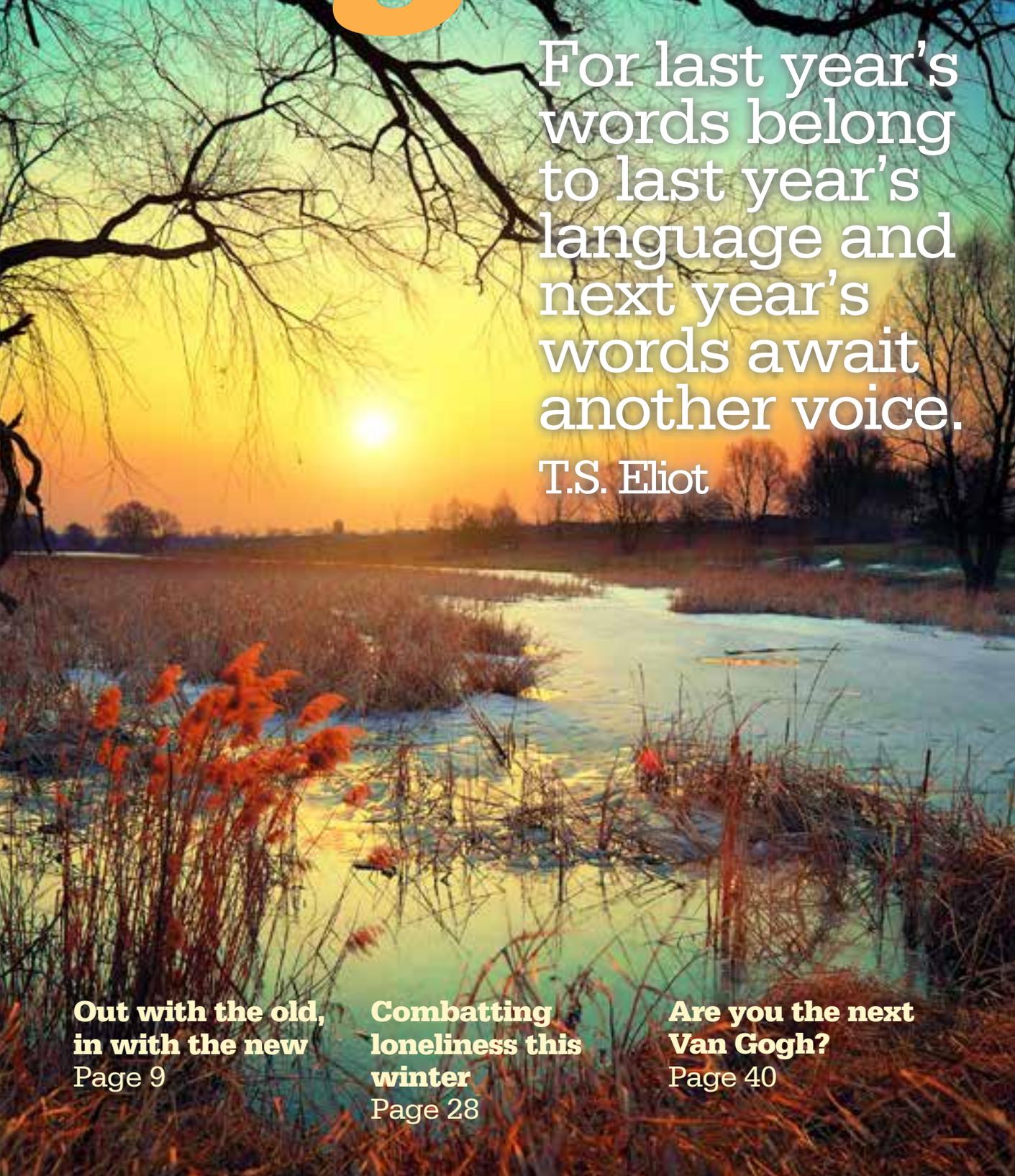


NFOP magazine



For last year's
words belong
to last year's
language and
next year's
words await
another voice.
T.S. Eliot

**Out with the old,
in with the new**
Page 9

**Combatting
loneliness this
winter**
Page 28

**Are you the next
Van Gogh?**
Page 40

How can I tell the difference between dementia and normal ageing?"

Typical age-related changes



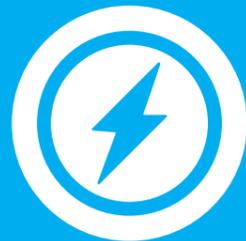
Forgetting where you parked your car or put your glasses.

Possible signs of dementia



Putting things in unusual places, losing items or getting lost.

