

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast Cancer Awareness month is a worldwide campaign taking place throughout October, aiming to highlight the importance of breast awareness, education and research.

And it's not just women who can get breast cancer, men are susceptible as well. Recent research undertaken by the charity Breast Cancer Now shows that both male and female breast cancer may have a very similar genetic basis, a discovery which the charity says could, in the future, lead to new preventative treatments for both sexes.

According to figures from the charity, around 370 men are diagnosed with the disease every year in the UK and around 80 of them will die as a result.

Contrast the figures with those for women and you will see that this is where the real problem lies – around 55,000 women will be diagnosed each year – that's approximately one every 10 minutes, and of those 55,000 unfortunately around 11,500 will die as a result.

Breast screening is offered regularly on the NHS for all women between the ages of 50 and 71. Once you reach 50, and if you are registered with a GP, then you will be invited for a screening – and this invite will be extended every three years until you reach the age of 71. In some areas of the country there is a trial being undertaken to determine the effectiveness of offering some women one extra screen between the ages of 71 and 73.

Generally, therefore, if you are over 71, automatic screening will have ceased. However, if you are worried or have any concerns and are over this age then you can still arrange to be screened – you just need to contact your local screening unit and arrange an appointment.

The importance of continuing to be screened once the automatic screening ceases is borne out by the facts. Statistics show that about one quarter of new breast cancer diagnoses are in women aged 75 and above.

It is important, whatever your sex and your age, that you check your breasts on a regular basis as this is one of the best ways of determining whether anything has changed or is different. The earlier you catch breast cancer, then the better the chance you have of recovering from it. Some of the symptoms to look out for include:

- The appearance of any lumps or swellings in the breast, upper chest or armpit. You might feel the lump, but not be able to see it.
- Changes in the size or shape of your breast.
- Look out for any changes that may occur in your skin texture including a puckering or dimpling of the skin.
- Watch out to see if there is a change in colour of the breast – it may look red or inflamed.

- You also need to check the nipple area to see if there is a rash or any crusting around that area.
- Watch out for any unusual discharge from either nipple.

The need to check is obvious and important as it can be the first sign that something is not quite right but unfortunately many people just don't bother, leaving themselves open to allowing the disease to take hold and spread without getting treated. It is estimated that less than half of women in the UK check their breasts regularly with almost one in ten saying that they never check for symptoms.

According to Breast Cancer Now checking your breasts only takes a few minutes. Everyone will have their own way of touching and looking for changes, but you must remember to check the whole breast area, including your upper chest and armpits. There's no special technique and you don't need training. It's as simple as TLC – that's Touch Look Check.

What factors can affect people?

The main reasons people contract breast cancer include:

- It sounds obvious but being a woman – 99% of new cases of breast cancer are in women.
- Getting older – 80% of breast cancers occur in women over the age of 50. Most men who get breast cancer are over 60.
- A family history of breast cancer – if you have a family history of breast cancer you, and other members of your family, may have a higher than average risk of developing the disease. However, there may be some ways you can manage your risk, and you may be eligible for screening before your 50th birthday – check with your GP.

But there's hope

Figures show that around nine in ten women survive breast cancer for five years or more. In fact breast cancer survival is improving all the time and has doubled in the past 40 years in the UK. This is as a result of a combination of improvements in treatment and care, earlier detection through screening and a focus on targets, including faster diagnosis.

There are an estimated 600,000 people still alive in the UK after a diagnosis of breast cancer. This figure is predicted to rise to 1.2 million by 2030.

Details of your local breast screening units can be found by consulting your GP or visiting the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/conditions/breast-cancer-screening

Look after your eyes in style!

Solarshield sunglasses for 100% protection from UVA & UVB rays!

Fit over your specs or wear them on their own.



Polycarbonate Lens version



Polycarbonate Brown/Amber style shown.

Solarshield Fits-Over sunglasses don't only look good, they look after your eyes too, offering the ultimate in optical clarity to ensure your eyes don't go unprotected. The wrap-around design providing maximum UVA and UVB ray protection and 48% more face area protection than conventional sunglasses.



