

NFOP magazine

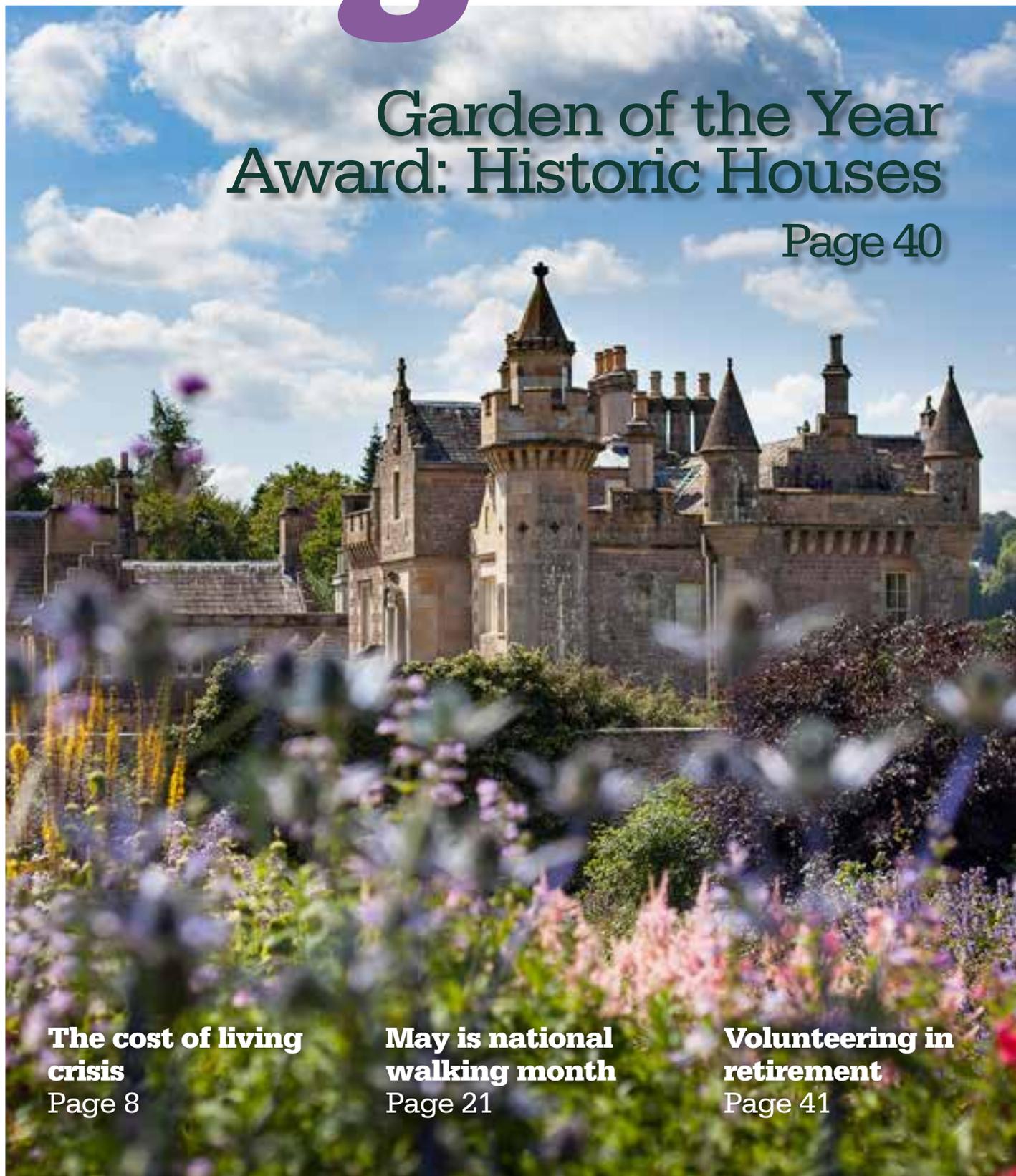
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May is National Walking Month

Regular readers will know that we often cover walking in the Magazine. It's a good body workout, great for health and fitness, both physical and mental, it is easy to do, requires little in the way of equipment and is cheap to undertake.

And did you know that this month, just like May each year, is designated as National Walking Month. As the days get longer and the weather gets warmer, May is an ideal month to get out and explore all that our lovely country has to offer.

Why is walking good for me?

Well, there are several reasons, not least of which is that walking is good for your heart. The heart is the main, and perhaps most vital organ you have, responsible for pumping oxygen and blood around your body and keeping all your other organs working.

