the same couple we'd been for years, we now had new labels, a second set of identities to wrangle. He was my husband. I was his wife. We'd stood up at church and said it out loud, to each other and to the world. It did feel as if we owed each other new things.

For many women, including myself, "wife" can feel like a loaded word. It carries a history. If you grew up in the 1960s and 1970s as I did, wives seemed to be a genus of white women who lived inside television sitcoms – cheery, coiffed, corseted. They stayed at home, fussed over the children, and had dinner ready on the stove. They sometimes got into the sherry or flirted with the vacuum-cleaner salesman, but the excitement seemed to end there.

Jessica Ennis: *Unbelievable – From My Childhood Dreams to Winning Olympic Gold*

I am Jessica Ennis. I have been called many things, from tadpole to poster girl, but I have had to fight to make that progression.

I smile and am polite and so people think it comes easily, but it doesn't.

I am not one of those athletes who slap their thighs and snarl before a competition, but there is a competitive animal inside, waiting to get out and fight for survival and recognition.

Cover shoots and billboards are nice, but they are nothing without the work and I have left blood, sweat and tears on tracks all over the world.

It is an age where young people are fed ideas of quick-fix fame and instant celebrity, but the tears mean more if the journey is hard.

So I don't cry crocodile tears; I cry the real stuff.

In 1993 my parents sent me to Sharrow Junior School.

In terms of academic results it was not the best, but Mum was keen for me to go somewhere that had a rich mix of races and cultures.

I was the smallest in the class and I became more self-conscious about it as the years went by.

Swimming was a particular ordeal, and in my mind now, I can still see this young, timid wisp standing by the side of a pool in her red swimming costume quaking with anxiety.

I was small and scraggy and that was when the bullying started.

'A long walk to Freedom'. Nelson Mandela's autobiography

My mother presided over three rondavels at Qunu which, as I remember, were always filled with the babies and children of my relations. In fact, I hardly recall any occasion as a child when I was alone. In African culture, the sons and daughters of one's aunts or uncles are considered brothers and sisters, not cousins. We do not make the same distinctions among relations practised by Europeans. We have no half-brothers or half-sisters. My mother's sister is my mother; my uncle's son is my brother.

Of my mother's three huts, one was used for cooking, one for sleeping and one for storage. In the hut in which we slept, there was no furniture.

We slept on mats and sat on the ground. I did not discover pillows until I went away to school. The stove on which my mother cooked was a three-legged iron pot that rested on a grate over a hole in the ground. Everything we ate we grew and made ourselves. My mother planted and harvested her own mealies. After harvesting the mealies, the woman ground the kernels between two stones. A portion of this was made into bread, while the rest was dried and stored in pots. Unlike mealies, which were sometimes in short supply, milk from our cows and goats was always plentiful.

From an early age, I spent most of my free time in the veld playing and fighting with the other boys of the village. A boy who remained at home tied to his mother's apron strings was regarded as a sissy. At night, I shared my food and blanket with these same boys. I was no more than five when I became a herd-boy, looking after sheep and calves in the fields. I discovered the almost mystical attachment that the Xhosa have for cattle, not only as a source of food and wealth, but as a blessing from God and a source of happiness. It was in the fields that I learned how to knock birds out of the

sky with a slingshot, to gather wild honey and fruits and edible roots, to drink warm, sweet milk straight from the udder of a cow, to swim in the clear, cold streams, and to catch fish with twine and sharpened bits of wire. I learned to stick-fight – essential knowledge to any rural African boy - and became adept at its various techniques, parrying blows, feinting in one direction, striking in another, breaking away from an opponent with quick footwork. From these days I date my love of the veld, of open spaces, the simple beauties of nature, the clean line of the horizon.

This is an extract from a memoir written by sapper B. Neyland, who served from September 1916 to December 1919 in the Royal Engineers (Signals), Wireless Section.

At the age of eighteen I crossed to France early in 1917, a sapper in the Royal Engineers Wireless Section. We operators had only a vague idea of our likely duties, for the Wireless Section was only then becoming of use in the trenches.

I was sent via St. Pol to Arras, and with a fellow-operator was led into the trenches at Roclincourt. There I first experienced the bursting of a shell near me, and I laughed at the frightened manner in which our guide flung himself down when the shell fell about thirty yards away. It was not long before I took to flinging myself down on such occasions.

When our guide led me into a trench filled waist deep with muddy water, I could not believe he was serious – and I hesitated – I was wearing brand-new riding-breeches, puttees, and boots. However, I waded in, and it was seventeen days before my boots touched dry soil again.

We were left in a muddy dug-out at Roclincourt with an officer and his batman, waiting for the attack. We spent our time experimenting with a small British Field set – the Trench set – and we still had no idea of our purpose.

Then, on April 5th, we were called into Arras where a R.E. officer "put us wise". The attack was to be made within the next few days, the infantry waves were to advance under cover of a formidable barrage, and each wave was to be provided with a wireless station. The Roclincourt station was to go over with the first infantry wave.

The Roclincourt station! That was Hewitt and I and an officer! Four infantrymen were to assist us in carrying our weighty apparatus, the set, accumulators, dry cells, coils of wire, earth mats, ropes, and other details.

We returned to Roclincourt and sent many practice messages to our Directing Station at Arras. That night one of our aerial masts was shattered and we were instructed to erect another. We had no reserve mast, but, fortunately, we found a large crucifix nearby.

"That's it," said the officer. "Hewitt, climb up there and attach the aerial as high as possible."

Hewitt clambered up over the figure of Christ just as a German machine gun swept the line, the Verrey lights revealing Hewitt distinctly. He soon fell into a depth of slime, frightened, but unhurt. It was our first experience of enemy machine-gun fire.

"You try," the officer pointed to me.

It is an eerie sensation to climb over an effigy of Jesus, to dig your feet into any parts of the figure offering foothold, to hold on to the outstretched arms, and breathe on to the downcast face, to fix a rope somewhere on the Cross and to hear the German machine gun tat-tatting all around.

Failing to secure the rope, I slid down and we returned to the dug-out with our officer extremely annoyed. Early the next morning we secured the aerial to the ruins of a building. On April 7th our officer laid a plan of the German sector opposite us on the table, and he detailed our instructions.

These are diary extracts from two soldiers, 100 years apart. Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) Ernest Sheppard writing from the trenches in 1915 and Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) Elliot Drake writing from Afghanistan in March 2012

WO2 Sheppard was awarded a field commission in 1916 but sadly killed in Action the following year.

WO2 EJR Drake Afghanistan March 2012

Muggy 30 degrees and a sand storm approaches. As I sit in the comfort of my Ops room in Camp Shurabak Afghanistan my mind wonders what it's like for those troops stuck out on a limb harbouring up in the Green Zone mentoring the Afghan National Army nothing but a radio to communicate to me whilst I am sat here watching the TV and monitoring the nets. I put the kettle on to make a brew feeling slightly bad knowing the lads on the ground could not brew up because the fire and smoke would give them away. Brew made I picked up my book to pass the time knowing the troops are taking a rest (probably with one eye open) in the cold moonlight of the green zone mentally preparing for the next day's task. Regimental Tales of the RIFLES is the title and the difference in War's cannot be far from the truth.

WO2 Ernest Sheppard March 1915

Rain All night. We imagine we are backwards men now. The wood we are in is a sight, not a tree intact, scarcely a branch on where the shrapnel has cut them off. Our dugouts are substantial owing to this we make good use of the limbs. About 11am the enemy sent 11 shells in a minute. I had a narrow squeak as I was ordering a fire to extinguished which was throwing up smoke, a thing we have to be very careful about, as the enemy's artillery observers wish for nothing better by which to direct there fire. A tree was blown down, just missed me, and I had lumps of wood and shell all about where I was standing. One man was wounded. This one instance where carelessness might have cost us several men.

WO2 Elliot Drake in Pakistan in 2011

WO2 EJR Drake

As dawn began to brake the radios came alive with contacts and reports of explosions coming from the guys on the ground, situation reports came in 2 x Afghan Soldier's injured medical assistance required. Improvised explosive device strike. No UK Personnel injured but assisting with first aid, Enemy now extracting. Helo in bound to pick up casualties to be brought back to camp B for treatment. I handed over duties to the day stag.

WO2 Ernest Sheppard

The bitterest Sunday I have known or ever wish to know. My company, B, lost 1 Officer and 45 men mostly No. 5 Platoon. A Company were luckiest, losing 12 men, C Company lost all 170 men except 38. Hardly know who is dead yet, but several of my best chums are gone under. Had we lost as heavily while actually fighting we would not have cared as much, but our dear boys died like rats in a trap, instead of heroes as they all were.

WO2 EJR Drake, May 2017

My Afghan tour saw 1 person killed from my unit – a much loved officer he was brought home and laid to rest as every soldier should be. Those 72,396 brave men that were not brought home were never given the send-off ever brave soldier should be given. This project aims to give these men the dignity they deserve so please if you can. spare a few pounds to support the Shrouds of the Somme [HERE](#)

WO2 EJR Drake
Rifles
Swift and Bold

Margaret Forster: Exclusive extract from her teenage diaries

JANUARY 1954

1st Started the Year well! I don't think with a grand row with Gordon, the beast. I broke all my resolutions and fled upstairs in a screaming rage and nearly broke the door. So spent a chilly afternoon up there rather than face that... Shirley, his girl came up and they started a sappy carryon. Went to the flicks with Pud.

11th M was off so went to see her. She fainted last night and was violently sick, poor thing. But she seemed much better. It was like my other half cut off at school! Had a good chat with her. I love reading the Monday paper with all the fashion news. We got talking about figures at dinner. Jen had 40" hips! I am 34-24-34 & everyone envious! The dinner was okay but not enough of it – not nearly enough!

21st Stinking old Miss Simpson wouldn't let me off for school council next week. Was furious. Says we've got to practise for the Festival. I'm not going to rotten old recorder if I can't go to SC. The beast. She's so horrible. I'm going to leave if she doesn't let me go. She's just a frowzy old maid. Stinks. Awful. She's so selfish. I wouldn't miss school council for worlds. Besides, the form depends on me.

FEBRUARY

18th Auntie Florrie was found dead this morning, poor old thing. Ruptured Heart. She left no will either. Mum was very upset. They came for her first of all. I never thought Auntie Florrie would die for ages. Naturally had no time for revision tonight. Didn't get the tea over until 7 o'clock. RIP.

19th Auntie Jean came for funeral. Finished exams thank goodness me! Arithmetic was atrocious. Have done terrible in Maths – usually do so well. Went to the Dentist – awfully nice chap, young and Scotch. Had three minor fillings. Bought some magazines to relax tonight – but so busy making meals that I didn't.

Extract from the diary of Francis Place describing a morning in London, 1827

(25 July 1827, 7.30 AM)

Much pleased, not to say delighted just now. A most beautiful – a gloriously fine morning. My bedroom window projects into the street, and both windows are open. At 7 came a coach from the Strand. 'Matthew Melton. Windsor' on the side. A good looking tall man in a scarlet frock coat and drab hat and white trousers as coachman – four as fine horses as ever I saw, the guard a well dressed man in an olive frock, was playing an air on a keyed bugle horn. The coach drew up at the Ship, nearly opposite to my window, the guard played, in excellent tone and time the 'Death of the Stag' – and ten one of our fashionable airs. Just as he finished, a coach drew up near the statue, and the guard a tall man in a scarlet coat, played on his bugle in excellent style, 'The lass of Richmond Hill'. The guard of the Windsor coach as soon as the other commenced playing caught up his bugle and played the same tune in the same time, and tone and manner, then played a waltz, and away galloped the horses with the coach from the statue. They were hardly off before another coach drew up, and the guard, a short man in a drab coat, commenced a piece of music, which he played exquisitely. This done he commenced a fashionable waltz, the Windsor guard accompanied him, and the two coaches started westward, the guards of both playing the waltz. The fineness of the weather, the uncommon beauty of the horses in all the coaches, the sun shining on their well-groomed skins, the hilarity they seemed to feel, the passengers on the outside gay and happy, the contrast of the colours of the cloaths worn by all the well-dressed women outside the coaches, large bonnets made of straw, or white silk or paper, which at a distance have the appearance of white silk, all gaily trimmed with very broad ribbons woven in stripes of various bright colours, running into one another like the colours in the spectrum their white gowns and scarlet shawls, made the whole exceedingly lively and delightfully animating.

Michael Palin Diaries, 1969 to 1979 below. The Python Years

Wednesday, March 31st, 1976

The Amnesty bandwagon gathers momentum today – a second and final rehearsal on stage at Her Majesty's, with Roger Graef and team poking about. I notice them filming, at great length, a conversation between Cleese and Peter Cook on the stage, and it occurs to me that, as the cameraman himself is small (or average) compared to them, he's probably much happier filming tall people. I asked Graef whether I would be a better bet for tele-verité if I were six inches taller ... 'Oh, yes, undoubtedly,' he assured me. 'They can get lovely angles if you're tall – shots against the sky, or, in this case, against the spotlights.' Yesterday they'd been filming the Goodies at rehearsal and the cameraman had found Bill Oddie quite a problem.

Peter Cook – who apologised for his slightly glazed state, saying he was recovering from a long night spent with John Fortune discussing Lenny Bruce's drug problem – steadfastly refuses to learn the words of the Condemned Man in our 'Court Sketch'. He does ad-lib very well, but it gives Terry J a few hairy moments.

At about 12:30, more press photos outside. For some reason a Daily Mirror photographer issues us all with pickaxes – no one knows why until we see the photo in the Mirror on April 1st with the caption 'Pick of the Jokers'. No wonder the Mirror are losing their circulation battle.