Typical age-related changes



Becoming irritable now and then. E.g. when your routine is disrupted.

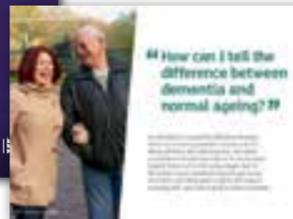
Possible signs of dementia



Changes in mood and personality - becoming confused, suspicious or aggressive.

Ok, let's talk dementia

From spotting the signs to reducing your risk.



Many people have questions about dementia.

That's why we have created this FREE pack. It will tell you about the different types of dementia, as well as showing you how to spot the signs and the steps you can take to reduce your risk.

To receive yours for FREE
call 0800 144 5850
or go to alzres.uk/advice

Alzheimer's Research UK is a registered charity, numbers 1077089 and SC042474.



**Alzheimer's
Research
UK**

Make
breakthroughs
possible



Editor's Note

Welcome to the first edition of The Magazine for 2021 and may I first of all take this opportunity to wish you all a happy New Year. This year can't be as bad as 2020 was that's for sure, so let's try and go forward with a degree of optimism and pray for a return to normality, or at least near normality as quickly as possible this year.

I suspect for many 2021 will be the year of the "family" with many looking forward to meeting up again with children, grandchildren or even great grandchildren once the restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic start to ease. And with that comes a realisation that no matter what has happened, life goes on. We should all enjoy these times when they come and take stock of how important family is to us all.

But most of all I suspect that 2021 will be a year of change for many of us – changes in the way we live, changes in the way we approach life and changes in the way we deal with other people, changes that will be brought about not just by what we do in our own lives, but by the changes that are imposed upon us by the shifting political and economic situations. This is something I touch on in the magazine and I would love to hear your thoughts on what you believe the

pandemic has taught us and what it will change for us all going forward.

2021 will be another big year for NFOP and it will be as important as ever to campaign on matters and issues that affect older people in society. Rest assured we will continue to report on these throughout the coming year.

Turning now to the magazine and we have another packed issue for you this month. We have some advice on how to increase your intake of Vitamin D – essential at this time of year – as well as looking at the issues of mental health, especially in men, and what you can do to help improve this.

We also have a reminder on scams and what to look out for, essential reading for us all, if only to refresh what we already know and we have the usual features that we cover for you each issue. Hopefully we will all be able to start travelling again as well soon and I look forward to bringing back the regular travel features that we carried before the pandemic struck and as the weather starts to improve and get warmer.

As always if there is something you would like me to cover for you in future editions, or there is something that you want to get off your chest then please do let me know and I'd love to incorporate this in future issues.

Until next time.

Ed.



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Contact us

Unit 6, Imperial Court,
Laporte Way, Luton LU4 8FE

Tel 01582 721652
Email info@nfop.org.uk
Website www.nfop.org.uk

Managing Editor Eamonn Donaghy

Editor Andrew Silk

Editorial Assistant Anna Blake

Advertising Landmark Publishing Services
020 7520 9474

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Mental health in men

According to charity the Mental Health Foundation around one in eight men in England suffers from a common mental health problem including depression, anxiety, panic disorder or obsessive compulsive disorder.

The statistics are stark – three times as many men than women take their own lives, with suicide rates for men being highest for those in the 40 – 49 age group. When you walk around the streets of any major city or town look at those that are forced to sleep rough, it is estimated that around 87% of rough sleepers are male and many of them are likely to be suffering from other problems, many of which may be drug or alcohol related. The suicide figures are also replicated in the fact that nearly three quarters of adults that go missing are men.

Perhaps it's also the need to nurture and to sustain, or perhaps it's that fact that still, to this day, society expects men to provide more than it does women. Whatever your views on this, the fact is that generally speaking men report lower levels of life satisfaction than women, a fact that is borne out by the findings from the Government's national wellbeing survey.

Then consider that generally speaking men are less likely to seek help for their problems than women with many men feeling that to ask for help is just not the done thing, or that to do so reveals a weakness and therefore lessens their value not just to themselves but to society as a whole.

But it's not just taking the first step and asking for help – for many men that suffer with mental health problems they quite simply just don't recognise that they do so. How can you talk about a problem or get help for it if you don't even know that you are suffering from it?

In fact many men tend to turn to other methods to help them cope with life rather than admitting that they have a problem. The staffs to which they turn are commonly alcohol and drugs, but of course we all know that in the long run this is no way of coping – it's quite simply just storing up problems for the future.

