

NFOP magazine

Spring unlocks the
flowers to paint the
laughing soil.

Bishop Reginald Heber



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– Brexit and
COVID-19**
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Editor's Note

Welcome to the March edition of the Magazine and its official, spring is finally here. I don't know about you but I always see the first day of March as being significant – for me it spells the end of the dark, cold days of winter and the promise of better, brighter and warmer times to come.

Well, what better metaphor could I actually choose for the times we live in? Boris has spoken and we now have a "road map" out of lockdown. I have written extensively about this on pages 09 and 10 of this issue but suffice to say we can all now see an end to the dreadful times that we have been through.

I expect that by now many of you have received the vaccination against coronavirus. I was lucky enough to be called for my first dose a couple of weeks ago and I must just take time to reflect on what a positive experience it was. My vaccine centre is at my local GP, a surgery that I have been attending for many years now, but what amazed me was the sheer volumes that they are vaccinating.

The nurse who administered my jab told me that they were only offering vaccination surgeries two days a week at present, not because they didn't want to offer more, they did, but simply because they just could not get enough vaccinations. I thought about that for a minute and then asked her just how many

people they were vaccinating – and the answer nearly knocked me off my chair. My one surgery was vaccinating 3,000 people a week on just two days – think about that – 1,500 people a day! What a great testament that is to the professionalism and dedication of our wonderful NHS staff.

The most important thing is that we can now start to plan just how we get our lives back to normal, whatever the new normal will be for us and I for one look forward to the day when I don't have to write about the pandemic in each and every issue of the Magazine.

But for now it's time to look forward with a degree of cautious optimism. What is the first thing you will be doing once lockdown is lifted – mine will be going out and having someone cook a nice meal for me in a nice restaurant. What will you do? Why not write in and tell me.

As always we have another packed issue for you this month as well as a special announcement from your Chairman – I won't spoil it for you but turn to page 05 to see what Jill has to say.

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 – I'd love to hear from you. Until next time.

Ed.



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Printing Precision Colour Printing

Published by Highwood House Publishing Ltd

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Snoring – we all do it!

But we might not realise it. In fact you would be surprised by just how common snoring is, but don't worry, it's not normally caused by anything serious or detrimental to our health.

However, it can be a problem for those that we live and sleep with and that's why the British Snoring and Sleep Apnoea Association have National Stop Snoring Week which aims to draw attention and raise awareness and takes place this year between the 20th and 24th April.

But what causes it?

The simple answer is that no one thing is responsible. It is generally caused by your tongue, throat, mouth or the airways in your nose vibrating as you breathe. When you are asleep these parts of your body relax and narrow.

However, there are certain things that can affect whether you snore or not. The most common factors associated with snoring are if you are overweight, if you are a smoker, if you drink too much alcohol, if you suffer from allergies or it could

quite simply be the position that you sleep in. Those of us that struggle to sleep and take a sleeping pill to help may also be at an increased risk of snoring.

Your age and sex can also impact on whether you snore or not. As you age your throat becomes narrower and at the same time the muscle tone or strength also decreases, both of these factors can cause your airways to narrow. It is also a well known fact that men tend to snore more than women.

If you are a snorer you may also suffer from a condition called sleep apnoea which is where your airways become temporarily blocked as you sleep. This causes your breathing to stop and start whilst sleeping and may lead you to make loud gasping, snorting or choking noises in your sleep. It can also mean that you have interrupted sleep as it will cause you to wake up on a number of occasions during the night. Sleep apnoea can be serious, so if you think you may suffer from this then it is essential that you consult your GP.



The most common factors associated with snoring are if you are overweight, if you are a smoker, if you drink too much alcohol, if you suffer from allergies or it could quite simply be the position that you sleep in.

What can I do to help?

If you snore then there are some simple things that you can do to try to reduce, if not stop altogether, the incidence of your snoring. These include:

- If you are overweight, try and do something about it. Losing weight will not only help your snoring but it will also help your overall health as well.
- Try to sleep on your side at all times. If you struggle to do this then you can buy special pillows or what is known as a "bed wedge" which can help keep you on your side whilst you are asleep.
- It might sound flippant, but buy your partner a good set of ear plugs that they can wear, especially if your snoring affects their ability to get a good nights sleep.
- Try and keep yourself hydrated as much as possible and drink plenty of fluids throughout the day. This is because the liquid in your nasal passages and throat becomes stickier when you're dehydrated and therefore can vibrate more as air passes over them when you are asleep.
- Make sure that your bedroom is clean and that you change or clean your pillows on a regular basis. If you don't then dust and allergens can build up, particularly on curtains, headboards and overhead lights over time. These can then cause allergic reactions causing you to snore more. If you have pets, don't let them sleep in your bedroom for the very same reason.