Thursday, September 16th, 1976 : Chepstow Castle

A moment of quite stimulating liberation when I am required to drop my trousers in a shot and reveal my un-knickered bum to all and sundry. As we're outside the main gates to the castle, quite a little crowd has gathered to watch the filming – about fifty or sixty in addition to the fifty extras in the scene.

Realise I feel less embarrassed than they do, and really quite enjoy the experience of flashing a naughty part of the body in a public place – and getting paid, rather than arrested for it. Can see the exhilaration of 'streaking' – a sort of heady feeling of freedom comes over me as I point my bum for the third time at a twin-set and pearl-bedecked lady standing not ten yards away!

Thursday, February 20th, 1975

Another Python meeting. This time to discuss affairs of Python generally and to plan our future in general.

When I arrived, Eric was the only one there, stretched comfortably in a corner of the sofa, wearing what looked very much like a bover boys outfit, with TUF boots and jeans with rolled-up bottoms.

Good news at the beginning of the meeting – Nancy rang through to say that a US record deal was signed today with Arista Records – we would get an immediate \$10,000 advance on Matching Tie and Live at Drury Lane. So good work there from Nancy, who has also secured her pet consideration on a record contract – \$50,000 set aside just for publicity.

This is an extract from the 2013 diary of Alan Bennett, the English playwright, screenwriter, actor and author. Diary: What I Did in 2013 by Alan Bennett

3 January, Yorkshire

The year kicks off with a small trespass when we drive over from Ramsgill via Ripon and Thirsk to Rievaulx. However the abbey is closed, seemingly until the middle of February, which infuriates us both, and though at 78 and with an artificial hip it's not something I feel I should be doing, we scale the five-bar gate and break in. The place is of course empty and though it's quite muddy underfoot, an illicit delight. It's warm and windless, the stones of the abbey sodden and brown from the amount of moisture they've absorbed. Spectacular here are the toilet arrangements, the redorter set above a narrow chasm with a stream still running along the bottom. Unique, though (or at least I haven't seen another), is the tannery complete with its various vats, a small factory in the heart of the abbey and which must have stunk as tanneries always did. I remember the tannery down Stanningley Road opposite Armley Park School in Leeds which my brother and I (en route for the Western cinema) always ran past holding our noses. The site at Rievaulx is just over the wall from the abbot's lodgings, which smelly though medieval abbeys were, must have been hard to take. Coming away we scale the gate again, happy to have outwitted authority, but since all that stands between Open and Closed is a five-bar gate it's maybe English Heritage's way of turning a blind eye.

4 February

I don't imagine that my old Oxford supervisor, the medieval historian Bruce McFarlane, would be much exercised by the discovery of the body of Richard III, though there would be some mild satisfaction in finding the king exactly where the sources said he was. McFarlane wouldn't have thought the body particularly informative as compared with the real stuff of history, some of the ex-duke of York's receiver's accounts, say, or records of Yorkist estate management.

The TV programme on Channel 4 was a lengthy and slightly spurious cliffhanger, culminating in the always conjectural reconstruction of what the famous corpse looked like. No different from the fanciful portrait, it turns out, but with enough humanity to satisfy the convictions of the Richard III Society, who were stumping up for the whole exercise. Bracketed in my mind with the 'Bacon is Shakespeare' lot, the Richard III fans seem not without a bob or two and with some of their barmier members on parade in the programme. ...

VICTORIA (r. 1837-1901)

Queen Victoria maintained a detailed diary, her famous Journal, which is contained in 111 large manuscript volumes. These volumes constitute about a third of the original, as her diaries were edited after her death by her youngest daughter Princess Beatrice, at Queen Victoria's request. The extracts below cover some of the more momentous events of Queen Victoria's reign, from her accession in 1832 to her Diamond Jubilee in 1897.

On William IV's death, and her accession aged 18 years: Tuesday, 20 June 1837 at Kensington Palace

I was awoke at 6 o'clock by Mamma, who told me that the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Conyngham were here, and wished to see me. I got out of bed and went into my sitting-room (only in my dressing-gown), and alone, and saw them. Lord Conyngham (the Lord Chamberlain) then acquainted me that my poor Uncle, the King, was no more, and had expired at 12 minutes past 2 this morning, and consequently that I am Queen. Lord Conyngham knelt down and kissed my hand, at the same time delivering to me the official announcement of the poor King's demise. The Archbishop then told me that the Queen was desirous that he should come and tell me the details of the last moments of my poor, good Uncle; he said that he had directed his mind to religion, and had died in a perfectly happy, quiet state of mind, and was quite prepared for his death. He added that the King's sufferings at the last were not very great but that there was a good deal of uneasiness. Lord Conyngham, whom I charged to express my feelings of condolence and sorrow to the poor Queen, returned directly to Windsor. I then went to my room and dressed.

Since it has pleased Providence to place me in this station, I shall do my utmost to fulfil my duty towards my country; I am very young and perhaps in many, though not in all things, inexperienced, but I am sure, that very few have more real good will and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have ...

At 9 came Lord Melbourne, whom I saw in my room, and of COURSE quite ALONE as I shall always do all my Ministers. He kissed my hand and I then acquainted him that it had long been my intention to retain him and the rest of the present Ministry at the head of affairs, and that it could not be in better hands than his ... He then read to me the Declaration which I was to read to the Council, which he wrote himself and which is a very fine one. I then talked with him some little longer time after which he left me ... I like him very much and feel confidence in him. He is a very straightforward, honest, clever and good man. I then wrote a letter to the Queen ...

At about half past 11 I went downstairs and held a Council in the red saloon. I went in of course quite alone, and remained seated the whole time. My two Uncles, the Dukes of Cumberland (who now succeeded William IV as King of Hanover) and Sussex, and Lord Melbourne conducted me. The declaration, the various forms, the swearing in of the Privy Councillors of which there were a great number present, and the reception of some of the Lords of Council, previous to the Council in an adjacent room (likewise alone) I subjoin here.

JOURNALS OF EXPEDITIONS OF DISCOVERY INTO CENTRAL AUSTRALIA AND OVERLAND FROM ADELAIDE TO KING GEORGE'S SOUND IN THE YEARS 1840-1 - EXPLORATORY EXPEDITION TO THE CENTRE OF NEW HOLLAND

The arrangements for the expedition into the interior, undertaken by Mr. Eyre, having been completed, His Excellency the Governor and Mrs. Gawler issued cards to a number of the principal colonists and personal friends of Mr. Eyre, to meet him at Government House on the morning of his departure. On Thursday last accordingly (the anniversary of Waterloo, in which His Excellency and the gallant 52nd bore so conspicuous a part) a very large party of ladies and gentlemen assembled. After an elegant DEJEUNER A LA FOURCHETTE, His Excellency the Governor rose and spoke as nearly as we could collect, as follows:--

"We are assembled to promote one of the most important undertakings that remain to be accomplished on the face of the globe--the discovery of the interior of Australia. As Captain Sturt in substance remarked in a recent lecture, of the five great divisions of the earth, Europe is well known; Asia and America have been generally searched out; the portion that remains to be known of Africa is generally unfavourable for Europeans, and probably unfit for colonization; but Australia, our great island continent, with a most favourable climate, still remains unpenetrated, mysterious, and unknown. Without doing injustice to the enterprising attempts of Oxley, Sturt, and Mitchell, I must remark that they were commenced from a very unfavourable point--from the eastern and almost south-eastern extremity of the island--and consequently the great interior still remains untouched by them, the south-eastern corner alone having been investigated. As Captain Sturt some years since declared, this Province is the point from which expeditions to the deep interior should set out. This principle, I know, has been acknowledged by scientific men in Europe; and it is most gratifying to see the spirit with which our Colonists on the present occasion have answered to the claim which their position imposes upon them. Mr. Eyre goes forth this day, to endeavour to plant the British flag--the flag which in the whole world has "braved for a thousand years the battle and the breeze"--on the tropic of Capricorn (as nearly as possible in 135 degrees or 136 degrees of longitude) in the very centre of our island continent. On this day twenty-five years since, commencing almost at this very hour, the British flag braved indeed the battle, and at length floated triumphant in victory on the field of Waterloo. May a similar glorious success attend the present undertaking! Mr. Eyre goes forth to brave a battle of a different kind, but which in the whole, may present dangers equal to those of Waterloo.

Journal of Christopher Columbus, 1492, (Excerpt)

Italian explorer Christopher Columbus's voyage to the Western Hemisphere in 1492 was one of the most significant events in modern history, bringing together for the first time the civilizations of Europe and the Americas. He kept a journal of his travels, which was lost upon his death. Bartolomé de Las Casas, a Spanish priest and famous Amerindian advocate, had access to the journal prior to its disappearance and wrote out his own interpretation—the only remaining copy of Columbus's personal travel records. In it, Las Casas incorporates many direct quotations from "the Admiral," as Columbus was called. The following are entries from his journal describing Columbus's first encounter with the Americas and its native peoples:

Wednesday, October 10.

He sailed to the west-south-west and they went at the rate of 10 miles per hour and at times 12, and sometimes 7, and during the day and night they made 59 leagues. He told the people 44 leagues and no more. Here the people could no longer suffer the journey. They complained of the long voyage: but the Admiral encouraged them as well as he was able, giving them good hope of the benefits they would receive, and adding that for the rest it was useless to complain since he had come in search of the Indies, and thus he must pursue his journey until he found them, with the aid of our Lord.

Thursday, October 11.

He sailed to the west-south-west. They had a much higher sea than they had had in all the voyage. They saw petrels and a green branch, near the ship. Those on the caravel Pinta saw a reed and a stick and they took another small stick formed as it appeared with iron, and a piece of a reed and other grass which grows on land, and a small board. Those on the caravel Nina also saw other indications of land and a little branch full of dog-roses. With these signs every one breathed and rejoiced. They went 27 leagues during this day up to sunset. After sunset he sailed on his first course to the west. They went 12 miles each hour and up to two hours after midnight they went about 90 miles which are 22

1/2 leagues. And because the caravel Pinta was the best sailor and was going ahead of the Admiral, land was discovered by her people and the signs which the Admiral had ordered were made. A sailor called Rodrigo de Traina saw this land first, although the Admiral at 10 o'clock at night being in the stern fore-castle saw a light, but it was so concealed that he would not declare it to be land: but he called Pero Gutierrez Groom of the Chamber of the King, and said to him that it appeared to be a light, and asked him to look at it: and he did so and saw it.

A LETTER FROM QUEEN ELIZABETH TO PRESIDENT EISENHOWER DATED JANUARY 24TH 1960

Dear Mr. President,

Seeing a picture of you in today's newspaper standing in front of a barbecue grilling quail, reminded me that I had never sent you the recipe of the drop scones which I promised you at Balmoral. I now hasten to do so, and I do hope you will find them successful. Though the quantities are for 16 people, when there are fewer, I generally put in less flour and milk, but use the other ingredients as stated.

I have also tried using golden syrup or Treacle instead of only sugar and that can be very good, too. I think the mixture needs a great deal of beating while making, and shouldn't stand about too long before cooking.

We have followed with intense interest and much admiration your tremendous journey to so many countries, but feel we shall never again be able to claim that we are being made to do too much on our future tours! We remember with such pleasure your visit to Balmoral, and I hope the photograph will be a reminder of the very happy day you spent with us. With all good wishes to you and Mrs. Eisenhower. Yours sincerely

ElizabethR

Cotherstone Academy Aug. 7. 1822

Dear Father

Our Master has arrived at Cotherstone, but I was sorry to learn he had no Letter for me nor anything else, which made me very unhappy. If you recollect, I promised that I would write you a sly Letter, which I assure you I have not forgot, and now an opportunity has come at last. I hope, my dear Father, you will not let Mr. Smith know anything about it for he would flog me if he knew it. I hope, my dear Father, you will write me a Letter as soon as you receive this, but pray don't mention anything about this in yours; only put a X at the bottom, or write to my good Friend Mr. Halmer, who is very kind to me and he will give it to me when I go to Church. He lives opposite and I assure you, my dear Father, they are the kindest Friends I have in Yorkshire and I know he will not show it to Mr. Smith for the Letters I write you are all examined before they leave the School. I am obliged to write what Mr. Smith tells us and the letters you send me are all examined by Mr. Smith before I see them, so I hope, my dear Father, you will mention nothing of this when you write.

It is now two years come October since I left you at Islington, but I hope, my dear Father, you will let me come home at Xmas that we may once more meet again alive - if God permit me to live as long.

Our bread is nearly black; it is made of the worst Barley Meal, and our Beds are stuffed with chaff¹ and I assure you we are used more like Bears than Christians². Believe me, my dear Father, I would rather be obliged to work all my life time than remain here another year. George is quite well but very unhappy.

Your respectful son

Henry

Extract from a letter sent by Fyodor Dostoevsky to his brother on 22nd December 1849

Brother, my precious friend! all is settled! I am sentenced to four years' hard labour in the fortress (I believe, of Orenburg) and after that to serve as a private. To-day, the 22nd of December, we were taken to the Semionov Drill Ground. There the sentence of death was read to all of us, we were told to kiss the Cross, our swords were broken over our heads, and our last toilet was made* (white shirts). Then three were tied to the pillar for execution. I was the sixth. Three at a time were called out; consequently, I was in the second batch and no more than a minute was left me to live. I remembered you, brother, and all yours; during the last minute you, you alone, were in my mind, only then I realised how I love you, dear brother mine! I also managed to embrace Plescheyev and Durov who stood close to me and to say good-bye to them. Finally the retreat was sounded, and those tied to the pillar were led back, and it was announced that His Imperial Majesty granted us our lives. Then the present sentences. Palm alone has been pardoned, and returns with his old rank to the army.