Covid-19

Understandably, the current coronavirus pandemic is having a major impact on mental health, not just in men, but across the population as a whole. Many people are worried not just about



Exercise helps our body pump out endorphins. Endorphins are basically the body's 'feel great' drug so we get a natural high when we get moving.

the disease itself but also about the impact that it is having and will continue to have over their lives.

People are worried about losing their jobs, many people will unfortunately already be in this sad position. With that comes all the associated financial worries – how will I live, how will I pay my bills, how will I feed myself and my family, will I be able to keep a roof over my head?

Thoughts such as these can quickly turn to anxiety and to depression and of course in this vicious circle people can turn to other methods to try and help them cope.

Isolation

Add into this mix the fact that, for many, the ability to see friends and family is severely restricted by the effects of the pandemic. This leads to feelings of loneliness and isolation which further affect our mental condition and can quickly have a depressing effect for many.

With our social lives also restricted the spectre of boredom can also quickly loom, further affecting our mood in a negative way. In fact government data released by the Office for National Statistics shows that the second lockdown has resulted in a plummeting of people leaving home to meet up with friends, with less than an estimated 10% of the population having done so in the week ending 15 November.

What can I do?

If you feel that your own mental health is suffering or that someone close to you is struggling with mental health problems then you can help in several different ways.

The Mental Health Foundation has a fantastic free booklet that you can download direct from their website that gives 10 practical ways to help you look after your mental health. These include:

- Urging people to talk about their feelings.
- Keep active through regular exercise.
- Eat well – food nourishes the brain as well as the body.
- Drink sensibly.
- Keep in touch with other people.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.
- Take a break – even a five minute walk around your garden or an open space near you can lift your mood.
- Do something you are good at – this can help beat stress.

- Accept who you are – feeling good about yourself can help you deal with adversity.
- Care for others.

If, in the first instance you feel uncomfortable talking to your family about your moods and your feelings then your first port of call should be your GP. They are independent, well trained, they are there to help you and not to judge you and are often in the best position to provide quick and effective solutions to help you confront and deal with your problems.

When dealing with your mental health there is no "quick fix", but seeking help and support is the first step on your journey and can make a massive difference to your life.

I'm worried about someone else – what can I do to help them?

If you are worried about a friend or a relative, trying to decide what is the best way to help them can be difficult to say the least – after all you don't want to be seen as interfering. The first step is to let them know, in the kindest way possible, that you are there for them and that you are willing to listen to them without judgement.

Likewise, if you have concerns then keep in touch with the person, even if it is only by way of a quick phone call or text message and if your concerns worsen then try and encourage them to get help.

Organisations that can Help

If you need help or want to find out more about men's mental health then you can visit the Mental Health Foundation website at www.mentalhealth.org.uk where you can also download for free a number of helpful publications. Other organisations that can also help include:

- Calm - The Campaign Against Living Miserably which is a leading a movement against suicide. Visit www.thecalmzone.net or call their nationwide helpline on 0800 58 58 58.
- The Samaritans can be contacted at www.samaritans.org or by calling 116 123.
- The Men's Health Forum can be contacted at www.menshealthforum.org.uk or by calling 020 7922 7908.

Perhaps it's also the need to nurture and to sustain, or perhaps it's that fact that still, to this day, society expects men to provide more than it does women.



Take a break – even a five minute walk around your garden or an open space near you can lift your mood.

For many, the ability to see friends and family is severely restricted by the effects of the pandemic.

January at the movies

Cinema



JOYCE GLASSER

Mayor

(89 mins.) Available on digital platforms and Dogwoof on Demand

In 90-year-old director Frederick Wiseman's latest documentary, *City Hall*, Wiseman follows Boston's democratic Mayor Marty Walsh to meetings and public appearances, as he grapples with a rash of shootings, substance abuse, discrimination, unemployment and Donald Trump. Walsh would sympathise with his counterpart in the de-facto capital of Palestine, Ramallah. Mayor Musa Hadid has enough problems under Israeli occupation before Trump declares Jerusalem as Israel's new capital and moves the American Embassy there, ten miles from Ramallah. Without cable, a satellite dish or newspaper, Musa is the last to know.

David Osit's eye-opening documentary, *Mayor* was shot around the time of Wiseman's (both just pre-Covid-19) and follows, with dark humour and compassion, the personable and refreshingly real family man and popular mayor as he deals with an ongoing sewage problem (they need Israeli authorisation to build a treatment plant), water pollution from illegal Israeli settlements, a "branding" exercise, a world tour to raise awareness, and the logistics of Christmas festivities.

Jerry Killick and Cathy Naden in *Second Spring*

He entertains a well-meaning German delegation that is left speechless when they hear how the city was demolished in 2002. When they propose an initiative to bring Palestinians and Israelis together, Musa interrupts with impatience. 'When I have to take off all my clothes because a 16-year-old soldier with a weapon pointed at me orders me too, it's about dignity; it's not negotiable.'