Walking not only strengthens your heart but reduces the risk of heart disease and strokes. Research shows that taking a brisk walk for 30 minutes every day is said to reduce your risk of a stroke by 27%. If this wasn't reason enough to get out walking, it also helps to reduce bad levels of cholesterol whilst increasing the levels of good cholesterol too.

Walking is also proven as a good way to help you lose weight. An average person will walk at a rate of between two and three miles an hour on flat or relatively level ground. If you did this for 30 minutes a day, at a speed of two miles an hour, you would burn around 75 calories but increase your speed to an average of three miles an hour then you will burn off just over 110 calories in that same 30 minutes. In fact, estimates show that walking just 20 minutes a day will burn a massive 7lbs of body fat over a year.

But that's not all. Walking regularly can also help lower your risk of dementia. Research shows that older people who regularly walk six or more miles a week do not suffer from as much brain shrinkage in later life than those that don't walk as far or as frequently. And the less brain shrinkage you suffer from, the less likely dementia is to strike you.

You might not realise this, but a good walk can actually boost your energy levels. This is because your raised heart rate boosts your circulation and pushes more oxygen around your body and more oxygen in your blood makes you feel more alert and awake.

It also gets your muscles working. Start off by walking over relatively flat or level surfaces but as you start to get more confident and feel fitter start to challenge yourself a bit more by varying your routes to take in more hills and climbs.

Not only will this aid your respiratory functions, but it will also start to benefit your muscles. Walking is particularly good for your calves, hamstrings, quads, glutes, and abdominals, or to put this in much plainer language, it is good for your bum, tum, and legs.



But it's not only physical benefits

Walking regularly doesn't only help you to get fitter it benefits your mental health as well. Being out in the fresh air and nature is a great way to help overcome feelings such as depression, anxiety or stress and helps to lift your mood. Just listening to all the birds singing in the trees as you walk along helps clear your mind and boost your endorphin levels.

And being outside for just 20 minutes in moderate or bright sunshine is enough to top up your vitamin D levels. Vitamin D is an essential vitamin for your body that benefits your bone health whilst boosting your immune system.

Give it a try

So what are you waiting for? Why not give it a try and follow the target set by national charity Living Streets, the charity for everyday walking, who are encouraging us all to walk for 20 minutes each day during May. You can find out more by visiting their website at www.livingstreets.org.uk or call them on 020 7377 4900.

Estimates show that walking just 20 minutes a day will burn a massive 7lbs of body fat over a year.

May at the movies

Cinema



JOYCE GLASSER

That the film is about the isolation imposed by illness and impending death is signalled by a split screen running through most of the film.

Vortex(May 13th, 2022) Cert tbc, 142 mins.

Gaspar Noé's *Vortex* is "dedicated to all those whose brains will decompose before their hearts." It will remind you of Michael Haneke's Academy Award winning *Love (Amour)* but not Noé's own film entitled *Love* which purports to tell the story of a young couple's romance through unsimulated sex – in 3D. Noé's films are usually 18-rated for sex and violence. In *Vortex* the only sex is a pat of affection, and the only violence are the ravages of time. Noé is now 58, when adult children lose their sense of security and realise that the parent-child role has altered.

Perhaps because this film is so personal, there is a middle-aged son in the cast of four: Stéphane (Alex Lutz) a struggling film editor with a drug habit and a young hyperactive son named Kiki is overwhelmed by the responsibility of sorting out his distressed parents' lives. There is not much plot. The Mother, a retired psychiatrist (the legendary Françoise Lebrun) with Alzheimer's, can no longer speak coherently and her lucid days – represented by a charming opening scene – are over. The script is improvised which helps the actors to speak erratically. The father (the legendary Italian film director-writer-actor Dario Argento), a retired film critic, is writing a book about dream symbolism and cinema. Despite a heart problem, he still entertains friends with wine and shtoptalk though he's struggling to keep his restless mistress.

That the film is about age is signalled up front with the year of birth below the names of the main characters: For Lebrun it's 1944 and for Argento, it's 1940. That the film is about the isolation imposed by illness and impending death is signalled by a split screen running through most of the film. It is not gimmicky, but disquieting and expressive. Noé also uses the technique to create tension, as when the father is taking a shower while the mother is tearing up his manuscript. The technique is used to express tenderness, as when the sparring couple grasp each other's hands across the screen divide.