I was just told, dear brother, that to-day or to-morrow we are to be sent off. I asked to see you. But I was told that this was impossible; I may only write you this letter: make haste and give me a reply as soon as you can. I am afraid that you may somehow have got to know of my death-sentence. From the windows of the prison-van, when we were taken to the Semionov Drill Ground, I saw a multitude of people; perhaps the news reached you, and you suffered for me. Now you will be easier on my account. Brother! I have not become downhearted or low-spirited. Life is everywhere life, life in ourselves, not in what is outside us. There will be people near me, and to be a man among people and remain a man for ever, not to be downhearted nor to fall in whatever misfortunes may befall me – this is life; this is the task of life. I have realised this. This idea has entered into my flesh and into my blood. Yes, it's true! The head which was creating, living with the highest life of art, which had realised and grown used to the highest needs of the spirit, that head has already been cut off from my shoulders.

Advertisement:

Restaurant 'Romantica' is the best place you can meet your friend and spend a nice evening in a good company. The place is designed to ensure lots of privacy. Comfortable armchairs and quiet soothing music in the background make the place perfect for those tired of everyday rush. Discreet service is our first priority. Our menu is created by people who worked for the best restaurants in the world. Great choice of vegetarian dishes. Come and enjoy! Satisfaction guaranteed!

32 Hight Street
Folkestone
Kent
CT19 5JY

Mrs Elizabeth Talker
33 The Glades
Folkestone
Kent
CT20 2PR

10 May 2010

Dear Mrs Talker,

I am writing to inform you that I was very disappointed with my visit to your restaurant two days ago. I read your advertisement in the newspaper and decided to spend an evening there with my friend. Unfortunately, I have a couple of complaints concerning this visit.

According to your advertisement the place is perfect for having private conversations in relaxing atmosphere. However, it turned out that the music was so loud that I could hardly concentrate on the chat with my friend. The waiter asked to turn the music down shrugged his shoulders and said that other guests liked it that way. Is that what you mean by 'discreet service'?

To make matters worse, the place was crowded and waiting for an ordered meal was intolerably long. I must admit that the cuisine was quite good but the prices were way too high.

I would like you to take my points under consideration and I expect a refund from your restaurant. I trust you will give this matter immediate attention. I look forward to receiving a reply from you.

Yours sincerely,
John Smith

Celebrations as last trapped Chile miner is rescued
14 October 2010

The last of the 33 miners trapped deep underground in northern Chile for more than two months has been rescued.

Luis Urzua, the shift supervisor who was credited with helping the men survive the first 17 days before rescue teams made contact, was greeted by his family and President Sebastian Pinera.

The six rescuers sent down to assist the miners have all been winched up.

The rescued miners have been taken to hospital. All have severe dental infections, and some have eye problems.

One man has been diagnosed with pneumonia, although his condition is not thought to be serious.

Health Minister Jaime Manalich stressed that all appeared to be in far better condition than expected.

The men had been trapped underground since 5 August, when a rockfall caused a tunnel to collapse.

"They were experiencing a kind of rebirth," President Pinera said in a televised address after Mr Urzua's ascent. "When the last miner exited the depths of the mine, I was moved as every Chilean was."

'Mission completed'

The rescue operation began shortly after 2315 on Tuesday (0215 GMT on Wednesday) with a technical expert, Manuel Gonzalez, being lowered down the 624m (2,047ft) shaft.

Mr Gonzalez was supposed to return to the surface and report on the condition of the rescue shaft, before handing over to a paramedic.

However, a live video feed from the refuge where the miners were gathered showed Mr Avalos getting into the "Phoenix" capsule. He was chosen to lead the way because he was one of the fittest of the miners.

Mr Avalos reached the surface at 0010 (0310 GMT) and was greeted by his family, rescuers, President Pinera and the first lady, Cecilia Morel. Bystanders cheered and clapped, and then started chanting "Chile".

President Pinera, his wife and Mining Minister Laurence Golborne were also waiting at the head of the shaft at 2155 (0055 GMT on Thursday), when the rescue capsule carrying Mr Urzua emerged to jubilant cheers, songs and applause.

The 54-year-old then embraced the president and said: "We have done what the entire world was waiting for. The 70 days that we fought so hard were not in vain."

"We had strength, we had spirit, we wanted to fight, we wanted to fight for our families, and that was the greatest thing."

London riots 2011: 'We were getting hit all the time with missiles'

During the summer riots in 2011 police officers came under attack from thousands of people involved in civil unrest and looting. Lawlessness broke out in cities across England in perhaps the largest example of disorder in post-war Britain.

Here, two former Metropolitan Police officers describe what it was like policing London, where the riots began.

The riots began following a protest in Tottenham over the shooting of Mark Duggan by police.

Sgt Simon Willmott and a fellow officer filming the disorder found themselves facing a violent mob of several hundred people.

He only had a see-through plastic shield to protect himself.

"I was on the front with the shields with the other officer who was doing the filming, and we were getting hit," he said.

The pair were hit with bottles and fruit.

"It just seemed surreal. We were then getting attacked with tins of baked beans and soup. We weren't trained for that.

"We were getting hit all the time with missiles. I thought it is only going to be a matter of time when we will get hit with something that will cause me serious injury."

Former Met Police sergeant Simon Willmott said he was conscious gangs operated in Tottenham and the rioters could be armed

While not specifically afraid for his life, at the back of his mind was the knowledge he could be shot at too.

"Being in an area such as this [Tottenham, north London] with the link to firearms that it has, there's that risk of threat as well," he added.

Flitting through his mind was the thought: "Is a gunman going to come out of the rioters and suddenly shoot at you?"

Years of training and experience stopped him from being paralysed with fear though.

Peaches Geldof: Writer and TV presenter dies aged 25 - 7 April 2014

Peaches Geldof, second daughter of musician Bob Geldof and the late Paula Yates, has died aged 25, leaving a husband and two sons. "We are beyond pain," said her father, confirming her death. "She was the wildest, funniest, cleverest, wittiest and the most bonkers of all of us."

Police, who were called to an address in Kent around lunchtime on Monday, say the death is currently being treated as "unexplained and sudden".

Geldof was 11 when her own mother died.

TV presenter Yates died of a drug overdose in September 2000. In September 2012 Geldof said she had not been able to come to terms with her mother's death for several years.

Her final tweet, posted on Sunday, linked to an Instagram picture of her, as a baby, in her mother's arms. The caption simply read: "Me and my mum."

Her father Bob Geldof said in a statement: "How is this possible that we will not see her again? How is that bearable?"

"We loved her and will cherish her forever. How sad that sentence is."

In a statement, Kent Police said: "Police were called at 13:35 BST on 7 April, 2014 to an address near Wrotham following a report of concern for the welfare of a woman."

"A woman aged 25 was pronounced dead by South East Coast Ambulance Service."

"Officers are working to establish the circumstances around the death."

The writer and TV presenter was married to musician Thomas Cohen, with whom she had two sons, Astala, one, and Phaedra, who will turn one on 24 April.

Bob Geldof's statement: Peaches has died. We are beyond pain. She was the wildest, funniest, cleverest, wittiest and the most bonkers of all of us.

Writing "was" destroys me afresh. What a beautiful child. How is this possible that we will not see her again? How is that bearable? We loved her and will cherish her forever. How sad that sentence is.

Tom and her sons Astala and Phaedra will always belong in our family, fractured so often, but never broken.

Bob, Jeanne, Fifi, Pixie and Tiger Geldof.

"My beloved wife Peaches was adored by myself and her two sons," said Cohen in a statement.

"I shall bring them up with their mother in their hearts everyday. We shall love her forever."

'Numb' about mother

Born in 1989, Peaches Honeyblossom Geldof embarked on a media career at the age of 15, when she began writing a column for Elle magazine.

She left home at 16 and went on to contribute to the Telegraph and the Guardian, as well as TV shows including ITV2's OMG! with Peaches Geldof.

She also worked as a model and, just last week, attended a launch for Tesco's F&F clothing range in London.

Feline first: Gus the cat entered in Australian dog swimming race - Mon 23 Dec 2019 - Alec Smart

Glenn Druery, the man who disrupted Australian politics, is causing an upset by wading into Sydney's Scotland Island dog swimming race with his pet Tonkinese

The Scotland Island dog swimming race has taken place in Pittwater, in Sydney's north, every Christmas Eve for the last 44 years, but in this year's race a wild-card entrant has thrown the cat among the pigeons (or the dogs more accurately). It's an 11-month-old Tonkinese cat named Gus.

Gus's owner has a history of shaking up contests. Glenn Druery, when he is not training Gus on Middle Harbour, he is better known as the "preference whisperer" due to his knack for getting minor parties across the line in complex Senate election deals.

In September 2013, he helped Motoring Enthusiast party's Ricky Muir get elected as a senator for Victoria on 0.5% of the primary vote.

ABC election analyst Antony Green said at the time that the series of deals Druery had brokered made a "joke" of Australia's democratic system. Druery brushed off the criticism: "I think, for democracy to work, everybody needs to have a say and be able to get elected; that's fair and that's reasonable."

The same system of harvesting preferences from minor parties was deployed by Druery to some degree of success in New South Wales in 1996 and 1999. He also twice stood as a candidate himself. Druery's ingrained competitiveness doesn't stop at politics, he has also twice competed in the 5,000km ultra-endurance cycling event Race Across America.

So can the man who disrupted Australian politics cause another upset by propelling Gus to victory on Christmas Eve against all odds?

It's unlikely.

Tonkinese, which are a cross between Siamese and Burmese, are not shy of water like most domestic cats, but they're not naturally as strong as the larger dogs competing in the 500 metre swim.

However, under the rules Druery can swim alongside Gus to enable it to climb on to his shoulders. The same rule applies to smaller dogs such as chihuahuas that compete in the event.

There's also the other 70 dogs – and their reaction to a cat in their midst – to consider.

Toby Jay, who co-manages a barge service around Scotland Island, says: "It should be kept as a dog race. With 50 to 60 dogs, all pretty excited, I would fear for the cat's safety."

Simone Biles: I went from foster care to the Olympics
By Simone Biles Updated 1752 GMT (0152 HKT) February 7, 2018

(CNN)People love to ask: "What's your secret?" Sometimes they want to know how I defy gravity on the mat. Other times they want to know how I went from foster care to the Olympics.

My answer to both is the same: a mix of talent, hard work and grabbing the right opportunity when given the chance. When I was far too young to know it, others around me saw that I had a gift for gymnastics. Without their encouragement and support, I would have never been a gymnast.

I was blessed to have both a gift and the chance to develop it. But many people aren't so lucky.

Did you know that in the United States there are nearly 400,000 children and youth in foster care? In my mind, those are 400,000 talents waiting to be discovered. But as few as 3% of foster kids go on to earn a bachelor's degree, compared to about 30% of the general population.

Is it possible that all of these young people have no desire to go on to higher education? Clearly not. They simply lack the support, and often the financial resources and opportunity to realize their potential.

So, I'm speaking up on their behalf to say it's time for an education revolution. It's time for a new model, where everyone has an opportunity to learn no matter their background.

And I want to advocate for these kids because I was a foster care kid myself. My road to success began the day my grandfather and his wife officially adopted my sister and me. My birth mother suffered from drug addiction, and when I was just three years old, my siblings and I were removed from her custody. From there, we bounced around until I was six and my grandparents made the brave move to adopt us. Although I was young when my foster care ordeal began, I remember how it felt to be passed off and over-looked. Like nobody knew me or wanted to know me. Like my talents didn't count, and my voice didn't matter.

Finding a family made me feel like I mattered. Finding a passion, something I loved and was really good at, made me feel like I mattered. Representing my country and being part of such an amazing Olympic team matters, as does being a role model for those looking to fulfill their own dreams.

Which brings me to the issue of education. There is overwhelming evidence to suggest that children and youth in foster care are a vulnerable population in the education system. Across the United States, 52% of foster youth attend schools that rank in the lowest 30%. Worse yet, nearly a quarter of foster youth struggle with learning disabilities in the school system.

Parkland student: My generation won't stand for this
By Cameron Kasky - Updated 1713 GMT (0113 HKT) February 20, 2018
Parkland student makes demand to lawmakers

Though we made it home, 17 people didn't. Those 17 people were murdered on the grounds of a school that has always felt like the safest place to be in a town that's been called the safest town in Florida.

We can't ignore the issues of gun control that this tragedy raises. And so, I'm asking -- no, demanding -- we take action now.

Why? Because at the end of the day, the students at my school felt one shared experience -- our politicians abandoned us by failing to keep guns out of schools.

But this time, my classmates and I are going to hold them to account. This time we are going to pressure them to take action. This time we are going to force them to spend more energy protecting human lives than unborn fetuses.

One of the most frustrating arguments I've heard is that it wasn't the Republican Party that killed those people and it wasn't the National Rifle Association -- it was the shooter himself. I understand where they are coming from. I do not believe this was a direct attack from the Republicans or their close allies at the NRA.

One of the most frustrating arguments I've heard is that it wasn't the Republican Party that killed those people and it wasn't the National Rifle Association -- it was the shooter himself. I understand where they are coming from. I do not believe this was a direct attack from the Republicans or their close allies at the NRA.

However, the shooter is not the only one responsible for this tragedy. While the alleged shooter may have had several issues, he also lived in a society where Sen. Marco Rubio refuses to take responsibility for the role gun culture may have played in this tragedy.