If you can't solve the problem on your own then a visit to your GP can help. They can advise you on alternatives you can try to stop or reduce the amount of snoring you do when asleep. Some of the things that you can talk to them about are:

- Wearing a device at night in your mouth that keeps your tongue towards the front of your mouth (known as a mandibular advancement device). This is because your tongue can partially block the back of your throat causing you to snore more.
- Your doctor might suggest that you try a chin strap which is intended to hold your mouth closed meaning that you breathe through your nose when asleep rather than your mouth. This is known as a vestibular shield.
- You could also try nasal dilators or strips that are designed to hold your nose open whilst you sleep – these prevent the narrowing of your airways, aiding airflow and thus reducing the vibrations that cause snoring.

Endometriosis – what is it and what can you do about it?

March is endometriosis month which takes place not just in the UK but across the world aiming to raise awareness of this debilitating condition that affects an estimated 176 million women worldwide. As well as being the biggest cause of infertility amongst women, endometriosis can have a devastating effect on the quality of life of those who suffer from it principally because of the extremely painful symptoms that the disease carries.

The disease affects one in ten women, and can affect women of any age. However, it is not easy to diagnose evidenced by the fact that, on average, it can take in excess of seven years to be diagnosed properly.

One of the main reasons that it is so difficult to diagnose is because the symptoms can vary considerably, whilst many other conditions can also cause similar symptoms.

The aim of the annual campaign is to raise awareness about the condition and to try and promote a greater awareness and understanding of the disease and the effect it has on sufferers lives. But it's not only sufferers who are targeted by the annual campaign. It also aims to educate people about the consequences of living with the disease and in particular families whose lives it can impact just as much as the sufferer.

So what is endometriosis?

The disease occurs when tissue similar to the lining of the womb grows in other areas of the body. The tissue is linked to the sufferers hormonal cycle but unlike a period, the tissue remains within the body and bleeds. This bleeding then forms adhesions (or scar tissue), lesions and blood filled cysts which can often burst causing great pain.

Symptoms to look out for include excessive bleeding, severe pain, fatigue and a suppressed immune system.

How is it diagnosed?

As we have said earlier, it is a difficult condition to diagnose. Even going for an ultrasound scan can prove inconclusive. In fact the only way to truly diagnose endometriosis is through an invasive procedure called a laparoscopy. This is where a surgeon will pass a thin tube through a small incision in the patients stomach in order that they can see if there are any patches of endometriosis tissue.

Is there a cure?

Sadly at the moment the answer to this question is no although there are treatments that can help to ease the symptoms. These include taking painkillers that are readily available over the counter such as paracetamol and ibuprofen and there are hormone based treatments that can also help.

However, in the most severe cases the only real treatment is surgery to remove patches of endometriosis tissue that have been identified or an operation to remove the organs that are affected by the disease – more commonly known as a hysterectomy.

For more information on the disease together with details of the help and assistance that is available visit www.endometriosis-uk.org/ or alternatively you can call their helpline on 0808 808 2227.

March at the movies

Cinema



JOYCE GLASSER

Eye of the Storm

(from 5 March in virtual cinemas) Cert. TBC, 78 minutes.

The only good thing to come out of Donald Trump's environmentally disastrous golf course in Aberdeenshire was the serendipitous meeting of Scottish landscape artist James Morrison and documentary director Anthony Baxter whose 2016, *You've been Trumped Too*, prompted the octogenarian artist to request a meeting. The result is a moving tribute to a contemplative, charming humanist with a charmed life, whose art is owned by J.K. Rowling and the Royal Family but is still affordable. Baxter follows the artist over what were to be the final years of his life as he battles with fading eyesight and memory to prepare one final painting for his 25th, and final exhibition in Edinburgh in January 2020. He died seven months later, aged 88.

A Francophile who bought his brushes from Magasin Sennelier in Paris, Morrison was influenced by the landscapes of Claude Lorrain, the Barbizon School and adopted the outdoor painting of certain impressionists. Penetrating artists' quotations serve as markers to Morrison's artistic life, like this from Claude Monet: "I see less and less. I will paint almost blind, as Beethoven composed completely deaf." Morrison

tells Baxter: 'My sight has quite badly deteriorated, and the very thought of coming in here and not being able to pick up a brush and do something with it really terrifies me'. "In here" is his studio in his sprawling white house on the sea in Montrose between Dundee and Aberdeen, where Morrison has been confined due to a recent operation, difficulty walking and poor eyesight. It is a challenging transition for an outdoor painter but, with new prescription glasses, he soldiered on, giving us lyrical insights into his technique.