Smoke

You can choose between the 2 styles illustrated: Polycarbonate Lens Version with matching frame and lens colour. Or the popular Polarised lens style that offers you unsurpassed polarising efficiency throughout the visible spectrum. The Copper tint lens is ideal for daylight driving as they eliminate glare from horizontally reflective surfaces such as snow, water, road surfaces and when driving into a setting sun.

Solarshields are one of the fastest growing styles around. Designed to fit all head sizes and to be worn either alone or over your prescription eyeglasses saving you a fortune on the additional cost of prescription sunglasses too.

Polycarbonate Brown\Amber colour - the only lens choice for sufferers of Macular Degeneration.

- ✓ **Helpful to people with ME.**
- ✓ **Polarised Lens version – shatter and scratch resistant. Black frame with choice of grey or copper lens.**
- ✓ **Polycarbonate Lens – impact resistant – choose between 2 frame and lens integrated colours.**
- ✓ **Rigorously tested and have passed the internationally recognised sunglasses standards: ANSI Z80.3 (USA), EN 1836 (European) & AS1067.1 (Australian).**
- ✓ **No quibble money-back guarantee when product returned within 4 days of original receipt WITH ALL LABELLING INTACT.**
- ✓ **Recommended by leading ophthalmologists.**

NF/06

FROM ONLY

£14.95

Complete with Free Microfibre case which doubles as a cleaning cloth
72 Hour Delivery



SAVE

On Multiple Purchases of 2 & 3 Pairs. (Delivered to one address)

FROM ONLY **£19.95**

Complete with Free Microfibre case which doubles as a cleaning cloth
72 Hour Delivery

Polarised Version

Ideal for driving in daylight.



Polarised UV400 lenses. GREY STYLE shown.

Available with black frame and choice of 2 superior grade performance lenses – dark grey or copper. (Copper best for driving).

Order TODAY by Credit/Debit Card

01843 866 523

or order on line to see more and other wear-over designs & styles at:

www.directselling.org.uk

DIRECT SELLING LTD

P.O. Box 360, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 9BQ. enquiries@directselling.org.uk

PRIORITY ORDER FORM

Don't delay - Complete and post to: Direct Selling Ltd, P.O. Box 360, Broadstairs, Kent CT10 9BQ.

HAVE YOU REMEMBERED TO TICK THE COLOUR CHOICE BOX?

Practical Sunwear	Quantity (pairs)	Price (exc. del)	Delivery (72hr del)	Total Price (inc. del)	SAVING	Please tick	ORDER VALUE
(Square 'Lite') Polycarbonate Lens	1	£14.95	£4.95	£19.90	↓		£
Wraparounds	2	£29.85	£4.95	£34.80	£5.00		£
	3	£43.75	£5.95	£49.70	£10.00		£

**** PLEASE TICK for LENS COLOUR CHOICE: Smoke Brown/Amber**

Popular Sunwear	Quantity	Price	Delivery	Total Price	SAVING		
(Square 'Ultra') Polarisated Lens	1	£19.95	£4.95	£24.90	↓		£
	2	£36.85	£4.95	£41.80	£8.00		£
	3	£56.75	£5.95	£62.70	£12.00		£

**** PLEASE TICK for POLARISED LENS COLOUR CHOICE: Grey Copper (for driving)**

GRAND TOTAL

I enclose my cheque / PO for £ _____ made payable to Direct Selling Ltd

or please debit my Mastercard/Visa/Maestro/Delta card

Card No: _____ Valid From: _____ Expiry Date: _____ Issue No last 3 digits on signature strip: _____

Signature: _____ Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms): _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Tel: _____

Email: _____

Advert Code: NF/06

“The need to check is obvious and important as it can be the first sign that something is not quite right but unfortunately many people just don't bother.”

Preparing your greenhouse for winter

By the time you are reading this autumn will be on the horizon and summer will be nearly over, and what a strange summer it has been for all of us. One thing many of us have been doing this year is spending more and more time in our greenhouses, both as a way of keeping fit and, for many of us, growing fruit and vegetables to help pass the time through lockdown. Now with autumn nearly here, the winter months fast approaching and the main growing season coming towards its end it's time to consider those jobs that you need to do to get your greenhouse ready for winter. Jobs that will ensure that when you come to start again in February and March of next year you are ahead of the pack and have the best start that you can get to your gardening year.