And there is no denying that the NRA continues to donate millions of dollars to politicians at every level of government. Then those politicians -- often "family values" conservatives -- rile up their base by making them think that "liberals" are going to take their guns away. Not knowing any better, some of these people stockpile guns in advance of a gun ban that never comes, and the gun manufacturers and the NRA make millions.

But the truth is that the politicians on both sides of the aisle are to blame. The Republicans, generally speaking, take large donations from the NRA and are therefore beholden to their cruel agenda. And the Democrats lack the organization and the votes to do anything about it.

I'm just a high school student, and I do not pretend to have all of the answers. However, even in my position, I can see that there is desperate need for change -- change that starts by folks showing up to the polls and voting all those individuals who are in the back pockets of gun lobbyists out of office.

Please do it for me. Do it for my fellow classmates. We can't vote, but you can, so make it count.

Volcanologist: Why Hawaii's volcano is in danger of going ballistic
By Einat Lev - Updated 2140 GMT (0540 HKT) May 14, 2018
Lava spills through Hawaii neighborhood

Einat Lev, a volcanologist, is an assistant research professor at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University. Her research, funded by the National Science Foundation, is focused on lava flow dynamics at different volcanoes, including in Hawaii. The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of the author.

(CNN)Everyone has been looking at Kilauea volcano's lava flows. Sure, a wall of molten rock consuming a car is quite the sight. But as we all focus on the damage at Leilani Estates, we shouldn't forget that volcanoes are complex systems, where everything is connected. New warnings about flying ballistic blocks and sinking lava lakes help us remember!

This event -- beautiful, destructive, frightening -- also presents a moment for all of us to appreciate the immense power of the forces that never cease shaping our planet. We are reminded by Kilauea to stay humble in the face of nature. And for volcanologists, the eruption is an opportunity to share with the public what we know about how these massive, intricate systems work.

Indeed, as lava is spitting and oozing along Kilauea's East Rift Zone, there is action miles away at the top of the volcano. The pressure dropped below the lava lake at Kilauea's summit crater, Halema'umau', and lake levels have reached the lowest level since it formed back in 2008. The Copahue volcano emits smoke and ash above Caviahue, in Argentina & Neuquen province, in December 2012.

Water and hot rocks and magma are not a good combination -- they create steam, and steam causes explosions. Such explosions can release tall clouds of ash and toxic gas and throw rocks -- so called "ballistic blocks" -- as far as eight football field lengths.

This concern led to the latest warning from the Hawaii Volcano Observatory about the risk of explosions at the summit. It's happened before. In April and May of 1924, the lava lake filling Halema'uma'u crater drained. The draining followed an intense sequence of earthquakes, suggesting that the magma was moving away from the summit reservoir. Once the lake fell below the height of the local water table, steam-driven explosions began.

Photographs from that time show the ash cloud rising miles into the sky. In fact, it was tall enough to reach the jet stream, which propelled the ash more than 10 miles away from the crater. The Hawaii Volcano Observatory website has a wonderful summary of the 1924 explosions, including magnificent historic photos.

Rocks thrown up by a steam explosion are a big hazard. Some weigh as much as 8 tons! (That's about 4 pickup trucks). Back in 1924, one person was hit and killed by a ballistic rock. Even the superintendent of the park at the time, Thomas Boles, was injured as he tried to escape one of these lava bombs.

In addition to rocks, ash is very hazardous to human health, as it can be a serious irritant to the eyes, skin, and the respiratory system. Therefore, in the coming weeks it will be critical to follow the updates from the USGS and Civil Defense regarding the status of Kilauea, not only at the lava flow field down at Leilani Estates, but also at the summit. Once again, nature has provided us with a demonstration of its forces. We should seize this opportunity to learn from it as much as we can, together.

JEREMY CLARKSON Just leave Greta Thunberg's Extinction Rebellion groupies glued to the railings to cause a real stink
COMMENT-Jeremy Clarkson-19 Oct 2019, 0:36Updated: 19 Oct 2019, 0:37

TODAY, thousands of mums and dads will climb into their Volvos and drive to London to pick up their Extinction Rebellion kids, who've spent the past two weeks at a fancy dress street party.

I was in the centre of the capital last night and God, it was annoying.

The police had a noisy helicopter hovering overhead. Streets were closed and everywhere you looked, there were people saying: "Oh look you've come as a broccoli. What do you think of my Grim Reaper suit?"

Like almost all sensible adults, I'll be glad to see the back of them, but I fear our relief will be short lived. Because when the weather improves, we can be certain they'll be back.

Only next time, I have devised a plan . . .

As we know, the police are so hamstrung by human rights red tape, they can't simply pick up these halfwits by the ears and lob them in the river.

Each one must be carried, gently, by five trained officers to a comfortable van and then driven off for a nice cup of tea.

SITTING ABOUT HUMMING

Water canon? Tasers? A clip round the ear? Not a chance.

So, how's this for an idea. As these fancy dress enthusiasts are largely middle-class kids, they really don't want to throw a plant pot through a shop window. They don't want to riot. They just want to sit about humming. So, let's not waste a single minute of police time on them.

We therefore let plod get on with the problem of knife crime while we handle the eco protesters ourselves.

We saw that happen this week. Early-morning commuters got to the Tube station for the cramped journey to work to find that one of the eco loonies had climbed on to the roof of the train.

Did they call for the police? Did they entice him down with celery? No. They threw stuff at him, and when that didn't work, they climbed up there themselves and threw him very roughly to the ground. Excellent.

by Arthur C. Brooks, taken from *The New York Times*.

To be happier, start thinking more about your death - 9th January 2016

Want a better 2016? Try thinking more about your impending demise.

Years ago on a visit to Thailand, I was surprised to learn that Buddhist monks often contemplate the photos of corpses in various stages of decay. The Buddha himself recommended corpse meditation. "This body, too," students were taught to say about their own bodies, "such is its nature, such is its future, such its unavoidable fate."

Paradoxically, this meditation on death is intended as a key to better living. It makes disciples aware of the transitory nature of their own physical lives and stimulates a realignment between momentary desires and existential goals. In other words, it makes one ask, "Am I making the right use of my scarce and precious life?"

In fact, most people suffer grave misalignment. In a 2004 article in the journal *Science*, a team of scholars, including the Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman, surveyed a group of women to compare how much satisfaction they derived from their daily activities. Among voluntary activities, we might expect that choices would roughly align with satisfaction. Not so. The women reported deriving more satisfaction from prayer, worship and meditation than from watching television. Yet the average respondent spent more than five times as long watching TV as engaging in spiritual activities.

If anything, this study understates the misalignment problem. The American Time Use Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that, in 2014, the average American adult spent four times longer watching television than "socializing and communicating," and 20 times longer on TV than on "religious and spiritual activities." The survey did not ask about hours surfing the web, but we can imagine a similar disparity.

This misalignment leads to ennui and regret. I'm reminded of a friend who was hopelessly addicted to British crossword puzzles (the ones with clues that seem inscrutable to Americans, such as, "The portly gentleman ate his cat, backwards"). A harmless pastime, right? My friend didn't think so — he was so racked with guilt after wasting hours that he consulted a psychotherapist about how to quit. (The advice: Schedule a reasonable amount of time for crosswords and stop feeling guilty.)

While few people share my friend's interest, many share his anxiety. Millions have resolved to waste less time in 2016 and have already failed. I imagine some readers of this article are filled with self-loathing because they just wasted 10 minutes on a listicle titled "Celebrities With Terrible Skin."

This is an article from the Guardian newspaper by Charlie Brooker, the English satirist and broadcaster. He has worked in television, radio, print and online media.

Charlie Brooker: 'Too much talk for one planet: why I'm reducing my word emissions'

I've been overwhelmed by the amount of jabber in the world – it's a vast cloud of blah. Eagle-eyed readers may have spotted I haven't been writing this column for a while. Roughly two people noticed its absence, until the other day when a paragraph in Private Eye claimed I'd asked Alan Rusbridger, editor of the Guardian, to switch off the reader comments underneath my articles (not true), and that he'd refused to do so (also not true), so I'd quit (not entirely true). This led to an intense flurry of activity, by which I mean four people asked me about it.

Although the Private Eye story wasn't completely wrong – I have stopped doing this particular column for a while, for reasons I'll explain in a moment – I was all set to write to their letters page to whine in the most pompous manner imaginable, something I've always secretly wanted to do, when I figured I might as well respond here instead, for money.

Incidentally, I'm aware this is Olympic-level navel gazing, but you're a human being with free will who can stop reading any time. Here, have a full stop. And another. And another. There are exits all over this building.

Anyway, I haven't quit the newspaper, but I have, for the meantime, stopped writing weekly, partly because my overall workload was making that kind of timetable impossible, and partly because I've recently been overwhelmed by the sheer amount of jabber in the world: a vast cloud of blah I felt I was contributing to every seven days.

If a weatherman misreads the national mood and cheerfully siegheils on BBC Breakfast at 8.45am, there'll be 86 outraged columns, 95 despairing blogs, half a million wry tweets and a rib-tickling pass-the-parcel Photoshop meme about it circulating by lunchtime. It happens every day. Every day, a billion instantly conjured words on any contemporaneous subject you can think of. Events and noise, events and noise; everything was starting to resemble nothing but events and noise. Firing more words into the middle of all that began to strike me as futile and unnecessary. I started to view myself as yet another factory mindlessly pumping carbon dioxide into a toxic sky.

This is perhaps not the ideal state of mind for someone writing a weekly column in a newspaper. Clearly it was time for a short break. Reader comments form part of the overall wordstorm described above, and it's true I'm not a huge fan of them, but that's chiefly because I'm an elderly man from the age of steam who clings irrationally to the outmoded belief that articles and letters pages should be kept separate, just like church and state. I guess conceptually I still think I'm writing in a "newspaper", even though the reality of what that means has changed beyond measure since I started doing it. So now I'm sitting grumpily in a spaceship with my arms folded, wearing a stovepipe hat. Ridiculous.

These days most newspaper sites are geared towards encouraging interaction with the minuscule fraction of readers who bother to interact back, which is a pity because I'm selfishly uninterested in conducting any kind of meaningful dialogue with humankind in general. I'd say Twitter's better for back-and-forth discussion anyway, if you could be arsed with it. Yelling out the window at passersby is another option.

Ian Birrell: 'As gay people celebrate, the treatment of the disabled just gets worse'

As gay people celebrate, the treatment of the disabled just gets worse

With more spending cuts looming, are we content to leave one minority locked out of society as second-class citizens?

They were clearing up the confetti, nursing hangovers and disappearing on honeymoons yesterday after the first batch of gay marriages in Britain. It was a remarkable moment as the contented couples celebrated their unions with the traditional kiss. Within my lifetime, homosexuality has been first legalised, then embraced into everyday normality. ... The ceremonies mark a milestone in the bumpy march towards tolerance and equality. We should rejoice at the speed with which people who were once jailed, mocked and used as a political football have taken their correct place at the heart of society. Politicians of all hues deserve praise for displaying courage in confronting the misanthropes who sought to stop lesbian and gay people from enjoying rights that the rest take for granted.

Problems remain with homophobic bullying in schools and bigotry abroad. But the reform shows how quickly attitudes can change. ...

We have seen a similar rapid shift in attitudes on gender and race, for all the hurdles that still exist for both women and ethnic minorities. Yet, amid all the discussion of diversity and selfcongratulatory talk of tolerance, one minority remains stuck in the shadows of society. Indeed, many members would argue that their life is getting worse, with hostility growing.

These are people with disabilities, a group growing fast in our ageing society. ...

Not only are people with disabilities far less likely to be in work despite being the most loyal employees, but almost two-thirds of those who develop a disability have lost their job within two years. ...

Reported hate crime is rising, with stories of awful abuse commonplace... You can multiply all these damning statistics – the terrible stories of routine harassment – for people with learning difficulties. Just imagine the rightful outcry if this was happening to people because of their gender, sexuality or skin colour.

So why is this happening in the wake of the Paralympics, with all that optimistic talk of transforming attitudes? ...

Tsunami Eyewitness Account by Nat Geo Photographer

The best way to describe this—because we grew up with the images and we all know what it looked like—is that Banda Aceh looks like Hiroshima after the atomic bomb. It's totally destroyed. The buildings have been flattened for miles and entire communities—probably something like a hundred thousand people—have been swept out to sea.

It's day 15 [January 10, 2005] since the disaster, and still there are vast areas where exposed bodies can be seen lying around, decaying. Just cleaning up, picking up the bodies, remains the biggest challenge.

The medical situation is just as daunting. Hundreds of thousands of survivors are refugees, squatting in makeshift camps wherever you go. A lot of relief agencies are trying to get in here to set things up. But the logistics remain a nightmare.

Everyone is very impressed with the U.S. military relief effort and the UN's coordination of some 200 different [charity organizations] setting up here. The urgent challenge is to make sure that another hundred thousand people don't die from disease.

The horror of this place reminds me of something from a biblical disaster story or the sketches of Hieronymus Bosch [a painter of monstrous scenes of hell]. Everywhere I go I have to be careful I don't step on a corpse.

The magnitude of this thing is that this goes on for hundreds of miles in both directions. In one area some 10 square miles [25 square kilometers] of the city was completely flattened. It is feared that something like 30,000 bodies are still in there.

The government has confirmed 95,000 dead and 77,000 missing. They are likely soon to convert that 77,000 missing into confirmed dead. Are the emergency supplies of food and medicine getting through to the people?