Baxter provides an overview of Morrison's life using video footage of his outdoor painting from the windy shores of Angus to the icy Arctic; and his happy, 22-year teaching career at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee. We are treated to archival footage from, among other sources, a BBC programme Morrison presented about the Catterline artist colony where Morrison, who moved there in 1960, met another Glasgow School of Art graduate, Joan Eardley, but had to keep her powerful art at "arm's length" to develop his own style. If Eardley's stylised portraits of Glaswegian children made her famous, Morrison's portraiture is confined to long-gone Glaswegian tenement buildings, which, like his landscapes are full of character and atmosphere, but devoid of people. It is for the viewer to inhabit them. Talented animator Catriona Black fills in the story's gaps with animation that is complementary to Morrison's art. True to his subject, Baxter's biopic steers sentimentality and spiritual messages. 'You have to avoid making a statement like the plague' Morrison tells his Catholic neighbour, Denis Rice, who continues to see God in Morrison's fading white clouds and brooding heavens.

The Dissident

(www.thedissident.film) The film will premiere at the Glasgow International Film Festival on 6 March, UK release TBC. Cert. TBC, 119 mins.

Are the world's nations so reluctant or helpless to confront despots who brutally murder journalists by entrapment that they go unpunished? In the case of the state-sponsored murder of Saudi Arabian royal court insider-turned-dissident, Jamal Khashoggi on 2 October 2017, for President Donald Trump, commercial interests prevailed over justice. While Trump disingenuously claimed the facts were unclear, Turkey, on which Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) tried to pass the blame, published translated transcripts of the sinister plans for the murder, and the gruesome murder itself, (complete with sick jokes), which were, astonishingly, recorded. Moreover, as Turkish Minister of Justice Abdulhamit Gül points out, high-ranking specialists took a private jet from Riyadh to Istanbul to carry out the murder, including Scientific

Council on Forensics director Salah Mohammed Abdah Tubaigy, "an expert on how autopsies are carried out and how corpses are dismembered."

Director-co-producer and co-writer (with Mark Monroe) Bryan Fogel (who won an Oscar for *Icarus* about Russian athletics doping) decided, 'this would be a film about truth.' As a court insider, Khashoggi must have known journalists are there to serve the truth-averse royal family. Ayman Nour, an imprisoned Egyptian Presidential candidate, tells us, 'Jamal's biggest turning point was the Egyptian January revolution' (2011). Disappointed by the reversals to the Arab Spring, he began testing the boundaries of what could be said. It was during Donald Trump's trip to Saudi Arabia that Khashoggi's tweets went too far. Though allegedly liberalising his country MBS began a purge of "dissidents", and Khashoggi fled to the USA. Fogel's riveting film is a political spy thriller, a biopic, the chronicle of a barbarous murder, and a love story. If Khashoggi's parting from his first wife and children is glossed over, leaving many questions, his short-lived relationship with the much younger Turkish academic Hatrice Cengiz is not. It was while entering the Saudi Embassy in Istanbul on 2 October 2018 to collect a marriage document that Khashoggi met his grim fate. A parallel subplot concerns 27-year-old self-exiled Saudi Arabian dissident Omar Abdulaziz Alzahrani, who tells his own chilling story from Quebec where he is carrying on Khashoggi's work on his YouTube channel. Regrettably, after assembling an impressive number of high-profile interviewees, Fogel drops the name captions when they reappear, leaving us struggling to remember who they are. While that is frustrating, Khashoggi's murder will leave you angry that MBS has avoided international sanctions, let alone justice.

The Father

(12th March) subject to Coronavirus restrictions. Cert. TBC, 97 mins.



Adapting for the screen a nearly single location play, with little plot or action would seem foolhardy enough, but Florian Zeller's award-winning hit play of 2012, *The Father*, appears even more problematic. Zeller had never directed a film before, and his script (written with Christopher Hampton) is from the point-of-view of the protagonist: an octogenarian suffering from advanced dementia. When that octogenarian is played by Academy Award winning Anthony Hopkins, his long-suffering carer daughter by Academy Award winning Olivia Colman the odds look better. But what makes *The Father* a triumph is that Zeller, who failed to better *The Father* with *The Height of the Storm* in 2018, turns out to be a natural-born filmmaker.