The greenhouse

It's essential that at the end of each growing season that you first of all give it a good clear out followed by a good clean as well. The temptation is to leave old plants in the greenhouse across the winter and only clear them out to make space to start your growing season early next year.

If you do that you could potentially expose next year's crops to the risk of disease. Tomatoes, especially, are prone to disease, so if you fail to clear these out after they have been fully harvested then you could be simply storing up problems for yourself.

It's actually better to completely remove all the plants at the end of the season, putting those that have finished in the compost bin, along with the soil in which they were planted. Those you wish to keep should be put aside ready to return to the greenhouse once you have finished your cleaning and maintenance.

But it's not just plants you should remove. You should also take out any old pots and containers that you have in there as well as benches and other items that you may have used to support your plants as they grow – in fact emptying the greenhouse completely is the best option.

Once you have done this you can sweep all the rubbish out that has collected across the growing season, you'll be quite surprised just how much of this there can be. If you have beds in your greenhouse that you plant directly into you should also remove and replace the soil every couple of years as this will help to control and remove the number of pests that may well have made those nice warm beds their home.

Once the greenhouse is empty it's time to clean and scrub. You should get a bucket of warm water and some disinfectant. Make sure that this is greenhouse friendly – you can get specialist greenhouse cleaners from your garden centre and DIY stores, Jeyes fluid is also popular and many domestic cleaners will also do the job – and then thoroughly clean both inside and out.

By doing this you will not only have removed the algae and bacteria from the glass (or plastic) that has built up over the summer, but the glass will be clean which will mean that it will allow as much light and heat through as is possible during those shorter and colder winter months – essential for those plants you may need to over winter in there.

You also need to pay attention to the cracks and crevices, especially those between the glass panes. Use an old plastic seed label to get in there and prise out all the dirt and other bacterial growth that may have accumulated.

With the same solution, clean all the furniture that you keep in there – so all the benches and shelves that you use to rest your plants and seed trays on should also be thoroughly cleaned as should the tools that you use as well – after all, there is no point in only doing half a job!

Whilst cleaning it is a good time to check over the structure itself and see if there has been any damage caused. You may find cracked panes of glass, or other damage. Always check that the windows and doors still fit flush as there might have been some movement across the year. Check any gutters on the outside that are used to help collect that essential rainwater that you use as well as the seals and entry and exit pipes to the water butts that you store the rainwater in prior to use. If any seals are broken or have perished then again, now is a good time to replace them.

But it's not just the greenhouse that you need to check and look after. Look at the area in which it is situated and consider if there are any maintenance jobs that need to be done in the local area. For example if it is close to trees are there any overhanging branches that could potentially cause damage in the high winds that winter invariably brings? If so, then these need to be dealt with.

Once you have cleaned, both inside and out, you can then start to re-introduce the things that you want to keep in there over the winter, especially the plants that you are looking to protect. If you do over winter plants then it is even more essential to make sure that there are no cracks or drafts in the structure that can let the cold air get in. Where possible you should also store these off the ground – an old pallet makes an ideal base for this.

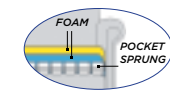
Look after your greenhouse and next year it will look after you!



THE MOBILITY FURNITURE COMPANY

Autumn SALE

TRULY MADE-TO-MEASURE RISE & RECLINE CHAIRS AND ADJUSTABLE BEDS



Ultra comfort pocket sprung 'AERO-seat' option now available!

Rise & Recline Chairs

✓ CHOICE OF WIDTH ✓ CHOICE OF DEPTH ✓ CHOICE OF HEIGHT

Choose from our extensive range of chairs and selection of 400 fabrics & leathers

Cheshire two seater sofa bed

2 SEATER SOFA BEDS AVAILABLE

'Super-hi' leg lift

Kent two-seater single motor rise and recline settee (one size only)