Food and medical aid is arriving, and it is getting to the survivors. An infrastructure is being set up here in Banda Aceh—but the needs are huge. We still see a lot of people with broken bones that have not received treatment. We see people with deep lacerations that have been covered with a dirty rag.

The U.S. military works here from dawn to dusk, and cruise ships have arrived from Singapore with relief workers and supplies. People are very, very appreciative that we are here. They appreciate America's help. People come up to me all the time to say thanks, give me a hug, or start crying in appreciation. The U.S. military is being well received.

It's going to be interesting to see how the massive amount of money raised in the U.S. and other countries will translate into help on the ground. The bottleneck is a challenge. So many people are here and so much assistance is coming in. Getting it out to all the outlying places and all the people who need it is a problem.

Book Of A Lifetime: Of Mice And Men, By John Steinbeck

By Graham Joyce-Friday 3 December 2010 01:00

A shuffling sixth-former returning a copy of Steinbeck's classic to the school library, I had to squeeze past two teachers. "What's the next stage Joyce?" said one. He was a grizzled old Welshman and he disapproved of the long hair growing way below my collar. "A spear and a bone through the nose?" The second teacher moved in and grabbed my book. He was new: younger, hipper, sympathetic. I was ready for more withering sarcasm but instead he said: "Steinbeck. The man. Cain and Abel, right?"

I'd enjoyed reading the book. I liked its mix of compassion, anguish and political edge, and I admired its accessible language. About Cain and Abel I hadn't got a clue. But because I was seventeen I stroked an imaginary beard and nodded sagely, as if the younger teacher and I shared a secret from which the grizzled old Housemaster was excluded. "Cain and Abel. Right."

I knew vaguely that Cain had killed Abel, but I had no biblical context for this scrap of knowledge. That chance remark by the young teacher sent me away to find out more.

I found out Cain was a crop farmer and Abel a shepherd. The murder had happened (depending on which version you read) because God had given the prettiest wife to Abel simply because he favoured Abel's work.

Thus sexual jealousy came into the equation, not to mention arbitrary injustice. I found that a mark had been put on Cain and that he would wander the earth and that the earth would never again reward him with a fair crop.

I re-read 'Of Mice and Men', and this time the pages blazed in my hands. Suddenly it was an illuminated manuscript. The migrant labourers wandering the spoiled earth of the American dustbowl were trying to get back to Eden. George and Lennie were descendants of Cain and Abel, brothers in all but blood. Curley's wife carried the burden of sexual guilt. George had to slay Lennie; all over again, it seemed.

I was astonished. I felt like I'd never read a book properly before in my life. The novel was a smuggler's suitcase with a false bottom. Or it was a vast echo. Or it was an echo of a shadow. I was bewildered, feverish with the discovery that great writing had hidden galleries. The young teacher had been passing on a secret after all.

What's more it was all done without showy language or pretentious lyricism. Just the roaring force of narrative, profound and clear, executed with precision and restraint.

I went back, trying to find more writing with occult dimension, and I found them in naturalistic and fantastical works alike. Hemingway wasn't just writing about fishing. Tolkien wasn't just writing about elves. The principle of narrative trumped lyricism every time. What's more, if a work didn't have a ghost or echo, it could never be a great work. After 'Of Mice and Men', the act of reading would never be the same again.

Rock Critics Really Blew Their Reviews of Queen's 'Bohemian Rhapsody'

BY LILY ROTHMAN - OCTOBER 30, 2015

The song "Bohemian Rhapsody"—which was released 40 years ago, Oct. 31, 1975—did not appear destined for the hit parade. It was, in TIME's words, "a six-minute cut that mingles introspection with Gilbert and Sullivan operatics" by a band with little public profile. Yet it quickly topped the charts in England and propelled Queen on a 21-city U.S. tour.

The critics never saw it coming.

"Unfortunately," TIME opined, "Queen's lyrics are not the stuff of sonnets." The New York Times, reviewing a 1978 appearance at Madison Square Garden came down equally hard: "Lyrically, Queen's songs manage to be pretentious and irrelevant. Musically, for all the virtuosity—though it was cheating a bit to turn over the complex middle portion of their 'Bohemian Rhapsody' to a taped version, with empty stage and flashing lights—the songs still sound mostly pretty empty, all flash and calculation."

Rolling Stone didn't mention the song in its review of the album A Night at the Opera ("The Prophet's Song" got top billing as the best track) but later referred to the song as a "brazen hodgepodge."

But that skepticism is long gone. Rolling Stone eventually put "Bohemian Rhapsody" on its list of the 500 greatest songs ever, and it also has pride of place on TIME's own list of the greatest songs since 1923.

Joker review – the most disappointing film of the year

Peter Bradshaw's film of the week-Joker

Why so serious? Todd Phillips' solemn but shallow supervillain origins movie has a strong performance by Joaquin Phoenix but is weighed down by realist detail and tedious material

The year's biggest disappointment has arrived. It emerges with weirdly grownup self-importance from the tulip fever of festival awards season as an upscale spin on an established pop culture brand. Last year we had Luca Guadagnino's solemn version of *Suspiria*, and now it's *Joker*, from director and co-writer Todd Phillips: a new origin myth for Batman's most famous supervillain opponent.

Joaquin Phoenix plays Arthur Fleck, a pathetic loser and loner in Gotham City, some time in the early 1980s. Arthur is a former inpatient at a psychiatric facility but is now allowed to live with his elderly mother, Penny (Frances Conroy), in her scuzzy apartment. Poor Arthur has a neurological condition that means he is liable to break into screeching laughter at inopportune moments. He has a crush on his single-mom neighbour Sophie (Zazie Beetz) and pines to be a comedian, hero-worshipping cheesy TV host Murray Franklin (Robert De Niro). But he can only get a job as a clown in grinning makeup and floppy-toed shoes twirling an advertising banner outside a store, where he is bullied and beaten up by young thugs passing by. One day, after the humiliation and despair become too much to bear, Arthur gets hold of a gun and discovers that his talent is not for comedy but violence.

Phillips has already directed a film featuring a brilliant unfunny-funny figure with learning difficulties: Alan in *The Hangover*, played by Zach Galifianakis, that strange dysfunctional figure who mispronounces the noun "retard". I wonder what *Joker* would be like with Galifianakis in the lead. Well, the casting of Phoenix indicates more clearly how sexy *Joker* is supposed to be.

There is great production design by Mark Friedberg, some tremendous period cityscape images by cinematographer Lawrence Sher, and a strong performance by Phoenix, though not his best – it is not as good as his appearance in Paul Thomas Anderson's *The Master*. The film holds your attention up until *Joker*'s terrible revenge bloodbath on the subway early on, perhaps intended to echo the notorious Bernhard Goetz shooting of 1984 – although Phillips prudently makes it a non-racist attack. After this, the film loses your interest, with tedious and forced material about *Joker*'s supposed triggering of an anti-capitalist, anti-rich movement with protesters dressing as clowns. *Joker*'s own criminal and serial-killer career bafflingly fizzles.

The film makes reference to movies from around the drama's era, such as the *Death Wish* films, *The French Connection* and maybe even *Star Wars*, but it's more obviously a laborious and pointless homage to the Scorsese/De Niro classic *The King of Comedy* with a bit of *Taxi Driver*, which means that at various moments it's a bit like *The King of Comedy* and *Taxi Driver*, only not as good.

The connection is signalled by the casting of De Niro himself, but it is nonetheless unearned and pedantic, especially compared to Lynne Ramsey's *You Were Never Really Here*, also starring Phoenix as a loner living with his mom, which managed the connection more adroitly.

The whole idea of the malign clown should be very relevant. We live in an era of trolling, incels and internet bullying. (The grisly Milo Yiannopoulos described himself as a "supervillain" on his now cancelled Twitter bio.) There's nothing wrong and everything right with engaging with all of this – and the "copycat" row is a red herring. But, perhaps because online aggression is difficult to dramatise, Phillips understandably wanted his film to be set in a pre-web age. Yet he cheats an anachronistic quasi-YouTube moment into his story when a video of Arthur's catastrophic attempt at standup comedy somehow emerges. (I wonder if there wasn't an earlier, contemporary-set draft of the script.)

This *Joker*'s genesis is determinedly mature and uncartoony, compared to, say, Jack Nicholson's low-level crook Jack Napier falling into a chemical vat in Tim Burton's *Batman*, turning him into the *Joker* with white skin, green hair and a rictus grin. (The look of DC's *Joker* was originally inspired by Conrad Veidt in the 1928 silent classic *The Man Who Laughs*, a man whose face was disfigured into a grin by his father's political enemies.)

There is no reason why Phoenix's elaborately backstoried *Joker* shouldn't be as powerful as Heath Ledger's mysterious, motiveless, originless *Joker* in *The Dark Knight*. But at some stage the comic-book world of supervillaindom has to be entered, and Ledger was more powerful because he wasn't weighed down with all this realist detail and overblown ironic noir grandeur, and he wasn't forced to carry an entire story on his own. This *Joker* has just one act in him: the first act. The film somehow manages to be desperately serious and very shallow.

This is a review of Anna Whittham's novel *Boxer Handsome* by the freelance editor, presenter and journalist, Flemmich Webb.

Book review: 'Boxer Handsome' by Anna Whittham

Boxer Handsome is Anna Whittham's first novel and was inspired by her grandfather, John Poppy, a young featherweight boxer at the Crown & Manor Boys Club in Hoxton. This familial connection gives this exciting debut an authenticity, which allied to a confident writing style, suggests Whittham has a promising future ahead of her.

The story opens with Bobby fighting childhood friend Connor over a girl. Both amateur boxers in the same boxing club in East London, they are due to fight each other in the ring in a divisional competition in a week's time, but this flurry of fists takes place by the canal, bare-knuckled and brutal. Bobby wins but can't resist a victorious act of brutality that drives subsequent events.

Whittham acknowledges the value of boxing in society – giving wayward kids a focus, trainers acting as father figures to young men – through Derek, who runs the Clapton Bow Boys Club and keeps an eye out for Bobby and his other charges.

But she doesn't shy away from its brutal side and the thin line that separates regulated fighting in the ring from unfettered violence outside it. Casualties of this world lay strewn throughout the world Whittham creates. Joe, Bobby's father, was once a decent boxer himself, but is now a sad alcoholic, a broken shell of a man with none of the respect that his fists once commanded. Bobby's mother, a victim of domestic abuse at the hands of Joe, sees history repeating itself as her son follows in his dad's footsteps, a slave to the code of honour that this macho world demands. There's something of Shakespeare's emotionally stunted warrior, Coriolanus, in Bobby. When he meets a local girl, Chloe, he suddenly glimpses an alternative to the world he has inhabited since birth. The tragedy is that he lacks the emotional skills to seize this chance.

Whittham's writing is as sharp as a one-two combination, short punchy sentences that capture effectively the brooding atmosphere of the East End, the threat of violence at every turn and the savagery of fighting. "Then [he] cracked the bridge of his nose wide open. Skin split. Blood spat. Connor stumbled about headless."

But the book is tender, too, a change of pace that deepens the emotional resonance of the characters. Bobby is uncharacteristically unsure of himself when he first takes Chloe on a date: "She had a grip on him, a spell that held him in awkward moments he couldn't get out of." This is a promising debut, and it will be interesting to see how Whittham handles subject matter in subsequent novels that is more distant from her own experience.

This is a review published in the FT Weekend magazine of the television drama *The Bridge* by the TV, radio and film critic, Martin Hoyle.

Pick of the Weekend: *The Bridge*

By Martin Hoyle

Saturday is complete again: Scandinavian noir is back. After the civilised machinations of Danish politics in *Borgen*, we plunge into the dark world of terrorism, mass killing and poisonous grudges underlying humane, orderly Nordic society.

The second season of *The Bridge* (BBC 4 9pm) resumes thirteen months after the story of the first ended, with an opening less gruesome but just as eerie when an apparently unmanned coaster crashes into the Øresund Bridge. The five drugged youngsters found chained on board trigger more joint Danish-Swedish police cooperation. Hoorah for the chalk and cheese combination of frowzy, easy-going Martin (Kim Bodnia) and the unsmiling, briskly robotic Aspergerish Saga (Sofia Helin).

Things have changed, of course. Martin is still recovering from the murder of his son by last season's mass killer who, though safely imprisoned, haunts him to the point of obsession.

Saga's antiseptic, angular, pre-eminently logical psyche is disturbed by her efforts at normal relationships. She has learnt to detect when people are making jokes and laughs heartily if unconvincingly, hurt when Martin gently points out that this is unnecessary. 'I acknowledge their attempts to be amusing,' she explains earnestly...

Saturday's brace of episodes is rich with subplots, vivid subsidiary characters and a reminder that even mass terrorism can be rooted in the skewed world picture of one unbalanced human. There emerges a common theme: connection, the failure to connect, the fear of abandonment and isolation, and the Nordic thriller's paradoxical juxtaposition of high principles and violent action, efficiency and murderousness. The dark is all-pervasive.

Bubala, London: 'Exuberantly vegetarian' – restaurant review - Jay Rayner - Sun 29 Dec 2019 06.00 GMT
If you love vibrant Mediterranean dishes, Bubala will be your East End sweetheart

Shortly after sitting down at Bubala, I felt a chill breeze. I looked across to the front door, which was flapping open. As a customer left, they pulled it shut behind them. It sprung open again, just enough to let in a gust of frigid air. I studied the narrow, L-shaped dining room with its textured walls in light shades of oatmeal, and its bar tiled in jade green, and its hard-wooden banquettes, with their sky-blue panels. The colours may have changed, but everything else was familiar, including my plummeting core temperature. I got out my phone and did something I never, ever, ever do, because it's hideously vain and I am absolutely not that person. Not at all. Not me. I Googled myself.