Anthony (Zeller wrote the role with Hopkins in mind) still shows glimmers of the playful, opera-loving, intelligent and stubbornly independent engineer he was. But Anthony still believes he is living in his home and that his divorced daughter, Anne (Colman), has moved in with him with the excuse that he needs looking after. Routine reassures Anthony, and when he is not accusing Anne of stealing his watch, he tenderly expresses his appreciation. But he can turn

belligerent on a penny when confronted with patronising carers and is confused by the men in Anne's life: an unidentified man (Mark Gatiss, who reappears as a care home nurse) and Paul (Rufus Sewall). They are far less understanding than Anne and resent his intrusion on their lives. As any carer will identify with, Anne is torn between her own needs and a sense of responsibility for her father, who complains how he longs for his "favourite daughter", Lisa, to return after so many years from her travels abroad.

The main action is the interview with a new carer, Laura (the excellent Imogen Poots), in a last-ditch attempt to keep Anthony from being institutionalised. To Anne's relief, Anthony puts on a show to impress Laura whom he sees as Lisa, who exclaims, 'he's charming!' Anne must warn her: 'not always'. The following morning when Laura (now played by Olivia Williams) turns up to start work, Anthony feels he has been deceived and slams his bedroom door in W9 for the last time.

‘Zeller manipulates time like Christopher Nolan, only better.’

Zeller manipulates time like Christopher Nolan, only better, and, aided by Yorgos Lamprinos's editing, and clever production and set design, we notice subtle changes in the décor (the kitchen tiles, a painting by Lisa over the fireplace) as we, and Anthony time travel from his apartment to Anne's and even the doctor's office. Zeller's only false step is the maudlin ending which, given Hopkins's ability to convey a range of emotions, including vulnerability, in one gesture, is overkill. If you want to see a career best performance from an 83-year-old actor, see *The Father*.

Apples

(19 March in cinemas and on Curzon Home Cinema) Cert. TBC, 90 mins.

A sparsely populated Athens before mobile phones and when people danced to *Let's Twist Again*, has been struck by a strange pandemic which results in sudden amnesia. Cate Blanchett is one of the Executive Producers of Greek co-writer/director Christos Nikou's touching directorial debut. Nikou's darkly comic, absurdist style with a chilling undertone is reminiscent of compatriot Yorgos Lanthimos's films (*The Lobster* and *The Favourite*), who now boasts A-list casts and English language scripts.

Bearded, thirty-something Aris (Aris Servetelis) is banging his head on the wall of his large, comfortable apartment when, after hearing an information bulletin for the New Identity Hospital for amnesia victims, he abruptly leaves, and boards a bus. When he awakens at the end of the line with no memory of where he is headed, he is despatched to the Disturbed Memory Department of a neurological hospital where those not reclaimed by their families embark on a closely monitored program designed to prepare them for a new life. While taking selfies of various "normal" activities with a polaroid as part of the treatment, Aris is picked up by free spirited Anna (Sofia Georgovassili) with whom he forges an uneasy relationship.

While the film invites us to contemplate the nature of memory loss, there are increasingly explicit clues, culminating in the heart-breaking ending, that *Apples* is about another kind of loss: one so painful that one longs to forget. Photos are supposed to help us remember, although the whimsical "selfie" sequences grow tiresome, trivialising this repressed depth of feeling. When Aris sings along to the words of *Sealed with a Kiss*, Anna points out excitedly that Aris has remembered the lyrics. And, in one of the film's most intriguing scenes, Aris, with a look of horror on his face, empties his bag full of apples when the fruit stall owner encouragingly remarks, 'apples are good for the memory.'

Modelling – turn back the clock!

“If you are thinking of returning to this as a hobby it’s best to get started on one of the easier kits. That way if you make a mistake or struggle to finish you won’t have wasted a lot of money.”

We have all had a lot more time on our hands over the last year or so and the challenge for many has been what to do with that time and how to keep yourself busy.

Understandably, crafts and hobbies have enjoyed something of a resurgence during this time and many people have taken the opportunity to take up new hobbies, or revisit those that they enjoyed earlier in their life.

As a small boy, or girl for that matter, how many of you built models? I guess quite a lot of you. Model aeroplanes, cars, ships and boats, trains or military vehicles to name but a few were extremely popular in my childhood and toy shops used to be brimming with these kits and all the equipment that you needed to help you put them together.