A jubilant aide reports 'All of Facebook is talking about the municipality of Ramallah' after an ego and morale boosting trip from Prince William. But this mood is extinguished by an Israeli military invasion in which Musa, who emerges a hero, is trapped inside City Hall. Absurdist humour breaks the tension. To a frantic aide who suggests, 'if they come in, you should 'livestream: open Facebook and start talking', Musa, 55, replies, 'Do you think I know how to do that?'

What he does know how to do is orchestrate the dancing fountain in front of City Hall: the pride of the square in the city that is Palestine's refuge for artists, writers and musicians. Andrea Bocelli and Sarah Brightman's version of *Time to Say Goodbye* plays as the fountain dazzles the awestruck crowd.

Second Spring

(82 mins) from January 15 in cinemas

Robin's Wish and Andy Kelleher's mesmerising directorial feature debut, *Second Spring* have in common central characters whose lives are gradually altered by a rare and incurable degenerative form of dementia that leaves them helplessly aware of their transformation. *Second Spring* is fiction, but in Cathy Naden's magnetic, debut performance, the unpredictable and disquieting archaeologist Kathy Deane becomes frighteningly real. Unlike Williams's illness, Frontotemporal Degeneration (FTD), which commonly hits people under 60, can be diagnosed early and managed. Once Kathy realises why she forgets words, like the term Disc-Fibula to describe the Anglo-Saxon Alton brooch in a lecture, she is instinctively drawn to a new life with a new mission.

Kathy, and her architect husband Tim (Matthew Jure), live in London like roommates in an uncomfortably open marriage. Tim has a girlfriend and Kathy has her sights on Nick (Jerry Killick) a peripatetic, confirmed bachelor, who lives on an old houseboat, wears his long, fair hair in a ponytail and is a gardener at the museum where Kathy works. He cannot believe his luck when this attractive, though unkempt and greying academic comes on to him, and the relationship grows passionate. But before long Nick becomes more alarmed than amused at her lack of inhibition and self-assertive possessiveness. He need not worry. Kathy's new object of desire is the forlorn estuary in Kent that is Nick's childhood

home, surrounded, like Antonioni's *Red Desert*, by industrial smoke towers, isolated in the eerie windswept marshes. With Jonas Mortensen's atmospheric cinematography (using the last 16mm Fuji film stock in the UK), the Hoo Peninsula becomes a character in the story, one in need of Kathy's protection. The film's turning point comes when Kathy finds a flower in the rugged landscape. 'This flower means more to the landscape than we ever will' she tells Nick. 'Yeah', he jokes, 'until someone chops it down'. The title is from Albert Camus: 'Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower.'

Martin Herron's script adroitly presents the symptoms of FTD – a heightened sex drive, lack of empathy, craving for carbohydrates, irrationality – through Kathy's actions and interactions and lets them drive the storyline even before, at Tim's insistence, she is diagnosed. While Kathy is difficult to warm to, with Naden's compelling performance you begin to inhabit her world and feel her vulnerability.

One Night in Miami

(110 mins) from January 15 on Amazon Prime

It is a sign of the times that one of the best films of the year is the directorial debut of a black woman, the Oscar winning actress Regina King (*If Beale Street Could Talk*), working with an all-black cast, and from a script by Afro-American playwright Kemp Powers, whose riveting play, *One Night in Miami* electrified London's Donmar Warehouse in 2016. This is a thought-provoking character and issue-driven story that is imagined, but based on a meeting of four very real, high-profile black men at a crossroads in their lives and in the history of their people.

What is true is that on February 25, 1964, the 22-year-old underdog from Kentucky, Cassius Clay (Eli Goree) beat Sonny Liston to become Heavyweight Champion of the World and invited his friend, singer-songwriter-producer and entrepreneur Sam Cooke (Leslie Odom Jr, *Hamilton*, *The Wire*) into the ring. Congratulating Clay at the segregated Hampton House Hotel after the fight were Cooke (who added an e to the family name in an attempt to hide his identity), football superstar Jim Brown (Aldis Hodge) and Nation of Islam spokesman Malcolm X (Kingsley Ben-Adir).

Two days later, Clay risked his hard-won celebrity in announcing that he was abandoning his "slave name" for Muhammad Ali. Four months later, Cooke was dead, aged 33. The following year Jim Brown resigned from the AFL to pursue his film career full time and Malcolm X was assassinated.