BOTH SEATS RISE & RECLINE

CHOICE OF BACK HEIGHT

CHOICE OF SEAT HEIGHT

CHOICE OF SEAT DEPTH

CHOICE OF SEAT WIDTH

£300 OFF THE 1ST ITEM

50% OFF THE 2ND ITEM*

Adjustable Beds

✓ CHOICE OF WIDTH ✓ CHOICE OF DEPTH ✓ CHOICE OF HEIGHT

WIDE RANGE TO CHOOSE FROM

CHOICE OF LENGTH

CHOICE OF WIDTH

CHOICE OF HEIGHT

DRAWERS FOR EXTRA STORAGE

5 YEAR WARRANTY INCLUDED FREE WITH EVERY MECHANISED ITEM

Flexible finance packages available

THE MOBILITY FURNITURE COMPANY

HOME CARE PRODUCTS

A WIDE RANGE OF SPECIALIST BEDS & CHAIRS AVAILABLE

'Cleveland' Contemporary fully adjustable hi-low bed in single or double

'Truro' Chair Wheel-around rise and recline chair

'Bingley' Remote controlled bed-to-chair function

FREE home demonstration

FREE nationwide service

FREE home delivery & set up

NO cold calling

FREE removal of old furniture

Beds & Chairs Ideal for Home Care

BHTA British Healthcare Trades Association

tsi APPROVED CODE TRADINGSTANDARDS.UK

Call FREE today for a FREE brochure & home demonstration

0800 810 8770

www.mobilityfurniture.co.uk

HANDCRAFTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

*The 50% offer is taken from the least expensive item and must be ordered at the same time.

September at the movies

Cinema



JOYCE GLASSER

Hope Gap

(Playing in cinemas and on Curzon Home Cinema)
Cert. 12A, 100 mins.

William Nicholson has a long and successful career as a novelist and writer, with two Academy Award nominations (for *Gladiator*, which he co-wrote and for the 1993 film adaptation of his play *Shadowlands*), but has only directed one of his scripts, the largely forgotten *Firelight*. There was no one else, however, who could have directed *Hope Gap*, an adaptation of Nicholson's autobiographical play, *The Retreat from Moscow*, about a young man caught in the middle of his parents' painful divorce. Though marred by an excess of literary and symbolic allusions, this is a perceptive and moving depiction of the hurtful end of a failed marriage.

Jamie (Josh O'Connor, *God's Own Country*), enjoyed an idyllic childhood in Seaford, Sussex with Grace, his gregarious, poetry-reciting, Roman Catholic mother (Annette Bening, *Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool*) and Edward (Bill Nighy, *Love Actually*) his quiet, history teacher father, currently obsessed with putting Napoleon's retreat from Moscow on Wikipedia. In an expository introductory voice-over, which almost derails the film at the start, the camera shows us exactly what Jamie's voice-over is telling us. He remembers his mother on the beach, watching him explore the tide pools, but never asked what she was thinking or whether she was happy: "you don't, do you?"

Now a thoughtful, compassionate computer programmer, his close work colleagues tell Jamie he is "unreachable" while his mother has her theories about his single status. Grace complains that Jamie never visits, never suspecting she might be the cause, while Edward claims, "he has his own life." For the past year, it turns out, Edward has had his own life, too, and in some brilliantly written and acted scenes, we are the uncomfortable voyeurs of Edward's long overdue endgame.

When Edward surprises Grace with the good news that Jamie is coming for the weekend, only Edward knows it is step one in his own retreat strategy. Railroaded, Jamie's life becomes consumed by the revelation that the happy marriage he took for granted had died years ago. Used by Edward to buffer the blow to Grace, Grace clings to Jamie in her denial, suicidal self-pity, and bitterness. We are treated to light relief when Grace buys a puppy, names it Eddy and teaches it to roll over and play dead. The fine acting prevents scenes from turning to melodrama as Jamie finds himself by supporting his mother in her depression and eventual reawakening.

Nicholson is a master at blending his themes into his dialogue. In Edward's college lecture, his students debate the morality of the retreating French soldiers who took the

clothes off the dying to prolong their own lives. Asked why she took Edward, his lover Angela (Sally Rogers) answers, 'I think I thought there were three unhappy people and now there's only one.' On the other hand, Grace's endless poetry reading is more pretentious than powerful, leading to a neat and sentimental ending.

La Haine

(Re-release on September 11, 2020), Cert. 15, 98 mins.

With the international reaction to the death of George Floyd still burning in the headlines, *La Haine*, celebrating its 25th anniversary with a crisp 4K restoration print, could be the timeliest re-release in history. The French Interior Minister in 1995, Charles Pasqua, a hard-right populist and defender of the institutionally racist police, created a toxic atmosphere that erupted when a 16-year-old Zairean, Makome Bowole, died mysteriously in police custody.