Well, it’s probably no surprise that model kits have never really gone away – in fact they are proving just as popular as ever, the only difference nowadays being that they can be more and more sophisticated than the ones we remember from our younger days. Modelling can also have health benefits. So if you remember the good old days of Airfix kits read on and find out more – maybe you will be inspired to get back into modelling all over again!

Kits can be easily bought from most good toy stores across the country and you won’t be surprised to find that there are a huge number of choices available from the many online stores that you can find on the internet.

Most kits tend to be made from either plastic, wood

(usually the lightweight balsa wood) or metal and come in small pieces which you then have to assemble following a well laid out plan that comes with the kit. You can spend as little as a few pounds to get you started, but you can also buy more sophisticated, and therefore more difficult, kits for well in excess of £100 or more.

If you are thinking of returning to this as a hobby it’s best to get started on one of the easier kits. That way if you make a mistake or struggle to finish you won’t have wasted a lot of money. As you get more competent and confident you can then move onto the costlier and more difficult kits that are out there.

So what are some of the things you need to take into consideration?

Most kits are made to scale which essentially tells you how big the model is in relation to its original size. For example, if you are buying a model plane a common scale is 1:72 – this means that for every inch, centimetre, foot or metre that your finished model is, the original is 72 times larger. Common scales for model ships tend to be either 1:350 or 1:600 whilst military vehicle models tend to be to a scale of 1:35.

The next thing you need to consider is the level of difficulty, also known as the skill level. This determines how difficult it will be for you to complete the model in question. There are five skill levels as follows:

- Level 1 – this is the lowest level and consists of models that contain snap together pieces and do not need you to use glue to assemble them or paint to decorate them.
- Level 2 – These are easier to complete kits that will generally require you to use both glue and paint but they will contain relatively few pieces – generally less than 100.
- Level 3 – Now you start to get a little trickier – parts will tend to be getting smaller and greater in number – level 3 kits will likely have over a hundred separate pieces.
- Level 4 – These are advanced kits, they will certainly have more than a hundred pieces. You will also find attention to detail much greater and construction much more intricate.
- Level 5 – This is the level for expert modellers. These kits will usually be the most expensive and may include moving parts that you will need to assemble such as moving propellers on planes, moving turrets on tanks and working suspension on cars.

Just a word of advice here – the leading model brand in the UK, Airfix, list many of their kits as being “skill level 1” but you will need to use glue and paint to complete them – thus they are really skill level 2 standard.

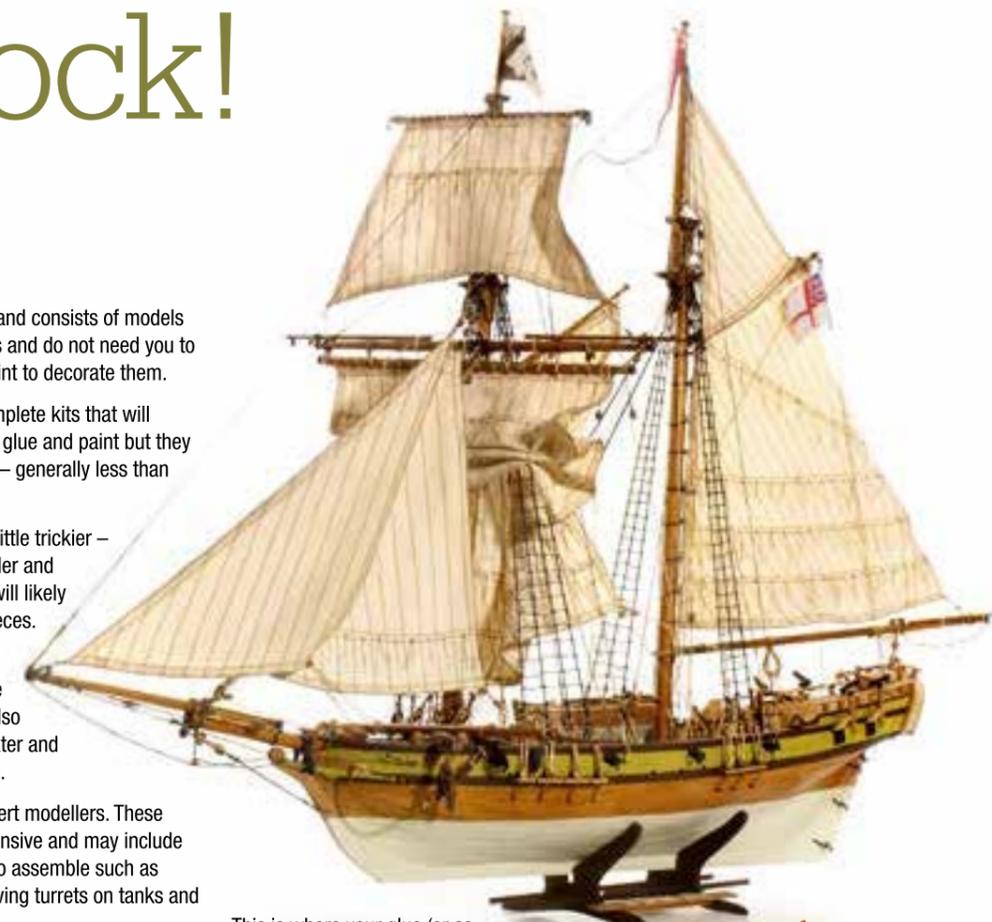
So what do I do next?