There is some dark humour because both the father and mother require a daily medley of medication which they risk mixing up – or not taking. When the mother feels threatened by the father whom she fails to recognise, she concocts a poisonous witches' brew. Stéphane warns his father, but a later disaster is not thwarted, in part because of the mother's painfully slow reaction.

Like Haneke's *Amour*, the well-lived in apartment is the predominant location. Jean Rabasse's production design transforms it into a repository of an active, intellectual couple's life. The father cannot bear to leave it behind for a cramped nursing home. Noé leaves us to ponder the fate of

cherished belongings that enrich and define our lives. The film, which could use judicious trimming, is not the masterpiece that is *Amour*, but is a painfully relevant, powerful piece of filmmaking.

Benediction(May 20th) Cert 12, 137 mins.

The Kent-born poet and novelist, Siegfried Sassoon is buried, with other "Great War poets," in Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner, beneath a stone that is inscribed "My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity." The pity, for Sassoon, exaggerated in his eyes, is that even in death, he missed out on glory. For it was Wilfred Owen, a 25-year-old soldier whose craft Sassoon shaped and inspired, who wrote those famous lines. Then he died in battle; an ending that Sassoon, nicknamed Mad Jack for his suicidal bravery, half welcomes. In this impressively ambitious, if unfocused, and painfully sad biopic, 76-year-old-Terence Davies seems to identify with Sassoon's lifelong quest for peace of mind as he grapples with his art, his homosexuality, and his faith (Davies rejected his Catholicism; Sassoon converted to it).

Despite Sassoon's (a superb Jack Lowden) war record, which won him the Military Cross, in 1917, while convalescing from gastric fever and affected by the death of his brother Hamo in Gallipoli, Sassoon refuses to return to the front. He sends a powerful, but treasonous letter (read out in the film) to his commanding officer: Finished with the War: A Soldier's Declaration. His mentor, Oscar Wilde's backer and loyal friend, Robbie Ross (an under characterised Simon Russell Beale) uses his connections to have Sassoon diagnosed with shell shock and sent to Craiglockhart War Hospital. There, Sassoon benefits from a coded, meaningful dialogue with the sympathetic, homosexual Doctor Rivers (Ben Daniels, excellent); becomes editor of the hospital magazine Hydra, and mentor (and possible lover) to fellow-patient and burgeoning poet, Wilfred Owen (a lacklustre Matthew Tennyson). Given the extent of Sassoon's influence on Owen's poetry it is disappointing their relationship merits just a few lines.

Benediction is, fittingly, a sombre, contemplative and quiet narrative, but Davies' screenplay captures the decadent lifestyles and cynical wit of the Bright Young Things in the 1920s. The charming, elegant and courageous soldier-poet, scion of a once fabulously wealthy Jewish dynasty, was a fixture on Edith Sitwell's (Lia Williams) and society hostess Lady Ottoline Morrell's (Suzanne Bertish) guest lists. His affairs with the bitchy, polyamorous composer/entertainer Ivor Novello (Jeremy Irvine) – Sassoon's mother (Geraldine James) warns him that Novello has "cruel eyes" – and with the decadent socialite Stephan Tennant (Calam Lynch and Anton



Lesser), reveal a submissive, insecure side to the war hero. Sassoon's uniform is now a tuxedo, and the endless parties and bed-hopping appear to be a punishment for being a survivor, but Davies does not develop this idea. The indulgent middle section concludes with Sassoon's desperate marriage to Hester Gatty (Kate Phillips), attended by old gay friends and acquaintances, including DH Lawrence.

In the final section bizarrely, Sassoon is played by Peter Capaldi as a bitter, nasty old man still married to a long-suffering Gatty (Gemma Jones), when in fact, their marriage ended officially in 1945. He has estranged his beloved son, George (Richard Goulding); converts to Catholicism and feels passed-over for honours. Then we are gifted a tour-de-force finale in which old Sassoon transforms into his younger self in uniform, sitting on a bench in 1967 reciting through a torrent of tears the poem *Disabled*, with the camera shifting from Lowden to an amputee. It's powerful stuff.

Benediction lacks the integration of work and life that enlightened Davies' brilliant biopic of Emily Dickinson, *A Private Passion*. Sassoon's poetry is recited, usually in voice-over, but barely mentioned. Is Ivor Novello's slur that Sassoon's poetry has not evolved a fair point? Even Sassoon's popular *Sherston Trilogy* is fictionalised autobiography about his war experiences. He can't shake it. If Sassoon is jealous of T.S. Eliot's large, personalised stone in Poets' Corner, he must have been annoyed that the lyrics to Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*, which was composed for the consecration of Coventry Cathedral in 1962, were Wilfred Owen's, not his own. Davies does not use this event to explore the notion of Sassoon's professional disappointment that is hinted at in the film.