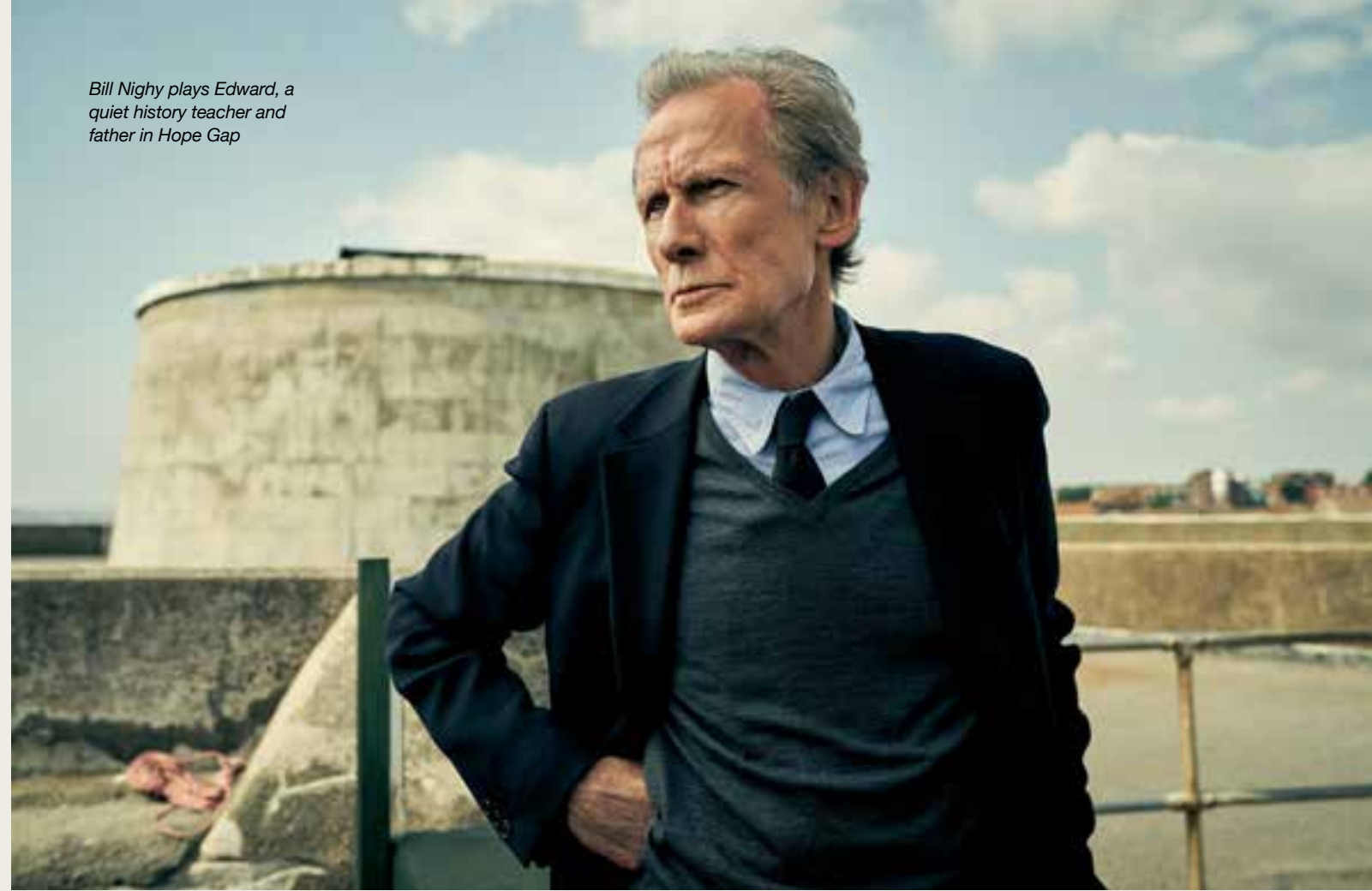
La Haine opens with news footage of riots in Chanteloup-Vignes (where most of the film was shot) an immigrant community of tower blocks near Paris after police brutality landed Abdel Ichacha in hospital. The film follows its three central characters, Vinz (Vincent Cassel), who is Jewish; North African Muslim Saïd (Saïd Taghmaoui), and Afro-Caribbean Hubert (Hubert Koundé) over a 20-hour period after the incident. The ethnic mixture might be a contrivance, but it emphasises how diverse groups came together in solidarity against the police.