Choose the first model kit that you want to assemble. Once you have this you will need four basic pieces of equipment which are a cutting board, a modelling knife, a small file and a small paint brush. You will also need some glue and some paint but more of this later.

The cutting board is needed to allow you to safely cut the plastic model pieces from the plastic frames that they come in as well as to help you assemble the model itself. Don’t be tempted to remove the pieces from the frames (also known as sprues) by twisting them by hand, it is much cleaner and safer to remove them by cutting through with your modelling knife.

Once you have removed the pieces use your file to smooth away the little imperfections that might be left (an emery board is also a great way of doing this). Once you have done this then it is essential to make sure that you have thoroughly read the instructions. This is because at this stage you will need to make sure that you identify any pieces that require painting before assembly and make sure you paint them.

Once you have done this you are ready to go and you can follow the instructions and start the actual assembly itself.



This is where your glue (or as modellers call it plastic cement) will come in. Typically this comes in either a paste or a liquid form – it is up to you which one you choose – and you can buy standard and non-toxic versions. However, just be aware that the non-toxic versions will take longer to set.

The final stage

Then it’s onto the more intricate stage of painting. Your instructions will contain a list of the paints that you will need to buy to complete your model, an average kit will require between five and ten different colours. Paints tend to be either enamel based or acrylic based, and to be honest both do the job just as well, especially when you are just starting.

For ease, as a beginner or relative novice it’s probably better to go for acrylic paints. These are water soluble and your brush can easily be cleaned with lukewarm soapy water when you have finished. If you use enamel paints, which are oil based, you will need to use a paint thinner to clean your brush afterwards.

Once you have painted your model and it has dried it’s time to add the finishing touches which include any transfers or decals that are required. Again your instructions will tell you what to do and where to place them. And that’s it so stand back and admire your handy work whilst contemplating the next challenge!

“Airfix list many of their kits as being “skill level 1” but you will need to use glue and paint to complete them – thus they are really skill level 2 standard.”



Book reviews

KATE GOODMAN PICKS SOME SPRING BLOSSOMS

Who's the Daddy?

When tech billionaire Miles Cookson learns he has a fatal genetic disease, he's left reeling by the implications not just for himself but his kids. Breaking the news to them is not going to be easy – not least because Miles doesn't know who, where or even how many there are! He'd almost forgotten the sperm donation he made as an impoverished young man but now it has come back to haunt him.

Discreet inquiries – and a bit of bribery – throw up news of nine young adults scattered around the country. Keen to do the honourable thing, and ensure they're financially secure at least, Miles sets out to track them down. But someone else is interested in Miles' offspring – and unlike him, they're out not to help but destroy them! Just who is behind the series of fatal hits that are picking off Miles' progeny – and can he save any of them?

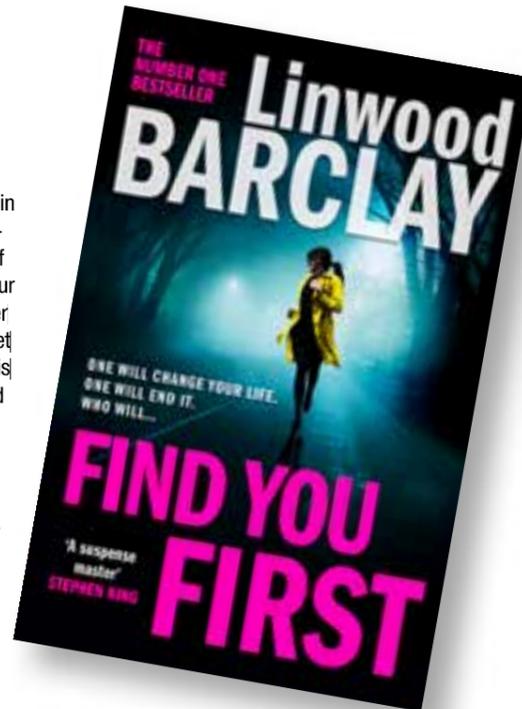
Oh my goodness! The twists and turns delivered in this nail-biting thriller are enough to keep you up all night! Though the plot is at times a little far-fetched, it's still utterly compelling,