The film suggests that Sassoon spent his life trying to fill a gap or retrieve something lost. It could be Owen, for *Disabled*, which ends the film so dramatically, is not one of Sassoon's

poems, but Owen's. Time might not permit Davies from proposing David Cuthbert Thomas, who is immortalised in the *Sherston Trilogy*. But Thomas's death in the trenches devastated Sassoon and accounts for much of the anger of his Soldier's Declaration.

Elizabeth: A Portrait in Part(s)

(May 27 & June 1 on Prime Video) Cert 12A, 89 mins.

A review of the late Roger Michell's final feature film, *The Duke*, appeared in the March issue of The Magazine. Later this month you can see his final documentary, *Elizabeth: A Portrait in Part(s)*. It is a mischievous, yet respectful tribute in this, the 70th anniversary of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II in 1952, four years before Michell's birth.

Michell has made several films, fiction and nonfiction, about older women with jobs and responsibilities, but of Elizabeth he has only superlatives: "She is the longest-serving female head of state in the history of the world, the world's oldest living monarch, the longest-reigning current monarch, and the oldest and longest-serving current head of state. But... she's now so much more than any of these things."

This "Covid-made" documentary is a compilation of hundreds of hours of archival footage, organised by chapters, or topics, such as the Queen's speech, protocol, world tours, the royal yacht and garden parties. Be prepared to see Elizabeth in different outfits and at different ages, touring factories and pushing buttons. In what might be 1987 she switches on both the monitor and microwave production lines at Sony's new factory with the legendary chairman Lee Jae-Yong. In a newscast, we hear: "they will then walk down the production line where they *may* stop to talk to some employees."

Though all the handshaking, waving from trains and curtsying may grow monotonous, Joanna Crickmay's meticulous editing allows Michell's wit and personal commentary to shine through, so spot the details. A cute little girl curtsies to the departing Queen just as a guard lifts his arm to salute her, hitting the little girl in the head. As the segment cuts, we can just make out the squeal. But you don't need sharp eyes to spot the Queen's joy "In the Saddle;" Enjoying a pony ride as a youngster; cantering with Margaret through lush, green hills; galloping on the beach on a thoroughbred, and, late in life, on a slow walking Highland pony. Elizabeth's devotion to her racehorses is obvious, too. She jumps up and down, dashes around and claps with excitement at the track. Watch her collect on a bet, thrilled at the £16 win, but unaccustomed to handling cash despite her image being all over it. We are given access to an analogue honours file cabinet with an index card on John Lennon's Order of the British Empire (class: ordinary member). Stamped at Buckingham Palace 26 October 1965, it was returned in 1969. In the corner we see: "Died 8/12/80."

The cleverly selected songs are perfectly matched to each segment. Nat King Cole's heart-breaking *Mona Lisa* accompanies the segment, *Close-up* as the Queen poses for multiple portraits, fidgeting with a tassel in one. A television clip of the late art critic Robert Hughes' commenting on the merchandising ("from soaps to sweatshirts") of the Mona Lisa is intercut with all souvenirs bearing the Queen's image. "It passes the final test of celebrity," Hughes notes cynically. "It's famous for being famous." Michell finished the sound editing the day he died, last September. The Cambridges' controversial trip to the Caribbean may affect your reaction to the endless Commonwealth tours and touristy native dances that the Queen, and Michell, dutifully endure.

Opposite page: Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh on their coronation day, Buckingham Palace, 1953.

Collecting Postcards

YVONNE THOMAS GETS INTO DELTIOLOGY...AND WINE

It is 182 years since the world's very first picture postcard was sold. It was bought by an Englishman called Theodore Hook who lived in Fulham, London, and after buying it, he posted it to himself.

Since then other countries have put forward their candidates claiming to have sent or received the world's first picture postcard, but canny Mr. Hook, who was no angel (he had a spell in jail for stealing) always comes out on top with his self-sent self-coloured postcard, and the stamp franked, giving the date. Yet even he, shrewd as he was, could not have imagined what an astonishing investment he had made when he addressed and sent that postcard to himself.

This was 20 years earlier than other international claimants, several of whom thought they had the world's first. But Hook had the proof: his self-sent card, franked with the date on it. And now, 160 years later, that first picture postcard, which shows post office workers sitting round a big inkwell – has been sold to a Latvian collector for £31,750. It is a world record for postcards.