If Clay, Cooke and Brown were hoping to party with the city, Malcolm X, accompanied by his sinister Nation of Islam minder Kareem (Lance Reddick, Charon in the John Wick films) was a man with a mission. In opening up the play, Powers and King show us how, despite their success, all four were struggling with their identity in the face of racial injustice. The meeting brings out unspoken rivalries and ideological differences that Powers captures in brilliantly balanced, dramatic debates. When Malcolm X rants that Cooke is the only one not waiting on a cheque from a white man, Brown reminds him, 'you don't even have a job.' But while Brown believes financial independence is the key to power, it is not enough for Malcolm X. In one of the most potent scenes in a film packed with them, he plays Bob Dylan's new hit, *Blowin' in the Wind* and asks Cooke how a white boy from Minnesota 'speaks more to the struggles of our people than anything you have ever penned?' Instead of celebrating, the three entertainers confront their dual identities as powerful black men who are sidestepping the Civil Rights movement raging outside in a white world. Malcolm X is the instigator, but, plotting his break with The Nation of Islam and dependent on Clay's conversion to pull it off, he is the most troubled. In their long night of the soul each man digs deep inside himself to emerge anew. At the end, Cooke sings, *A Change is Gonna Come* on the Johnny Carson show, the song that replaced Billie Holiday's *Strange Fruit* as the black anthem of the decade.

Robin's Wish

(77 mins) releasing on digital and on demand from 4 January 2021

On 11th August 2014, the world was shocked by the news that the "world's funniest man", Robin Williams, committed suicide by hanging. The void was filled by speculative newscasts and tweets while tabloids were quick to attribute the death to his history of drugs, alcoholism and mental health issues. Graphic artist Susan Schneider the Marin County comedian's third wife of barely four years, juggled grief and incomprehension with injurious reporting, as well as mounds of flowers and tributes left at their door. It wasn't until the Coroner's Report in October that she learnt a truth that Williams died without knowing.

Producer-director Tylor Norwood, in collaboration with Schneider-Williams in her new role as founder of the Lewy Body Dementia Fund, aims "to restore a legacy that had been tainted by a fundamental misunderstanding." Tributes are paid by neighbours, friends, military personnel (Williams entertained the troops and shared his fears with wounded soldiers) and work colleagues who marvel at his ability to improvise for hours, his bottomless creativity and his unparalleled quick wit. In the months before his death, Williams was not only starring in *Night at the Museum* but shooting the short-lived sit-com *The Crazy Ones*. Shawn Levy, director of the former and *The Crazy One's* producers David E Kelley and John Montgomery noticed that Williams was forgetting his lines, and recall how his ensuing low morale, anxiety and insecurity was heart-breaking. Levy protected Williams' changing personality, but with hindsight feels 'it is more loyal to share without shame as the guy was hurting.'

They also noticed him covering his hand. A diagnosis of Parkinson's in May 2014 was some comfort, but he was aware enough to know that the visual hallucinations, paranoia, and insomnia he had was a form of dementia that was only detected by an autopsy. By the time of his death Williams' neurons had been so consumed by this incurable degenerative disease that it was a miracle he could stand up. It is apparently only due to his superior intellect that he could resist as long as he did.

While we hear that after John Belushi's death Williams got clean and took up cycling, the film does not mention his admission to an alcohol rehab centre in 2014. We are left to ponder whether drink and drugs contribute to the disease or whether the drinking was a way of dealing with it; or perhaps Williams, confusing the symptoms of Lewy Body disease with alcoholism, checked himself in. Devastating stuff.

Robin and Susan



Crystals

YVONNE THOMAS CRYSTALISES HER THOUGHTS ON A COLOURFUL COLLECTION



‘Citrines, a sparkling yellow type of amethyst are also called “the merchants’ stone.” It is said to bring in the money.’

There is a small shop along the street which has survived all the others that have succumbed to developers. This may seem surprising because it doesn't sell the sort of things people need from day to day like bread and milk. Inside they sell eagles' feathers, dream-catchers, crystals and stones that enhance and heal and do all sorts of things to boost life and character.

During the shopping restrictions although there is never more than one customer inside, the man behind the counter said they had never been busier with people buying online. Why? Because of the healing and exhaling powers of crystals of course. Native Americans who lived close to nature had a rich knowledge of their power from which many people are benefitting today.

As you can't get too much of a good thing, there are many people who collect crystals. These are presented as polished little chips and pebbles which are colourful and shiny and some people collect them without realising the benefits they are supposed to bring.