as are the characters. Miles' daughter Chloe, a main protagonist in the narrative, is fierce, feisty and determined to save not just herself but her unknown siblings.

Miles' and Chloe's are not the only viewpoints in the story – there's also his gold-digging sister-in-law Caroline, the hired assassins, several other of Miles' children, and hugely influential entrepreneur Jeremy Pritkin – a Jeffrey Epsteinesque character whose predilection for young girls is just one facet of his deeply unpleasant character. But what is his connection to the Cookson kids? Trying to second guess the plot is impossible – just enjoy the ride as the threads all come together in a thrilling explosive finale.

Though murder and mayhem are at the heart of all his books, Barclay's trademark wry humour and his ability to engage his readers emotionally through an exciting plot and skilfully-drawn, empathetic characters make him one of my top go-to thriller writers.

Find You First by Linwood Barclay is published by HQ in hardback, RRP £20.



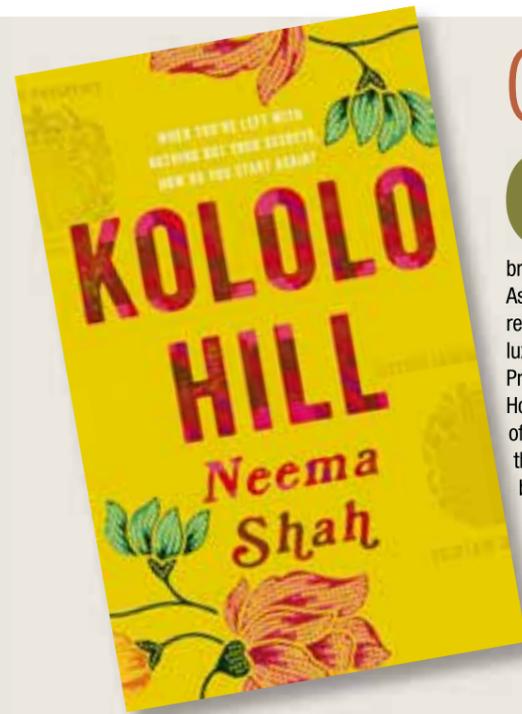
Out of Africa

Growing up in the 70s, reports over Uganda made a deep impression on me, a memory brought searingly back with this story of an Asian-Ugandan family living under his harsh regime. Motichand and his wife Jaya live in luxury at the top of Kololo Hill with their sons Pran and Vijay, and their daughter-in-law Asha. Houseboy December, a native Ugandan, is part of the family. Thanks mainly to Pran's efforts, the family are rich, successful and respected, but that won't save them when Amin announces all Asians must leave Uganda or face the consequences. With murders, tortures and disappearances commonplace, the family make plans to leave for England. But what's to be done about December,

one of a tribe Amin is persecuting? Can they save him? Can they save themselves?

This is a tale of two parts – the first half, taking us through the family's trials in Uganda, is tense and dramatic – though the narrative is slow-paced, there's an underlying air of menace to remind you danger is never far away. It then switches to the UK, where the family find that they may have British passports, but not everyone is going to make them welcome. Told from different viewpoints, this story builds up a picture of individuals who have nothing left but their pride and resourcefulness, and must navigate their way through hostile worlds while dealing with the challenge of their own fractured family dynamics and their longing for the gentle life they once led in beautiful Uganda.

Kololo Hill by Neema Shah is published by Picador in hardback, RRP £14.99



A new Queen Bee creates a buzz

Not since the publication of *Queen Lucia* back in 1920, which saw the first outing of E.F. Benson's Emmeline Lucas – the pretentious social climber and self-appointed queen of her small quintessentially English community – has there been such a smug, self-deluded heroine as modern-day monster Flappy Scott-Booth!