Vinz has found a police gun that went missing during the riots and, posing as Travis Bickle, swears that he will shoot a cop if Abdel dies. Hubert, a talented boxer whose gym was destroyed in the riots, deals in drugs to help his single mother whose eldest son is already in jail. He tells her, 'I want out. It's getting worse' and warns his two friends that 'hate breeds hate.' But is it too late?

The film was shot in black and white to enhance its architectural aspect – in one scene, the geometrical tower blocks begin to move in on the characters – and to remove the romanticism from the City of Lights. When Hubert and Vinz accompany Saïd to Paris to collect a debt, their sordid adventures turn the film into a coming-of-age story as we realise that the tough-guy posturing is a survival mechanism masking the boys' vulnerability. In one scene, they hotwire a car to get home, only to realise that none of them know how to drive. An amused drunkard (a cameo from the great Vincent Lindon) plays decoy when the police approach.

Perhaps best known for his acting in *Amélie*, *The Fifth Element* and *Munich*, writer-director Mathieu Kassovitz's directorial debut has become one of the most influential films of the last 25 years, while launching the careers of its

Bill Nighy plays Edward, a quiet history teacher and father in *Hope Gap*



three leads. When shown at the Cannes Film Festival, the then 27-year-old director received a standing ovation and the Best Director award. *La Haine* was compared with Spike Lee's 1989 film, *Do the Right Thing*, and sadly, both films are once again topical.

The Painted Bird

(From 11 September) Cert. 18, 169 mins.

The March issue included a review of *The Painted Bird*, Václav Marhou's deeply disturbing, gripping, and visually striking adaptation of Polish born novelist Jerzy Kosinski's controversial 1965 Holocaust novel. The release was cancelled in late March but is scheduled for select cinemas and On Demand from 11 September. You might still be able to catch Matteo Garrone's (*Gomorrah*) remarkable adaptation of Italian writer Carlo Collodi's 1883 *Pinocchio* co-starring the Academy Award winning Roberto Benigni (*Life is Beautiful*), released in August. Although granted a PG rating, do not expect the sanitised Disney cartoon. Like *The Painted Bird*, *Pinocchio* is an intense and visceral coming-of-age story told through the innocent eyes of a vulnerable 10-year-old boy – or in this case, puppet. While the style, setting, and characters of both films are very different, there is a striking similarity in the depiction of a boy, separated from a father he never really knew, who embarks on a perilous journey through a surreal obstacle course populated by cruel, and occasionally kind, adults. Ultimately, both boys learn what it means to be human.

Rebuilding Paradise

(In selected cinemas and screening virtually from 25 September)
Cert: unrated, 95 mins.

Rebuilding Paradise, Ron Howard's follow-up to his Pavarotti documentary, is, like *La Haine*, all too topical. While residents of the picturesque, close-knit, all-American town of Paradise, California cite Hurricane Katrina, the recent Beirut explosions might be on your mind as you witness the emotional and tangible impact of death, escape, homelessness, trauma and anger. Anger because in both cases the cause of loss was human, or company negligence. For Howard, the subject is close to home with deadly fires engulfing Los Angeles every year.