The man behind the shop counter said he knows crystals have powers to improve and change things because he has had experience of what they can do. He used to be unsure of himself and insecure but since he has carried a little

apatite, which is a green rock crystal in his pocket he has felt optimistic and positive. It really had made a difference. 'I've got one in my pocket now', he said. 'And a lot of business people put citrines around their cash-tills.' Citrines, a sparkling yellow type of amethyst are also called “the merchants' stone.” It is said to bring in the money.

Power and influence

The few stones that I have on my bookshelf were bought because they are colourful and examples of what the natural world can produce, but their powers to influence peoples lives and behaviour have been wasted on the shelf because one has to carry them around to feel the benefit.

Following this revelation, I put a small piece of polished turquoise which promotes patience, serenity and balance into my pocket. It was soon lost. Still, there remains a craggy piece of pyrite, also known as “fool's gold” because of its colour and shine bought without realising that it also promotes intelligence, mental stability, memory and optimism... I await results!

Some customers are after much bigger crystals for garden ornaments. One had just telephoned to buy an impressive chunk of amethyst more than a foot high (stimulates intellect

for £999. Nearby was a bigger piece of celestite, clear with shadows of sky blue for £1,500, and a piece of fossilised tree trunk 230 million years old, rock-solid and heavy with one end polished to make a stool which will never wear out is there for £1,899...

Dream catchers

For anyone who is not sleeping well and is interested in old native American culture there are also dream-catchers. These are made of cane bent to make a circle about the size of the palm of a hand (it could also be bigger) and threaded across to make a net. Feathers of wild geese or turkey (or eagle) which see things from a higher plane are attached to the perimeter, which can be personalised with a lock of hair. The dream-catcher is then attached to the bedroom window at night and it is meant to stop bad dreams from coming in. Sweet dreams to all, and health, serenity, prosperity etc to all the collectors out there!

Names

I thought of collecting scams but it would be too tedious. Besides, everyone has scam stories, loads of them, and they aren't at all entertaining, not even original any more. Except, perhaps, one.

It was an early attempt and I suppose the man was inexperienced. Otherwise he would have chosen something better. He said he was telephoning from China and in an urgent voice revealed the sad news that a man with the surname “Thomas” had died suddenly in a street in Hong Kong.

'He was a wealthy man and we haven't been able to trace his family nor to find anyone with his name so I've done some research', said Mr Scammer, 'and as your name is Thomas, you must be his next of kin and inheritor. If you can send me your bank details...' etc.

You can see he was a novice. But apart from his lack of experience, did the dolt think there was only one “Thomas” in Britain? There are more than 71,000 of us here. It is the ninth most common surname in the UK. There are even more Smiths, over half a million of those (632,854) probably more by now; nearly 400,000 Joneses and 250,000 Browns... The Williamses are not far behind.

If the scammer had any sense he would have gone for the rarest names, something unusual. I don't want to give any hints but there are some names that have been labelled “on the brink” – presumably in danger of disappearing. It's a pity because most of them sound worth keeping: “Sallow” for instance – not many people have that early Anglo-Saxon surname in Britain now. Or “Miracle” or “Relish”, or a pre-Norman conquest name like “Hatt”, all apparently “on the brink” – though holders of those ancient surnames might disagree.

Collecting names is not visual like collecting post cards or grand pianos (I met a film producer once who had a dozen grand pianos and a collection of old swords which he kept under a bed). Names do not take up space but they have a long link with our history just as place names do.

The scammer who hit on the name, Thomas hoping to steal a bank account may have improved his technique by now but most of them have the same old stories with slight variations. Perhaps my would-be scammer was just a school kid learning the business. How about my special how-to- scam-course, cheap at only £1,500 an hour?



Book reviews

KATE GOODMAN BREAKS OUT SOME WINTER READING AND DISCOVERS THAT...

Good things come in small bundles...

The year is 1625 and in a village north of London, 10-year-old butcher's son Nat Davy is about to set out on life's next big adventure. A dwarf, he's tried everything from pleading with the faeries to enlisting his brother Sam's help to stretch him from a tree in order to grow. His father's about to sell him to a freak show when he comes to the attention of the Duke of Buckingham who buys him as a gift for King Charles wife, Henrietta Maria.