I'm not a deltiologist myself (that's the important-sounding name for postcard collectors) but picture postcards are one of the favourite collectibles in the UK, only coming after stamps and coins.

And Britain's claim to having sent the first picture postcard in the world has been challenged but never lost.

As for the biggest collection, a German in Hanover is said to hold more unique picture postcards than anyone else – 15,553 of them,

unique because they all contain an image of a bridge – the collector is an engineer. But that was a few years ago, and he probably has more by now. And would any one of those cards be worth anything near £31,750 today?

It seemed unlikely that anybody would spend that much money for a single picture postcard in 2022, even if it had been sent 182 years ago, and incidentally, in an envelope stamped with a penny black. (Postcards at the time were sent in envelopes, more private but also slightly more expensive for postage than just the card itself.)

Today there must be very few people in Europe who have not sent and received picture postcards from "wish you were here" holiday places, villages, towns and countryside... They are colourful records of what is around us, and also of what used to be: how the village, the town, the countryside looked in the old days...

There is a "World Postcard Day" – it is on the first of October this year, and members of the many postcard collectors' societies home and abroad will be "post crossing" cards to friends who are also collectors. Those who are serious about it may focus on one subject, such as pictures of cars, ocean liners, trains, sea and country views... "this is a real photograph" printed on them. And serious collectors all emphasise that they want cards in very good condition.

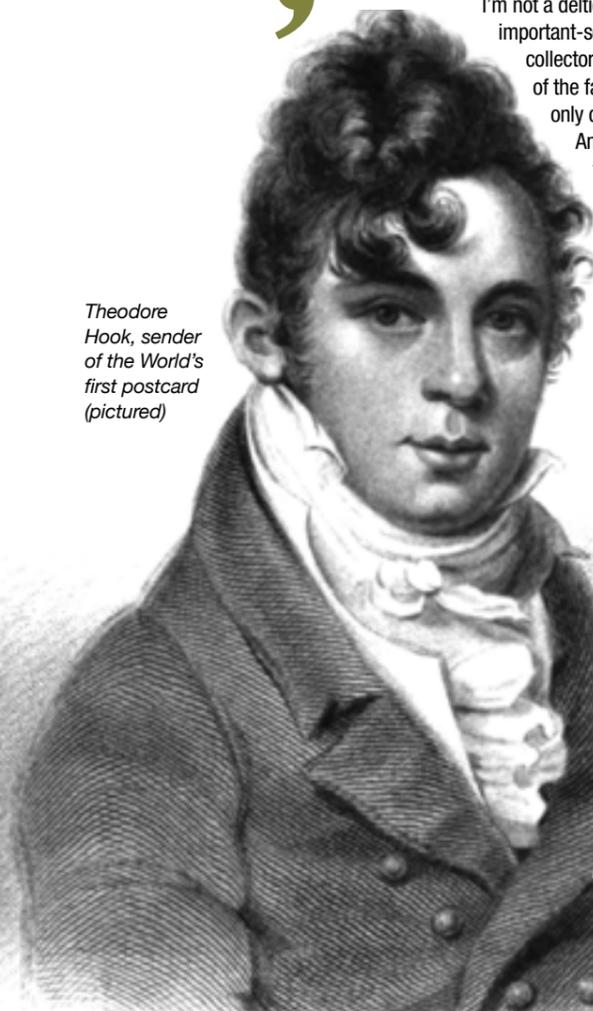
Some of the most valued old cards show street scenes, football teams, "learning about an era long gone", says a collector who did not wish to be named, and whose cards go from 1890 to the end of the last world war. 'I do a lot of research on them', he said. 'On one card I could even read the tail number on a jet aeroplane, then I looked it up and could see it was from Canada.'

Mr Steve Kentfield, secretary of the Postcard Traders' Association, says that early cards had to be sent in envelopes because during the first world war soldiers in France,



“A German in Hanover is said to hold more picture postcards than anyone else – 15,553 of them.”

Theodore Hook, sender of the World's first postcard (pictured)



sending home cards with embroidered "good luck" messages, found they could tuck a note behind the embroidery, a way of avoiding the cost of posting a letter. To stop that, the cards had to be sent in envelopes. Fortunately that no longer applies.

Picture postcards are part of holidays today as well as a precious record of the past. There is a postal museum in London (Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DA) and it covers the history of the British postcard.

Seeds

How would summer look without daisies, buttercups, poppies and cornflowers and all the many other wild summer flowers – if they disappeared from our fields? It's unlikely, but it could happen – except that Britain now has what is the biggest and most comprehensive collection of wild flower seeds in the world.