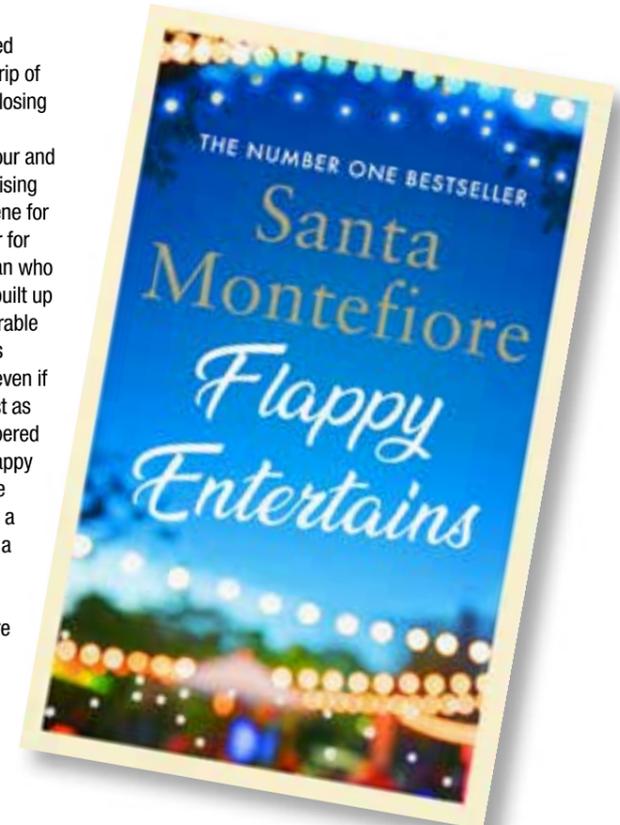
A 60-something woman who has retained her looks and undoubted charm, Flappy rules over the Devonshire village of Badley Compton from her home at Darnley Manor, bossing about her friends, swanning over committees and social clubs and still finding time to practise yoga every day! Of course she has a PA to help her – clever Persephone who actually does all the work.

But suddenly Flappy's dominance is threatened with the arrival of the Harvey-Smiths, who buy grander-than-Darnley's Compton Court and set about ingratiating themselves with their neighbours. Their presence not only threatens Flappy's position in local society – her very being is challenged when she falls under the spell of Charles Harvey-Smith's mesmerising green eyes. Suddenly the woman who has denied her

long-suffering husband Kenneth her bed for over 10 years, finds herself in the grip of middle-aged passion and in danger of losing control!

With its air of nostalgia, gentle humour and snobbery, this is a super but also surprising read! The opening chapters set the scene for satire, but Flappy is more than a cipher for the author's skilful wit – she is a woman who unpeels the protective layers she has built up around herself to reveal a warm, vulnerable and ultimately loving person who cares deeply about her family and friends – even if she is sometimes horrible to them! Just as EF Benson's ridicule of Lucia was tempered by affectionate understanding, so is Flappy allowed to develop and grow. Of course a leopard doesn't change its spots, nor a tiger its stripes (Flappy sees herself as a white tigress on Hedda Harvey-Smith's Ayrshire cow) but by the end of the book, you'll definitely want to read more about Flappy, Hedda and the Badley-Compton cohort!

Flappy Entertains by Santa Montefiore is published by Simon & Schuster in hardback, RRP £12.99



To the lighthouse...

The *Lamplighters* by Emma Stonex has to be near the top of all the great books published this month. Inspired by a haunting true story, it explores the mysterious disappearance of three lighthouse keepers from the notorious Maiden.

Arthur, Bill and Vince have spent weeks on duty, but when their relief ship arrives just after Christmas, 1972, it finds the lighthouse door locked and no trace of the men. Twenty years later, a writer decides to explore the mystery, piecing together the tragic story from press reports and interviews with the men's grieving widows.

As the multi-voiced narrative tracks back and forwards across the years, a story emerges of complex relationships between the different parties, of love and friendship betrayed, of past tragedies and

unhappy childhoods returning to haunt all three men, just as surely as the "silver man" reputedly haunts the lighthouse. There's certainly an evil presence about the lighthouse – but is its source human or supernatural?

This is such an atmospheric read – descriptive passages evoke the power and cruelty of the sea as it crashes around the lighthouse, which takes on a persona of its own, guarding its secrets closely. Lights in the sky, albino birds, phantom keepers and chilling fables about the fate other men in other lighthouses keep up a menacing atmosphere against the sometimes prosaic chatter of the women left behind, who, despite their heartbreak, are determined to keep the light of their memories burning.

Will we find out what happened to the men? You'll have to read it and see ... **The Lamplighters** by Emma Stonex is published by Picador in hardback, RRP £14.99