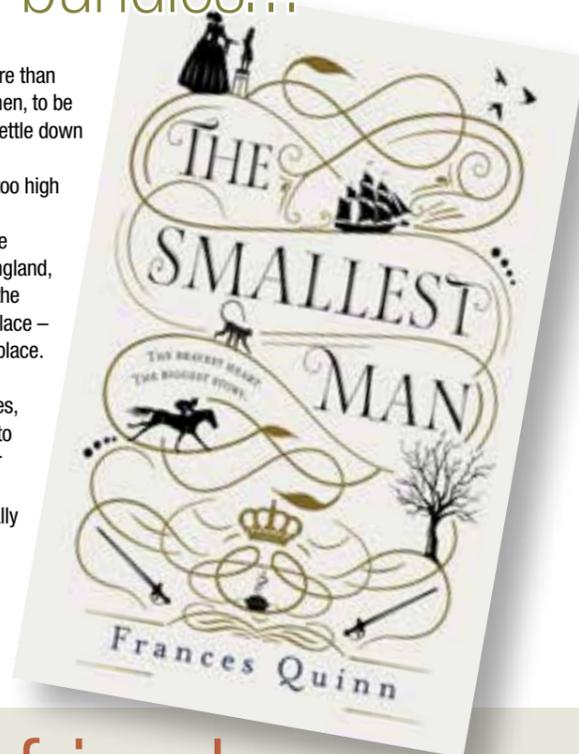
Poor Nat is popped in a pie to emerge to a life in court where he soon becomes the queen's confidant and finds a life-long friend in Jeremiah, a gangly giant who teaches him to ride. Though Nat faces many challenges, he tries to remember his mother's advice that he may be "small on the outside, but inside he's as big as everyone else". There's certainly nothing little about his loyalty to his masters – Nat sticks with the queen through thick and thin as Charles leads his country into a bloody civil war. As his adventures take him around England and across Europe, Nat grows in wisdom, courage and

strength, proving himself a true hero more than once. But still he longs to be like other men, to be accepted as an equal by his peers and settle down with his one true love.

Has our small hero set his ambitions too high or will he find happiness in the end?

What a joy of a read! Descriptive prose immerses you in seventeenth century England, where the sights, sounds and smells of the times – be it at a country fair or royal palace – immediately evoke a sense of time and place. There's adventure on every page as Nat navigates his way through turbulent times, but most interesting of all is his journey to maturity as he finally accepts himself for who he is, puts his experience to use to help others and finds the courage to finally live the life he wants to live.

***The Smallest Man* by Frances Quinn is published by Simon & Schuster in hardback on January 7, RRP £14.99**



You can choose your friends...

Eliza Miller's single mother Jeannie may have had her madcap moments, but she got one thing right in her choice of Eliza's godmothers, Olivia and Maxie – her two closest friends from her wild and wonderful schooldays. Together they ensure Eliza has some stability in her life, and when tragedy strikes, they both fly halfway round the world to help and comfort 17-year-old Eliza.

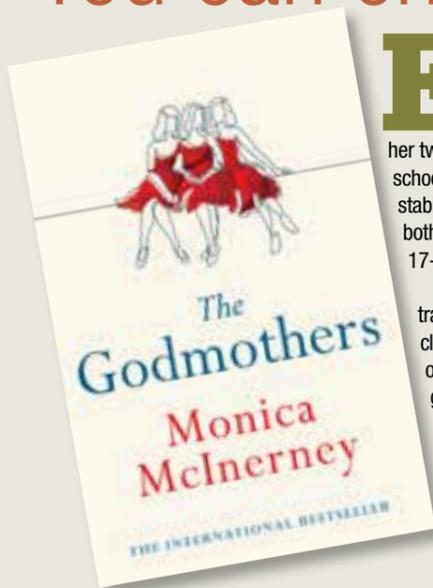
Now, at 30, Eliza needs them again, to help her track down her unknown father. Olivia and Maxie claim to know nothing about him – but will all the other secrets they're keeping from their beloved goddaughter help or hinder her in her quest to discover the truth about her mother's life and untimely death?

Funny, moving and poignant, this story has a well-paced plot that flows effortlessly between Australia, Scotland and Ireland, but its real joy is its characters. Sweet, anxious

Eliza, efficient art expert turned hotel-keeper Olivia and exuberant actress Maxie's bonds are explored in the shadows of the woman they loved and lost – Jeannie may be long dead, but never has a character come so vividly to life in the bitter-sweet memories of her friends and family.

Then there are the new friends Eliza meets along the way – Celine, Olivia's irascible eccentric stepmother; Olivia's stepsons Alex and Rory and her hotel manager Lawrence, all of whom provide a tantalising glimpse of future romance for our heroine; and finally Sullivan, the precocious eleven-year-old she meets on her flight to Edinburgh, who helps her overcome her fear of flying and grounds her in reality whenever things get too much elsewhere. A truly heart-warming read.

***The Godmothers* by Monica McInerney is published by Welbeck in hardback on January 21, RRP £12.99**



Revenge is a dish best served cold...