I thought I recognised that cold wind. Exactly two years ago I sat in this very same dining room, on Commercial Street in east London. Back then it was an ill-conceived modish Indian restaurant, limbering up to die. In that review I also whined about the door. "Efficiently, on a cold November lunchtime," I wrote, "the open front door channels chilly air right to the back corner. We ask for it to be closed more than once." Here then, is the one message I would love the management of Bubala to take away from this review. Rehang the bloody door. Take it off its hinges and loosen them. It will never close properly unless you do so and your diners will be cold throughout the winter and do you really want me to sit here and freeze my tuchus off?

The small lurch into Yiddish is appropriate. Bubala is roughly the Yiddish for sweetheart or darling. It's what a mother calls her child; what a husband calls his wife. Yiddish is the language of the Ashkenazi Jews of central and eastern Europe. And yet the menu at Bubala concerns itself with food from the far eastern Mediterranean and Spain, which I associate with the Sephardim. Certainly, do not come here looking for a salt-beef bagel. Indeed, do not come here looking for any meat at all. It is entirely, robustly, exuberantly vegetarian. The menu may reference ingredients you have never heard of. Still, in an age dominated by the great Yotam Ottolenghi we are all skilled at nodding sagely at such things, to indicate we get the drift, if not the details. Labneh Schabneh as no one has ever said, until now.

We order their pickles, to crunch away at while we blink at the menu. There are taut quarters of green tomato, and slabs of carrot in a sweet-sour brine with the lofty aromatics of cumin. Their take on hummus, whipped up with brown butter and tahini, arrives with an indentation filled with olive oil, chickpeas, toasted pine nuts and roughly chopped parsley. It is smooth and close to a light peanut butter. Next to this is a pumpkin tirshy, a Moroccan dip the colour of a dying sun, with the acidity of preserved lemons, the fire of harissa and the light bitterness of kalamata olives. We worry that we do not have enough of their pillowy, singed flatbread to do these dishes justice. Somehow, we manage.

John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address in Washington on January 20, 1961

This is an extract from the speech by John F. Kennedy at his inauguration, a formal ceremony to mark the beginning of his term of office as President of the United States of America.

To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny. We shall not always expect to find them supporting our view. But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom - and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside.

To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required - not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

To our sister republics south of our border, we offer a special pledge: to convert our good words into good deeds, in a new alliance for progress, to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty. But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers. Let all our neighbours know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas. And let every other power know that this hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house.

To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instruments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support - to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective, to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak, and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run.

Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental selfdestruction. We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.

But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course - both sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war.

So let us begin anew - remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.

Colonel Tim Collins to 1st Battalion, Royal Irish Regiment, in Iraq in 2003

This is the eve-of-battle speech made by Colonel Tim Collins to the 1st Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment in 2003, prior to British troops entering Iraq.

"We go to liberate, not to conquer.

We will not fly our flags in their country. We are entering Iraq to free a people and the only flag which will be flown in that ancient land is their own.

Show respect for them.

There are some who are alive at this moment who will not be alive shortly.

Those who do not wish to go on that journey, we will not send.

As for the others, I expect you to rock their world.

Wipe them out if that is what they choose.

But if you are ferocious in battle remember to be magnanimous in victory.

Iraq is steeped in history.

It is the site of the Garden of Eden, of the Great Flood and the birthplace of Abraham.

Tread lightly there.

You will see things that no man could pay to see - and you will have to go a long way to find a more decent, generous and upright people than the Iraqis.

You will be embarrassed by their hospitality even though they have nothing.

Don't treat them as refugees for they are in their own country.

Their children will be poor, in years to come they will know that the light of liberation in their lives was brought by you.

If there are casualties of war then remember that when they woke up and got dressed in the morning they did not plan to die this day.

Allow them dignity in death.

Bury them properly and mark their graves.

It is my foremost intention to bring every single one of you out alive.

But there may be people among us who will not see the end of this campaign.

We will put them in their sleeping bags and send them back.

9 Speech

There will be no time for sorrow.

The enemy should be in no doubt that we are his nemesis and that we are bringing about his rightful destruction.

There are many regional commanders who have stains on their souls and they are stoking the fires of hell for Saddam.

He and his forces will be destroyed by this coalition for what they have done.

As they die they will know their deeds have brought them to this place. Show them no pity.

It is a big step to take another human life.

Sacha Baron Cohen's scathing attack on Facebook in full: 'greatest propaganda machine in history'

Thank you, ADL, for this recognition and your work in fighting racism, hate and bigotry. And to be clear, when I say “racism, hate and bigotry” I’m not referring to the names of Stephen Miller’s Labradoodles.

Now, I realize that some of you may be thinking, what the hell is a comedian doing speaking at a conference like this! I certainly am. I’ve spent most of the past two decades in character. In fact, this is the first time that I have ever stood up and given a speech as my least popular character, Sacha Baron Cohen. And I have to confess, it is terrifying.

I realize that my presence here may also be unexpected for another reason. At times, some critics have said my comedy risks reinforcing old stereotypes.

The truth is, I’ve been passionate about challenging bigotry and intolerance throughout my life. As a teenager in the UK, I marched against the fascist National Front and to abolish apartheid. As an undergraduate, I traveled around America and wrote my thesis about the civil rights movement, with the help of the archives of the ADL. And as a comedian, I’ve tried to use my characters to get people to let down their guard and reveal what they actually believe, including their own prejudice.

Now, I’m not going to claim that everything I’ve done has been for a higher purpose. Yes, some of my comedy, OK probably half my comedy, has been absolutely juvenile and the other half completely puerile. I admit, there was nothing particularly enlightening about me – as Borat from Kazakhstan, the first fake news journalist – running through a conference of mortgage brokers when I was completely naked.

But when Borat was able to get an entire bar in Arizona to sing “Throw the Jew down the well,” it did reveal people’s indifference to antisemitism. When – as Bruno, the gay fashion reporter from Austria – I started kissing a man in a cage fight in Arkansas, nearly starting a riot, it showed the violent potential of homophobia. And when – disguised as an ultra-woke developer – I proposed building a mosque in one rural community, prompting a resident to proudly admit, “I am racist, against Muslims” – it showed the acceptance of Islamophobia.

That’s why I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you. Today around the world, demagogues appeal to our worst instincts. Conspiracy theories once confined to the fringe are going mainstream. It’s as if the Age of Reason – the era of evidential argument – is ending, and now knowledge is delegitimized and scientific consensus is dismissed. Democracy, which depends on shared truths, is in retreat, and autocracy, which depends on shared lies, is on the march. Hate crimes are surging, as are murderous attacks on religious and ethnic minorities.

What do all these dangerous trends have in common? I’m just a comedian and an actor, not a scholar. But one thing is pretty clear to me. All this hate and violence is being facilitated by a handful of internet companies that amount to the greatest propaganda machine in history.

The greatest propaganda machine in history.

Think about it. Facebook, YouTube and Google, Twitter and others – they reach billions of people. The algorithms these platforms depend on deliberately amplify the type of content that keeps users engaged – stories that appeal to our baser instincts and that trigger outrage and fear. It’s why YouTube recommended videos by the conspiracist Alex Jones billions of times. It’s why fake news outperforms real news, because studies show that lies spread faster than truth. And it’s no surprise that the greatest propaganda machine in history has spread the oldest conspiracy theory in history – the lie that Jews are somehow dangerous. As one headline put it, “Just Think What Goebbels Could Have Done with Facebook.”

On the internet, everything can appear equally legitimate. Breitbart resembles the BBC. The fictitious Protocols of the Elders of Zion look as valid as an ADL report. And the rantings of a lunatic seem as credible as the findings of a Nobel prize winner. We have lost, it seems, a shared sense of the basic facts upon which democracy depends.

When I, as the wannabe gangsta Ali G, asked the astronaut Buzz Aldrin “what woz it like to walk on de sun?” the joke worked, because we, the audience, shared the same facts. If you believe the moon landing was a hoax, the joke was not funny.

When Borat got that bar in Arizona to agree that “Jews control everybody’s money and never give it back,” the joke worked because the audience shared the fact that the depiction of Jews as miserly is a conspiracy theory originating in the Middle Ages.

But when, thanks to social media, conspiracies take hold, it’s easier for hate groups to recruit, easier for foreign intelligence agencies to interfere in our elections, and easier for a country like Myanmar to commit genocide against the Rohingya.

Joe Biden was Barack Obama's Vice President. Obama gave this speech as part of a ceremony in which he presented Biden with the Presidential Medal of Freedom with Distinction. This is the highest honour which he could have given to Biden.

This has been quite a ride. It was eight and a half years ago that I chose Joe to be my vice president. There has not been a single moment since that time that I have doubted the wisdom of that decision. It was the best possible choice, not just for me but for the American people. This is an extraordinary man, with an extraordinary career in public service. This is somebody the people of Delaware sent to the Senate as quickly as they possibly could. [laughter]

Elected at age 29, for more than a dozen years a piece, he served as chair or ranking member of the Judiciary and Foreign Relation Committees. Domestically, he championed landmark legislation to make our communities safer, to protect our women from violence. Internationally, his wisdom and capacity to build the relationships that shaped our nation's response to the fall of the Berlin wall and the Iron Curtain, to counter-terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan. And for the past eight years, he could not have been a more devoted or effective partner in the progress that we've made.

He fought to make college more affordable and revitalise American manufacturing, as the head of our middle-class taskforce. He suited up for our Cancer Moonshot, giving hope to millions of Americans touched by this disease. He led our efforts to combat gun violence and he rooted out any possible misappropriations that might've occurred and as a consequence, the recovery act worked as well as just about any large-scale stimulus project has ever worked in this country. He visited college after college and made friends with Lady Gaga... [laughter] For our It's On Us campaign against campus sexual assault. And, when the pope visited, Joe was even kind enough to let me talk to the holiness, as well. [laughter]

Behind the scenes, Joe's candid, honest council has made me a better president and a better commander in chief. From the Situation Room, to our weekly lunches, to our huddles after everybody else has cleared out of the room, he's been unafraid to give it to me straight, even if we disagree. In fact, especially when we disagree. And all of this makes, in my belief, the finest vice president we have ever seen. And I also think he has been a lion of American history.

The best part is, he's nowhere close to finished. In the years, ahead as a citizen, he will continue to build on that legacy internationally and domestically. He's got a voice of vision and reason and optimism and love for people and we're going to need that -- that spirit and that vision as we continue to try to make our world safer and to make sure that everybody's got a fair shot in this country. So all told, that's a pretty remarkable legacy, an amazing career in public service. It is, as Joe once said, "a big deal." [laughter and applause]

On 20th January 2017, Donald Trump gave the following speech as part of his inauguration ceremony. He describes an America which is broken but which he will fix by giving power back to the people.

Chief Justice Roberts, President Carter, President Clinton, President Bush, President Obama, fellow Americans and people of the world, thank you.

We, the citizens of America are now joined in a great national effort to rebuild our country and restore its promise for all of our people. Together, we will determine the course of America and the world for many, many years to come. We will face challenges, we will confront hardships, but we will get the job done. Every four years we gather on these steps to carry out the orderly and peaceful transfer of power and we are grateful to President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama for their gracious aid throughout this transition. They have been magnificent. Thank you.

Today's ceremony however, has very special meaning, because today, we are not merely transferring power from one administration to another or from one party to another, but we are transferring power from Washington DC. and giving it back to you, the people. For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while others have borne the cost. Washington flourished, but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered, but the jobs left and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself but not the citizens of our country. Their victories have not been your victories. Their triumphs have not been your triumphs and while they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land.

That all changes starting right here and right now because this moment is your moment. It belongs to you. It belongs to everyone gathered here today and everyone watching all across America. This is your day. This is your celebration and this, the United States of America, is your country. What truly matters is not which party controls our government but whether our government is controlled by the people. January 20th 2017 will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again. The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer.

Everyone is listening to you now, you came by the tens of millions to become part of a historic movement, the likes of which the world has never seen before. At the centre of this movement is a crucial conviction, that a nation exists to serve its citizens. Americans want great schools for their children, safe neighbourhoods for their families and good jobs for themselves.

These are just and reasonable demands of righteous people and a righteous public but for too many of our citizens, a different reality exists: mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities; rusted-out factories, scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation; an education system flushed with cash but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge; and the crime and the gangs and the drugs that have stolen too many lives and robbed our country of so much unrealised potential.

This American carnage stops right here and stops right now.

In 2014, British Actor, Emma Watson, gave the following speech at the United Nations. It focuses on the need for more men and women to support the fight for equal rights for both genders. It also calls on people to join a movement called HeForShe.

Your Excellencies, UN Secretary General, President of the General Assembly, Executive Director of UN Women, and distinguished guests. Today we are launching a campaign called HeForShe. I am reaching out to you because we need your help. We want to end gender inequality, and to do this, we need everyone involved. This is the first campaign of its kind at the UN. We want to try and galvanise as many men and boys as possible to be advocates for change. And, we don't just want to talk about it. We want to try and make sure that it's tangible.

I was appointed as Goodwill Ambassador for UN Women six months ago. And, the more I've spoken about feminism, the more I've realized that fighting for women's rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating. If there is one thing I know for certain, it is that this has to stop.

For the record, feminism by definition is the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of political, economic and social equality of the sexes.