That's thanks to the Millennium Seed Bank which was opened in Sussex by Prince Charles 22 years ago, and today it holds and protects 2.25 billion wild flower seeds.

It is a bigger collection than 190 other countries could rustle up between them: 39,000 species altogether, so it looks as if buttercups and daisies and other wild flowers are safe in Britain for now.

Collected from meadows, gardens and hillsides for species-preservation, all the seeds first get the long-life treatment. They are inspected, cleaned, dried out and x-rayed, to root and throw out any that are damaged or empty.

One might have thought a little moisture could do them good, but the opposite is true. Drying them out is an important part for their conservation, and the surprising statistic is that for every 1% reduction of moisture content, the seed's lifespan is doubled. The next step is to freeze them all.

This sounds like a way of killing them off, but in fact, keeping them bone dry and then making sure they are cold is essential in extending their lives. Finally, stored in concrete underground vaults they can last hundreds, and apparently even up to 1000 years, though that would be difficult to prove. They are logged in and labelled with their country of origin. The Millennium Seedbank can only get bigger!

Wine bottle corks-openers

Iwonder how many people think that a screw-topped bottle of wine is probably inferior to one with a cork. But that's not true, say the experts. In fact it could be the other way round, depending not only on the quality of the wine, but to some extent on the quality of the cork itself.

Some corks of low quality are improved by filling them with glue and water. There can be "cork taint," the wine can become "corked." And there are some fake corks, made of plastic. But there's still a lingering belief that corks are best. A screw top can give a calculated level of "oxygen ingress" just like corks, but one thing they don't have, and that is the ingenuity and sometimes the artistic quality of corkscrews.

In France there is a corkscrew museum – and there is a world-wide market for some of the collectable versions. One of the commonest is the Wiggle 'n' Twist. Just jam the two blades down each side of the cork and wiggle the thing out. This one is known as "the butler's friend" because you can get the cork out of the bottle without marking it, take a swig or two, fill up the bottle with inferior wine and replace the cork.

Corkscrews are a bit like mousetraps. They have challenged the ingenuity of gentlemen and armchair engineers since the 1700s, when corks were first commonly bunged into bottles and by the end of the 1900s more than 300 patents had been taken out. The first English patent was taken by the Reverend Samuel Hunshall in 1795 – a steel shaft that helped to break the pressure between bottle-neck and cork. Some of these inventions sell for a few thousand pounds. Part of their attraction must be that they challenge the ingenuity of the inventor and when it works, there is the reward of a sip or two of whatever is in the bottle.



Book reviews

KATE GOODMAN REVIEWS ANOTHER BATCH OF BOOKS AND ASKS...

Where have all the good men gone?

Thirty-one-year-old Yinka has a project – “Operation Wedding Date” is going to see her find a partner in time for her cousin Rachel’s wedding day! But of course, finding the perfect man is not as straightforward as it seems, especially when Yinka has her Nigerian mum, aunts, cousins, fellow church goers and friends all ready and eager to butt in.

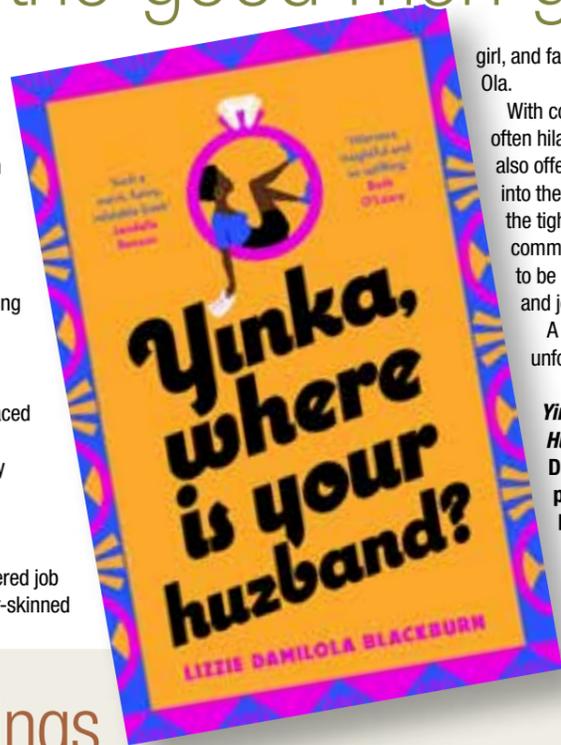
So much so that Yinka’s mum prays over her – in public! – that she will find a “huzband”.