Ever performed a 60-40 crippler on a frozen half-pipe halfway up the piste? No me neither, but despite all the snowboarding terminology thrown into the narrative, I was gripped by this story of five snowboarding friends on a reunion trip, 10 years after the disappearance of one of their number on the icy slopes. With champion snowboarder Saskia's remains presumably trapped in an icy glacier, the truth of what happened to her may never emerge – especially given the lies told by her friends and rivals.

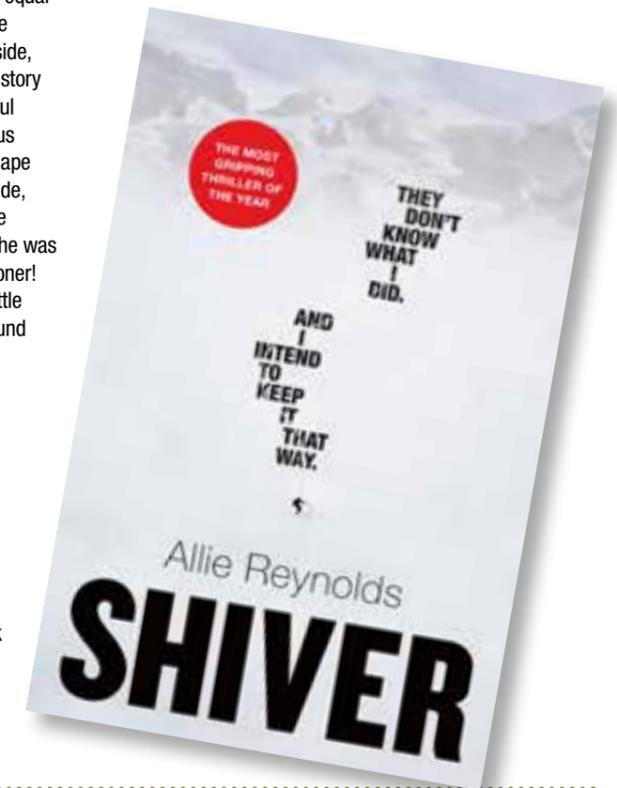
The story opens with Milla, Brent, Heather, Dale and Curtis (brother of the missing Saskia) arriving at the place where it all happened. As they enter the deserted ski-lodge, where a pot of stew bubbles merrily on the stove there are no humans around to welcome them, the radios are disabled and strange messages appear on frosty windows, it occurs to them that they are participants in a deadly game of truth and dare. But just who is behind it? Has Saskia survived the slopes and returned to exact revenge? Or is one of their own party pulling the strings?

Told exclusively from Milla's point of view, the narrative alternates chapters between

past and present, with tension rising in equal amounts as we begin to understand the rivalries, both on and off the mountainside, of the main players. The 10-years-ago story is compelling – descriptive, suspenseful and taut, the sharp narrative presents us with a most dislikeable victim in the shape of Saskia, queen bee of the mountainside, and a bitch to everyone around her. The question becomes not why or even if she was murdered, but why it didn't happen sooner!

The present-day narrative drags a little around the middle as the friends go round in circles trying to get to the truth. But the promise of them being picked off one-by-one, Agatha-Christie style, is enough to keep you reading. The plot twists are as tortuous as the cripplers the snowboarders perform – and as potentially devastating, too. This story won't leave you cold!

***Shiver* by Allie Reynolds is published by Headline in hardback on January 21, RRP £12.99**



My name is not Jane!

Her true name – that's all Vietnamese immigrant Thanh Dao has left to call her own along with a photograph of her parents, a bundle of letters from her sister and a tattered copy of Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men*. Everything else has been disposed of in the furnace by the man who calls himself her husband and keeps her prisoner on his remote farm.

Cowed into submission both verbally and physically – he has crippled her ankle with bolt-cutters to prevent her escape – Thanh can only submit to his demands, cleaning and cooking for him, and serving his needs in bed. Not even an outsider can save her, for how can she confide in anyone when her tormentor holds the final threat of having

her beloved sister arrested and deported if Thanh does not toe his line?

Then something miraculous happens and she is given something to live for and fight for – but how?

Dealing as it does with harrowing and challenging issues, this story of people trafficking, modern-day slavery and coercive control is no easy read, but it is thoroughly gripping in its exploration of the human condition, in all its good and evil. Thanh is an articulate and honest narrator, implacable in her hatred of her oppressor but fierce, loving and loyal to the people she loves. I read her story with bated breath, feeling her pain, applauding her indomitable spirit and willing her on to find a way out of what seems an impossible predicament as she fights to regain the right to her own name.

***The Last Thing To Burn* by Will Dean is published by Hodder & Stoughton in hardback on January 7, RRP £12.99**