I started questioning gender-based assumptions a long time ago. When I was 8, I was confused for being called bossy because I wanted to direct the plays that we would put on for our parents, but the boys were not. When at 14, I started to be sexualized by certain elements of the media. When at 15, my girlfriends started dropping out of their beloved sports teams because they didn't want to appear muscly. When at 18, my male friends were unable to express their feelings.

I decided that I was a feminist, and this seemed uncomplicated to me. But my recent research has shown me that feminism has become an unpopular word. Women are choosing not to identify as feminists. Apparently, I'm among the ranks of women whose expressions are seen as too strong, too aggressive, isolating, and anti-men. Unattractive, even.

Why has the word become such an uncomfortable one? I am from Britain, and I think it is right that I am paid the same as my male counterparts. I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body. [applause] I think it is right that women be involved on my behalf in the policies and decisions that will affect my life. I think it is right that socially, I am afforded the same respect as men.

But sadly, I can say that there is no one country in the world where all women can expect to see these rights. No country in the world can yet say that they have achieved gender equality. These rights, I consider to be human rights, but I am one of the lucky ones.

Mhairi Black was the youngest Member of Parliament in 2016. She's a member of the Scottish National Party. This is the first speech which she gave to Parliament, in which she attacks the values and actions of the Conservative Party and reaches out to work with the Labour Party.

When I discovered it is tradition to speak about the history of your constituency in a maiden speech, I decided to do some research despite the fact I've lived there all my life. As one of the tail-end doing the maiden speech of my colleagues in the SNP I've noticed that my colleagues quite often mention Rabbin Burns a lot and they all try to form this intrinsic connection between him and their own constituency and own him for themselves. I, however, feel no need to do this for during my research I discovered a fact which trumps them all. William Wallace was born in my constituency.

Now, my constituency has a fascinating history far beyond the Hollywood film and historical name from the mills of Paisley, to the industries of Johnstone, right out to the weavers in Kilbarchan, it's got a wonderful population with a cracking sense of humour and much to offer both the tourists and to those who reside there.

But the truth is that within my constituency it's not all fantastic. We've watched our town centres deteriorate. We've watched our communities decline. Our unemployment level is higher than that of the UK average. One in five children in my constituency go to bed hungry at night. Paisley Job Centre has the third highest number of sanctions in the whole of Scotland.

Now, before I was elected I volunteered for a charitable organisation and there was a gentleman who I grew very fond of. He was one of these guys who has been battered by life in every way imaginable. You name it, he's been through it and he used to come in to get food from this charity, and it was the only food that he had access to and it was the only meal he would get. And I sat with him and he told me about his fear of going to the Job Centre. He said "I've heard the stories Mhairi, they, they try and trick you out, they'll tell you you're a liar. I'm not a liar Mhairi, I'm not."

And I told him "It's OK, calm down. Go, be honest, it'll be fine."

I then didn't see him for about two or three weeks. I did get very worried, and when he finally did come back in I said to him, "How did you get on?"

Michael Palin, *Around the World in 80 Days*

Day 29: 23 October

Another Sunday, and into my fifth week away. At this moment home seems very far off and the prospect of seeing family and friends again in fifty days utterly remote. But at least we are moving east, and there is daylight through the shutters. There's also an insistent pounding on the door. I open it and find a small, grubby bearded man standing there looking - disgruntled. He demands to know what I want for lunch:

'Chicken biryani very nice,' he proposes briskly, and when I don't show instant enthusiasm (it is seven o'clock in the morning) he looks irritated. 'Egg curry, Western style, very nice.'

An order for several biryani, accompanied by payment, is all that will get rid of him, and I hear him go on to the next compartment. He knocks at this door persistently for at least fifteen minutes, too afraid to open it, too dogged to give up.

Not wanting to wake the rest of the compartment, I visit the Western-style latrine, then consult the two railway officials sitting in the corridor as to our whereabouts. Guntakal Junction is the next stop. How long would that be?

'Fourteen minutes,' says one, very positively.

'Half an hour,' pronounces the other authoritatively.

We pull into Guntakal Junction forty-five minutes later. When I next look, both men are gone.

Outside there are rain clouds in the skies. A boy waves at the train, further on an older man pulls his trousers up after depositing another load of what is poetically known as night soil.

The bird life is rich and I wish I knew what they all were. Egrets perch on bullocks and the rest pose on the telegraph lines as if in an ID parade - parrots, hooded crows, shrike, kite, humming birds. Some of the bullocks' horns have been painted bright blues and reds. Pride of ownership, I'm told. Like putting 'Les and Christine' across your car windscreen. There are no tractors in the fields, not even a bicycle.

In this extract from *Lonely Planet's Better than Fiction*, novelist Marina Lewycka reveals how getting lost in the African bush led her to find paradise by Lake Malawi

It's easy to get off the beaten track in Malawi. In fact it can be difficult to stay on it, as we found one early evening in July three years ago, when we were driving up the lake road from Salima towards Nkhata Bay for a week's holiday, in my daughter's old low-slung Nissan Bluebird, her boyfriend at the wheel.

It was that dangerous twilight time, when the roads are swarming with villagers, their children, chickens, runaway piglets, wayward goats and workshy dogs, all dashing to get home before nightfall; drivers of vehicles without functioning lights or brakes career around potholes, also hurrying homewards. For twilight is short in Malawi, and when night comes, the darkness is absolute. Road accidents are frequent in this dusky light. Children are often the victims. It's also the time of day when disease-vector mosquitoes come out to feast on human blood.

It became obvious that we weren't going to get to Nkhata Bay that evening, and we'd have to stop somewhere overnight. We tried a couple of upmarket lodges, but they were closed, or full, or just didn't like the look of us. We were directed to other, more remote places, which either didn't exist, or were also full; we were beginning to get worried. Suddenly, out of the dusk, a crooked, hand-painted wooden sign flickered across our headlights: "Maia Beach Cafe Accommodashon". We let out a cheer, executed a U-turn, and set out down the sandy track signposted towards the beach.

After a kilometre or so, the track divided into a number of less distinct tracks. The tracks were definitely not beaten – they were hardly more than faint trails. There was no light ahead – in fact, there was no light anywhere, apart from the stars, which hung so close and bright you almost felt you could reach up and pick them out of the sky like low-hanging fruit.

Suddenly, our wheels hit a patch of soft sand, skidded, and sank in. The tyres were spinning, but not gripping. We were stuck. Getting out to assess the situation, we saw it was even worse than we had imagined. Three wheels were hopelessly churning up the sand; the fourth was spinning free, perched over a sandy bluff with a four-foot drop beneath. If we slipped down there, we would never, ever get the car out again. Beyond the narrow beam of our headlights, it was pitch black. All around us were prickly bushes, their vague menacing shapes blocking out the lie of the land. Swarms of mosquitoes smelled our fear, and swooped.

The Old Patagonian Express: an extract from the Paul Theroux travel book - An extract from the famous Paul Theroux travel book about the travel writer's train journey from the east coast of the USA down to South America.

One of us on that sliding subway train was clearly not heading for work. You would have known it immediately by the size of his bag. And you can always tell a fugitive by his vagrant expression of smugness; he seems to have a secret in his mouth – he looks as if he is about to blow a bubble.

But why be coy? I had woken in my old bedroom, in the house where I had spent the best part of my life. The snow lay deep around the house, and there were frozen footprints across the yard to the garbage can. A blizzard had just visited, another was expected to blow in soon. I had dressed and tied my shoes with more than usual care, and left the stubble on my upper lip for a moustache I planned to grow. Slapping my pockets to make sure my ballpoint and passport were safe, I went downstairs, past my mother's hiccupping cuckoo clock, and then to Wellington Circle to catch the train. It was a morning of paralysing frost, the perfect day to leave for South America.

For some, this was the train to Sullivan Square, or Milk Street, or at the very most Orient Heights; for me, it was the train to Patagonia. Two men using a foreign language spoke in low voices; there were others with lunch-boxes and valises and briefcases, and one lady with the sort of wrinkled department store bag that indicated she was going to return or exchange an unwanted item (the original bag lending veracity to the awkward operation).

The freezing weather had altered the faces in the multi-racial car: the whites cheeks looked rubbed with pink chalk, the Chinese were bloodless, the blacks ashen or yellow-grey. At dawn it had been 12F, by mid-morning it was 9F, and the temperature was still dropping. The cold wind gusted through the car as the doors opened at Haymarket, and it had the effect of silencing the muttering foreigners. They looked Mediterranean; they winced at the draught. Most of the people sat compactly, with their elbows against their sides and their hands in their laps, squinting and conserving their warmth.

They had affairs to attend to in town – work, shopping, banking, the embarrassing moment at the refund desk. Two had hefty textbooks in their laps, and a spine turned towards me read *A General Introduction to Sociology*. A man solemnly scanned the headlines in the *Globe*, another thumb-flicked the papers in his briefcase. A lady told her little girl to stop kicking and sit still. Now they were getting out at the windy platforms – after four stations the car was half-full. They would return that evening, having spent the day speaking of the weather. But they were dressed for it, office clothes under eskimo coats, gloves, mittens, woolly hats; resignation was on their faces and, already, a suggestion of fatigue. Not a trace of excitement; all this was usual and ordinary; the train was their daily chore.

Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan, Volume I - (of 2), by Isabella L. Bird

LETTER I - Basrah, Asiatic Turkey, Jan. 1, 1890.

A shamal or N.W. wind following on the sirocco which had accompanied us up "the Gulf" was lashing the shallow waters of the roadstead into reddish yeast as we let go the anchor opposite the sea front of Bushire, the most important seaport in Persia. The Persian man-of-war *Persepolis*, officered by Germans, H.M. ship *Sphinx*, two big steamers owned in London, a British-built three-masted clipper, owned and navigated by Arabs, and a few Arab native vessels tugged at their anchors between two and three miles from the shore. Native buggalows clustered and bumped round the trading vessels, hanging on with difficulty, or thumped and smashed through the short waves, close on the wind, easily handled and sailing magnificently, while the Residency steam-launch, puffing and toiling, was scarcely holding her own against a heavy head sea.

Bushire, though it has a number of two-storied houses and a population of 15,000, has a most insignificant appearance, and lies so low that from the Assyria's deck it gave the impression of being below the sea-level. The shamal was raising a sand storm in the desert beyond; the sand was drifting over it in yellow clouds, the mountains which at a greater or less distance give a wild sublimity to the eastern shores of the Gulf were blotted out, and a blurred and windy shore harmonised with a blurred and windy sea.

The steam-launch, which after several baffled attempts succeeded in reaching the steamer's side, brought letters of welcome from Colonel Ross, who for eighteen years has filled the office of British Resident in the Persian Gulf with so much ability, judgment, and tact as to have earned the respect and cordial esteem of Persians, Arabs, the mixed races, and Europeans alike. Of his kindness and hospitality there is no occasion to write, for every stranger who visits the Gulf has large experience of both.

The little launch, though going shorewards with the wind, was tossed about like a cork, shipping deluges of spray, and it was so cold and generally tumultuous, that it was a relief to exchange the shallow, wind-lashed waters of the roadstead for the shelter of a projecting sea-wall below the governor's house. A curricule, with two fiery little Arab horses, took us over the low windy stretch of road which lies behind Bushire, through a part of the town and round again to the sea-shore, on which long yellow surges were breaking thunderously in drifts of creamy foam.

Alain de Botton is a philosopher, writer and television presenter.

Here, he gives his thoughts about travelling abroad in an article that was published in a travel magazine.

THE ART OF TRAVEL

Awakening early on that first morning, I slipped on the dressing gown provided and went out on to the veranda. In the dawn light the sky was a pale grey-blue and, after the rustlings of the night before, all the creatures and even the wind seemed in deep sleep. It was as quiet as a library. Beyond the hotel room stretched a wide beach which was covered at first with coconut trees and then sloped unhindered towards the sea. I climbed over the veranda's low railings and walked across the sand. Nature was at her most benevolent. It was as if, in creating this small horseshoe bay, she had chosen to atone for her ill-temper in other regions and decided to display only her munificence. The trees provided shade and milk, the floor of the sea was lined with shells, the sand was powdery and the colour of sun-ripened wheat, and the air – even in the shade – had an enveloping, profound warmth to it so unlike the fragility of northern European heat, always prone to cede, even in midsummer, to a more assertive, proprietary chill.

I found a deck chair at the edge of the sea. I could hear small lapping sounds beside me, as if a kindly monster was taking discreet sips of water from a large goblet. A few birds were waking up and beginning to career through the air in maternal excitement. Behind me, the raffia roofs of the hotel bungalows were visible through gaps in the trees. Before me was a view that I recognised from the brochure: the beach stretched away in a gentle curve towards the tip of the bay, behind it were jungle-covered hills and the first row of coconut trees inclined irregularly towards the turquoise sea, as though some of them were craning their necks to catch a better angle of the sun.

Yet this description only imperfectly reflects what occurred within me that morning, for my attention was in truth far more fractured and confused than the foregoing paragraphs suggest. I may have noticed a few birds careering through the air in excitement, but my awareness of them was weakened by a number of other, incongruous and unrelated elements, among these, a sore throat that I had developed during the flight, a worry at not having informed a colleague that I would be away, a pressure across both temples and a rising need to visit the bathroom. A momentous but until then overlooked fact was making its first appearance: that I had inadvertently brought myself with me to the island.

It is easy to forget ourselves when we contemplate pictorial and verbal descriptions of places. At home, as my eyes had panned over photographs of Barbados, there were no reminders that those eyes were intimately tied to a body and mind which would travel with me wherever I went and that might, over time, assert their presence in ways which would threaten or even negate the purpose of what the eyes had come there to see. At home, I would concentrate on pictures of a hotel room, a beach or a sky and ignore the complex creature in which this observation was taking place and for whom this was only a small part of a larger, more multi-faceted task of living.