On the surface, this is a light-hearted romantic novel about a young woman who sets out to find her happy-ever-after in a process that sees her meeting an array of unsuitable men while ignoring what’s under her nose the whole time.

But on the other hand, it’s a real insight into the life challenges faced by a dark-skinned woman of colour who judges herself by others’ standards of beauty, and who feels her achievements are constantly unfavourably compared to her peers.

Will she ever find the courage to be just herself, and conquer her insecurities while staying true to her own moral principles?

It’s going to be difficult, especially when she loses her high-powered job in banking, discovers her ex, Femi, has just got engaged to a lighter-skinned



girl, and falls out with her best friend Ola.

With colourful characters and an often hilarious narrative, the story also offers a tantalising glimpse into the culture and values of the tightly-knit British Nigerian community, where there seems to be always love, laughter and joy.

A fun, warm-hearted and unforgettable read.

Yinka, Where Is Your Huzband? by Lizzie Damilola Blackburn is published by Viking in hardback, RRP £14.99

A true story takes wings

Looking down over the late nineteenth century streets of Cardiff from the dizzying heights of a hot-air balloon, a young woman prepares to delight the crowds below with a daring parachute jump. Will she survive?

Just as we’re about to learn her fate, we’re taken back to the streets of Paris five years previously, where 12-year-old American orphan Laura is living alone, friendless and being exploited by a Fagan-like character.

Then aerialists August and Ena Gaudron swoop in to rescue her, paying off her tormentor and bringing her back to London, to live and work with them in the family hot-air balloon business.

Though Laura learns to fly, she tends to stay grounded, stitching balloons and taking care of August and Ena’s little daughter.

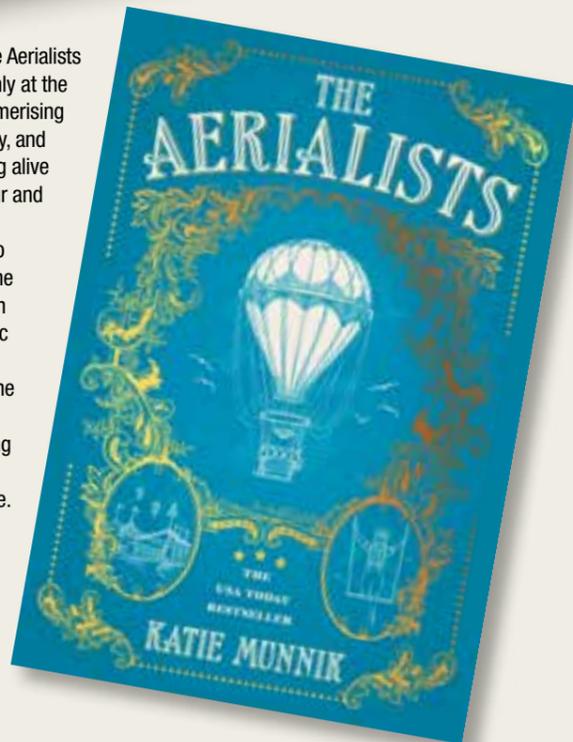
But in Cardiff, at the Fine Art Industrial and Maritime Exhibition, August has promised an aerial display from a young woman. Will Laura step in? Or is there another girl willing to risk her life for fame and glory?

Though based on a true story, *The Aerialists* puts Laura, a fictional character, firmly at the centre of the narrative. She’s a mesmerising presence, perceptive and trustworthy, and the cast of true-life characters spring alive through her eyes in the sound, colour and clamour of the ballooning world.

From the seamy streets of Paris to the excitement of the Cardiff show – rich and atmospheric prose and authentic historical details ensure that the reader is always fully immersed in the atmosphere of the story.

The continuing sense of impending danger adds tension and drama to what is a truly different historical tale. I loved this one.

The Aerialists by Katie Munnik is published by The Borough Press in hardback, RRP £14.99



A message written in blood!

In true domestic thriller noir tradition, this story opens with a disappearance. When Julianne Hillier swings by her friend Piper’s palatial home to go for their usual morning run, she discovers the entire Holden family have gone missing.

In a scene reminiscent of the Marie-Celeste, half-drunk coffee cups are still warm, the smell of toast lingers in the air, the radio is on, the family cars are in the garage – but there is no sign of Piper, her husband Gray, or fifteen-year-old twins Riva and Artie.

Chillingly, though, there is a message on Riva’s bedroom mirror. *Make Them Stop*, it reads – and it’s written in blood!