Bill Bryson's travel book *Notes from a Small Island*.

Blackpool – and I don't care how many times you hear this, it never stops being amazing – attracts more visitors every year than Greece and has more holiday beds than the whole of Portugal. It consumes more chips per capita than anywhere else on the planet. (It gets through forty acres of potatoes a day.) It has the largest concentration of roller-coasters in Europe. It has the continent's second most popular tourist attraction, the forty-two-acre Pleasure Beach, whose 6.5 million annual visitors are exceeded in number only by those going to the Vatican. It has the most famous illuminations. And on Friday and Saturday nights it has more public toilets than anywhere else in Britain; elsewhere they call them doorways.

Whatever you may think of the place, it does what it does very well - or if not very well at least very successfully. In the past twenty years, during a period in which the number of Britons taking traditional seaside holidays has declined by a fifth, Blackpool has increased its visitor numbers by 7 per cent and built tourism into a £250-million-a-year industry - no small achievement when you consider the British climate, the fact that Blackpool is ugly, dirty and a long way from anywhere, that its sea is an open toilet, and its attractions nearly all cheap, provincial and dire.

It was the illuminations that had brought me there. I had been hearing and reading about them for so long that I was genuinely keen to see them. So, after securing a room in a modest guesthouse on a back street, I hastened to the front in a sense of some expectation.

Well, all I can say is that Blackpool's illuminations are nothing if not splendid, and they are not splendid. There is, of course, always a danger of disappointment when you finally encounter something you have wanted to see for a long time, but in terms of letdown it would be hard to exceed Blackpool's light show. I thought there would be lasers sweeping the sky, strobe lights tattooing the clouds and other gasp-making dazzlements. Instead there was just a rumbling procession of old trams decorated as rocket ships or Christmas crackers, and several miles of paltry decorations on lampposts. I suppose if you had never seen electricity in action, it would be pretty breathtaking, but I'm not even sure of that. It all just seemed tacky and inadequate on rather a grand scale, like Blackpool itself.

What was no less amazing than the meagreness of the illuminations were the crowds of people who had come to witness the spectacle. Traffic along the front was bumper to bumper, with childish faces pressed to the windows of every creeping car, and there were masses of people ambling happily along the spacious promenade. At frequent intervals hawkers sold luminous necklaces and bracelets or other short-lived diversions, and were doing a roaring trade. I read somewhere once that half of all visitors to Blackpool have been there at least ten times. Goodness knows what they find in the place.

Charles Dickens' travelogue Pictures from Italy.

Pleasant Verona! With its beautiful old palaces, and charming country in the distance, seen from terrace walks, and stately, balustraded galleries*. With its Roman gates, still spanning the fair street, and casting, on the sunlight of to-day, the shade of fifteen hundred years ago. With its marble-fitted churches, lofty towers, rich architecture, and quaint old quiet thoroughfares, where shouts of Montagues and Capulets* once resounded. [...] With its fast-rushing river, picturesque old bridge, great castle, waving cypresses, and prospect so delightful, and so cheerful! Pleasant Verona!

In the midst of it, in the Piazza di Bra — a spirit of old time among the familiar realities of the passing hour — is the great Roman Amphitheatre*. So well preserved, and carefully maintained, that every row of seats is there, unbroken. Over certain of the arches, the old Roman numerals may yet be seen; and there are corridors, and staircases, and subterranean* passages for beasts, and winding ways, above ground and below, as when the fierce thousands hurried in and out, intent upon the bloody shows of the arena. Nestling in some of the shadows and hollow places of the walls, now, are smiths with their forges, and a few small dealers of one kind or other; and there are green weeds, and leaves, and grass, upon the parapet. But little else is greatly changed.

When I had traversed all about it, with great interest, and had gone up to the topmost round of seats, and turning from the lovely panorama closed in by the distant Alps, looked down into the building, it seemed to lie before me like the inside of a prodigious* hat of plaited straw, with an enormously broad brim and a shallow crown; the plaits being represented by the four-and-forty rows of seats. The comparison is a homely and fantastic one, in sober remembrance and on paper, but it was irresistibly suggested at the moment, nevertheless.

[...]

I walked through and through the town all the rest of the day, and could have walked there until now, I think. In one place, there was a very pretty modern theatre, where they had just performed the opera (always popular in Verona) of Romeo and Juliet. In another there was a collection, under a colonnade*, of Greek, Roman, and Etruscan remains, presided over by an ancient man who might have been an Etruscan relic himself; for he was not strong enough to open the iron gate, when he had unlocked it, and had neither voice enough to be audible when he described the curiosities, nor sight enough to see them: he was so very old. In another place, there was a gallery of pictures: so abominably bad, that it was quite delightful to see them mouldering away. But anywhere: in the churches, among the palaces, in the streets, on the bridge, or down beside the river: it was always pleasant Verona, and in my remembrance always will be.

extract from Sea and Sardinia by the English writer D.H Lawrence, who travelled from his home in Sicily to Sardinia in 1921.

I slept not so badly through the stifled, rolling night—in fact later on slept soundly. And the day was growing bright when I peered through the porthole, the sea was much smoother. It was a brilliant clear morning. I made haste and washed myself cursorily in the saucer that dribbled into a pail in a corner: there was not space even for one chair, this saucer was by my bunk-head. And I went on deck.

Ah the lovely morning! Away behind us the sun was just coming above the sea's horizon, and the sky all golden, all a joyous, fire-heated gold, and the sea was glassy bright, the wind gone still, the waves sunk into long, low undulations, the foam of the wake was pale ice-blue in the yellow air. Sweet, sweet wide morning on the sea, with the sun coming, swimming up, and a tall sailing bark, with her flat fore-ladder of sails delicately across the light, and a far-far steamer on the electric vivid morning horizon.

The lovely dawn: the lovely pure, wide morning in the mid-sea, so goldenaired and delighted, with the sea like sequins shaking, and the sky far, far, far above, unfathomably clear. How glad to be on a ship! What a golden hour for the heart of man! Ah if one could sail for ever, on a small quiet, lonely ship, from land to land and isle to isle, and saunter through the spaces of this lovely world, always through the spaces of this lovely world. Sweet it would be sometimes to come to the opaque earth, to block oneself against the stiff land, to annul the vibration of one's flight against the inertia of our terra firma! but life itself would be in the flight, the tremble of space. Ah the trembling of never-ended space, as one moves in flight! Space, and the frail vibration of space, the glad lonely wringing of the heart. Not to be clogged to the land any more. Not to be any more like a donkey with a log on its leg, fastened to weary earth that has no answer now. But to be off.

To find three masculine, world-lost souls, and world-lost saunter, and saunter on along with them, across the dithering space, as long as life lasts! Why come to anchor? There is nothing to anchor for. Land has no answer to the soul any more.

It has gone inert. Give me a little ship, kind gods, and three world-lost comrades. Hear me! And let me wander aimless across this vivid outer world, the world empty of man, where space flies happily.

Riding the Iron Rooster: By Train Through China by Paul Theroux

This is an extract from the travelogue by the American travel writer and novelist, Paul Theroux, who took eight trains across Europe, Eastern Europe, the USSR and Mongolia on his way to reaching the Chinese border.

We came to Paris and were met by a bus and brought to a hotel. This was in the fourteenth arrondissement near the end of the Metro line, in a district that was indistinguishable from the outskirts of Chicago, or South Boston. It was mainly post-war blocks of flats that had once been light stucco and were now grey. There were too many of them, and they were too close together, and people said: 'Is this Paris? Is this France? Where's the Eiffel Tower?' The centre of Paris is a masterpiece of preservation, but the suburbs such as this one are simple and awful. The brutal pavements and high windows of Saint-Jacques seemed designed to encourage suicide.

Then I was told ('funnily enough') that Samuel Beckett lived in one of those blocks of flats and indeed had been in it for years. That was where he wrote his stories and plays about the sheer pointlessness and utter misery of human existence. I thought: No wonder! I was told that he often came over to our hotel, the Hotel Saint-Jacques, to have a morning coffee. The hotel was a newish, spick and span place that resembled the lonely hotels that are found just outside American airports, where people stay because there is nowhere else. Beckett came here for pleasure? I walked the streets, I lurked in the coffee shop, I prayed for him to appear; but, nothing. It was a lesson, though. When people read 'Samuel Beckett lives in exile in Paris', they did not know that it meant a poky little flat on the fifth floor of number thirty-two – a tall grey building in which residents waited for Godot by watching television. And it was seventeen stops on the Metro from the centre of Paris, the Left Bank, the museums. ... It was a wet black morning in Paris, the street-sweepers and milkmen doing their solitary rounds by the light of street-lamps, and just as dawn broke over the eaves and chimney pots we plodded out of the Gare de l'Est. I thought we had left the suburbs behind in the rue Saint-Jacques, but there were more, and they were deeper and grimmer. The people in the group, with their faces at the windows of the train, were shocked and disillusioned. It wasn't gay Paree, it wasn't even Cleveland. The Americans looked very closely. We were unused to this. We put up suburbs too quickly and cheaply for them to wear well. We expected them to decline and collapse and be replaced; they weren't built to last, and they look temporary because they are temporary. But French suburbs – villas, terraced houses and blocks of flats – are solid and fairly ugly and their most horrific aspect is that they look as though they will last for ever. It had been the same in outer London: how could houses so old look so awful?

This is a blog written by George Scott, the assistant editor of RoadCyclingUK

A ride of two halves...

Day two's mountain ride left most of the group with sore legs ahead of the third day of training camp so we set out for a four-hour loop on the flat coastal roads north of Mojacar.

Trouble is, we now had a headwind worthy of the Northern Classics to contend with and there was still plenty of opportunity to hurt the legs when sitting on the front of the bunch, but after an early cafe stop on the beach front, and a chance to work on tan lines in the sun, we ventured inland and continued on the planned route.

Andalucia is both beautiful and barren in equal measure – Mojacar receives just 200mm of rain per year – and yesterday's mountain peaks had by now been replaced by arid coastal plains, with little to take the mind off the strengthening wind.

Give me hills and a view to work for over a death march into a block headwind.

So, with 35 miles on the clock we stopped for a comfort break and split the group into two, with the majority of riders opting to stay with the lead car and continuing on the original route back to Bedar, while our ride guide, James, and I, turned right into the hills for a lumpier loop to base.

We waved our goodbyes and immediately turned off the main road to Los Gallardos and into the orange groves to begin a steady drag to the foot of a snaking, two-mile, car-free climb, with the ridge above us by now offering protection from the wind and beautiful views back over the valley for company.

After a short descent we took a de-tour off our de-tour, with James, who had previously visited the area on a training camp of his own in December before returning at the start of March as a ride guide for Wheels in Wheels, keen to explore a back road over the ridge which took us back to Bedar.

We now had the wind on our back and clipped along comfortably at 55kph on a rolling road with a gradual downhill gradient which felt like heaven after the wind-restricted progress of the morning.

By now we were in the middle of nowhere, not entirely sure of the route and with only a farmer and his herd of goats for company, but this is what cycling is about – exploring uncharted territory with the wind and sun on your back, and the traffic-free road rising before you.

How to Survive a Sinking Ship

You've obtained your [boat license](#) and are now ready to venture out for some sea-bound fun. But would you know what to do if you were on a sinking ship? The following article will outline the steps you should take if ever you find yourself aboard a sinking ship. Fortunately, the odds of surviving a sinking ship are very high. The most important thing to do is stay calm.

Be prepared

Anyone who's had experience as a scout will know these 2 words: "be prepared". The meaning behind this famous saying is closely tied to another famous saying "knowing is half the battle". Those two bits of advice could very well save your life on a sinking ship.

Before even stepping aboard, prepare an evacuation bag complete with the tools you'd need to survive on a raft or an island.

Your survival kit should include:

- Compass
- Flashlight
- Waterproof matches
- Knife
- Sunscreen lotion
- Fresh water
- Mirror for signalling
- Flares
- First aid kit
- Some food rations

Learn Where Everything Is

Make sure to explore the ship and become familiar with all the emergency exits and evacuation maps. Find the closest lifeboat to your cabin, and be sure to know where all the life jackets are. When it comes to ocean survival, floating is everything. You may have been able to tread water for hours back in the old swimming pool, but the ocean is much, much colder and rough. You'll already be fatigued and in a relative state of shock, and the ocean is filled with various forms of dangly leg-eaters.

Calm Down!

So there you are, relaxing by the pool when suddenly the loud horn lets out 7 short bursts followed by one long one. This is not the boat playing battleship via Morse code with another distant ship, this is in fact the signal to abandon ship.

Screaming and running is the quickest way to get yourself killed. You're not thinking clearly, making terrible decisions, expending valuable energy and rushing into the madness of the mob. One trip and you could get trampled. Let the frenzied folk do their thing, and practice a little something called square breathing.

Square Breathing:

- Inhale deeply for 4 seconds
- Hold your lungs full for 4 seconds
- Exhale for 4 seconds
- Hold your lungs empty for 4 seconds

Do this 3-4 times and your nerves will settle, your heart rate will slow, and you will find it much easier to focus on survival. This simple technique is used in the military to lower the heart rates of snipers.

Statistically speaking, in an emergency scenario 70% of people will panic, 15% are going to make irrational decisions, and only the remaining 15% will be thinking clearly. Remaining calm already places you above 85% of the rest of the ship.