From there, the tension only increases as the narrative takes us back and forward in the weeks leading up to the family’s disappearance to unfold a story with so many plot threads that you wonder just how the author is going to untangle them all!

Grieving widowers, financial shenanigans, backstabbing teenagers, scorned mistresses, abusive husbands and toxic friendships – the plot just keeps on thickening.

Fortunately, Fiona Cummins’ masterly pen keeps the reader on course towards enlightenment as she delves deep into the darkness of humanity,

reintroducing a character from one of her previous books.

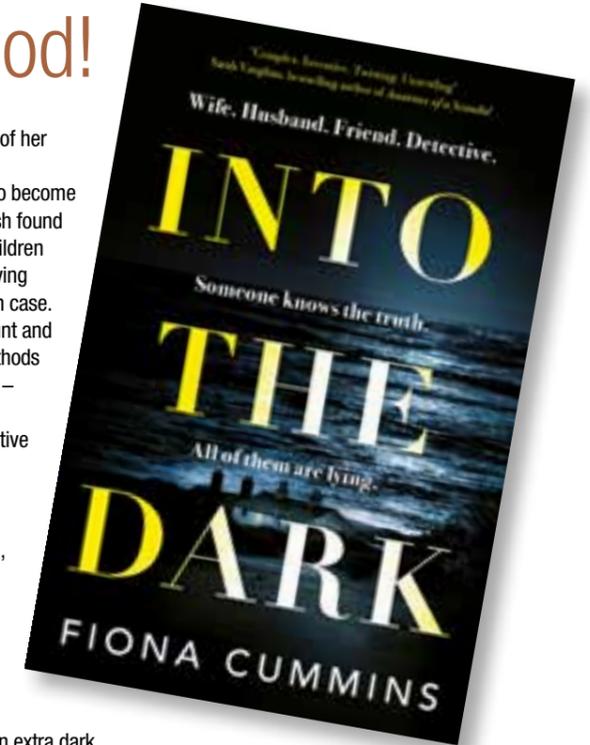
Once groomed by a serial killer to become his replacement, young Saul Anguish found his conscience, saved two small children from a grisly fate, and is now a serving police officer working on the Holden case.

With a past that continues to haunt and shape him, Saul’s investigatory methods – and his ways of delivering justice – aren’t always by the book.

But of course, one tortured detective isn’t enough for a Fiona Cummins’ novel! Dr Clover March, a forensic linguist, brought in to work on the case, is just as complicated as Saul, and the two are drawn together in an alliance some might describe as unholy!

But together, they are determined to crack the mystery of the Holden’s disappearance, and their role in this story lends it an extra dark deliciousness.

Meticulously plotted with characters you’ll love to hate – don’t be surprised if you’re drawn to the dark side yourself by the time you finish this read!



Into The Dark by Fiona Cummins is published by Macmillan in hardback, RRP £14.99

Hidden casualties of war

There is a church on Fleet Street in London, St Brides, which pays homage to the journalists and photographers who have put themselves into danger to bring home the truth of what is happening in battle-torn countries and paid the ultimate price. We read about them, and cry for them, but can we really appreciate not just the physical but emotional toll of the job they do?

As a former production editor and journalist for a major news network, author Sarah Sultoon brings all her experience to bear in this fictional story of two journalists prepared to put their life on the line for others.

Samira Nassar and Kris Gonzales couldn’t be more different. Young, ambitious and idealistic, she’s a minor player in the newsroom, working the nightshift at the London office while longing to get out in the field. He’s a seasoned, cynical photo-journalist, just back

from a spell in Iraq, where the story opens in 2003.

Circumstances see Sami and Kris working together on assignments overseas, bringing the stories of innocent victims of war to screens back home. People like Ahmed in Iraq, who has lost all his family to the wars there; Habibi in Afghanistan, who self-immolated to escape her abusive husband; Youstra in Darfur who no longer has even hope.

Sami and Kris know they must do all in their power to help them, but with their different attitudes comes different approaches to their methods. That causes conflict between them, and leads to a powerful denouement almost as shocking as the stories themselves.

This is a novel that works on so many levels, addressing issues of truth, idealism, morality and self-belief. Fictional their story maybe, but Kris and Sami hold a light to all that is good and bad in our world.

Your emotions will be wrung out by the end, and you’ll never watch the news in the same way again, but I promise you’ll be gripped by this dramatic, truly thought-provoking book.

The Shot by Sarah Sultoon, published by Orenda Books in paperback RRP £8.99