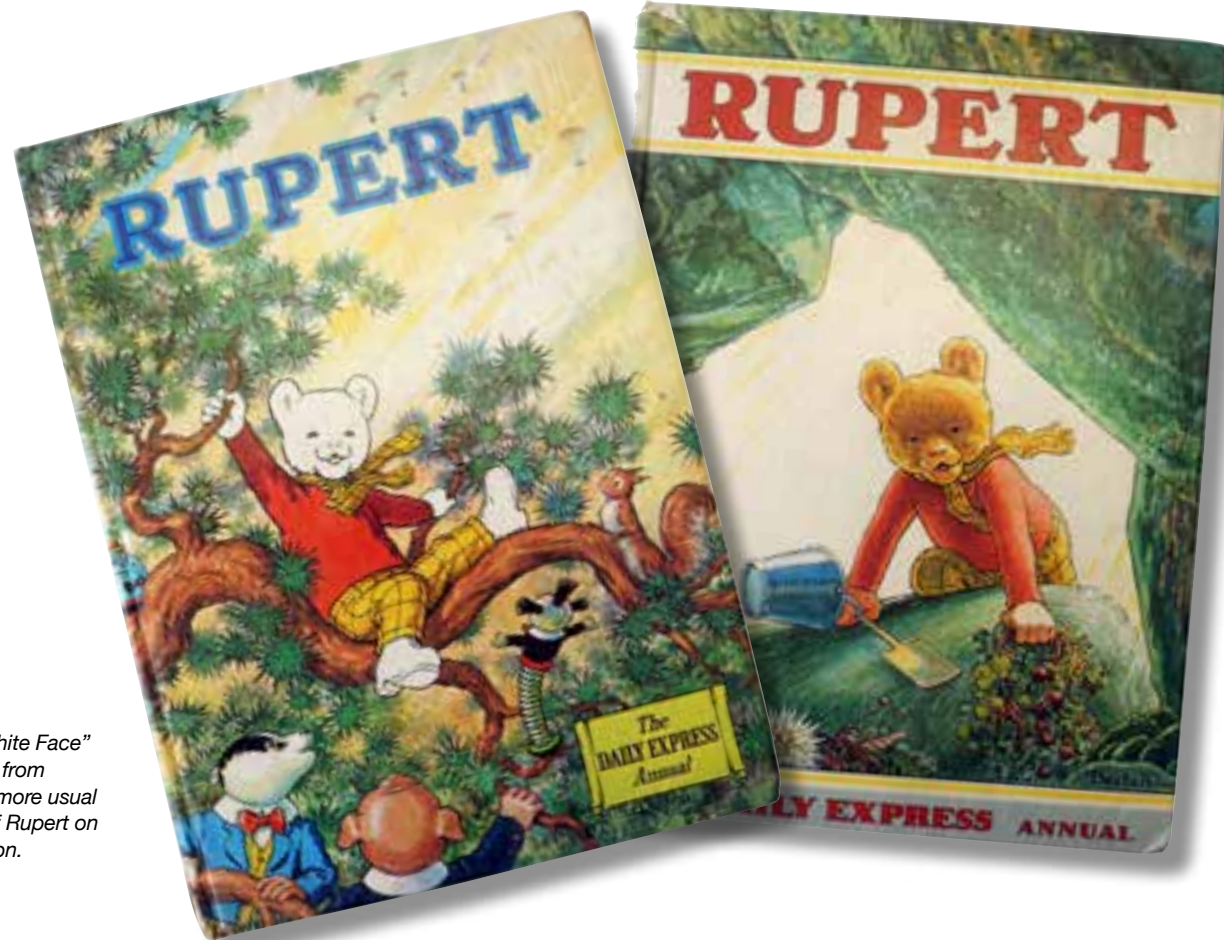
On the morning of Nov. 8, 2018, however, a devastating firestorm North of San Francisco became the worst and costliest in California's history. Unnoticed, a faulty Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) transmission line ignited a wooded area at Camp Creek Road. Spread by heavy winds, and soon out of control, the fire was finally extinguished on November 25th by the first rains of the season. The toll is staggering: 85 people died and 95% of the town was destroyed. Decades of poor land management and changing weather patterns contributed to the fire's severity.

Howard lets the sympathetic and resilient residents tell their stories, beginning with "Woody" Culleton, who arrived in Paradise in 1981 and lived as the town drunk before turning his life around, becoming Mayor in 2004. We see him rebuilding his home at the end. The marriage of proud father and empathetic Police Officer Matt Gates, does not survive the ordeal. Former fire safety volunteer Phil John survives the fire, but dies of a heart attack in the aftermath. Though overwhelmed, his tireless wife, Michelle John, Superintendent of Schools, is determined to stage a graduation ceremony for the High School seniors. Krystle Young has no relatives to stay with as her entire family is from Paradise. Asked for her recollections, Krystle's four-year-old daughter yelps, 'Fire! Fire!' before returning to devour her huge cookie.

Engrossing as it is, *Rebuilding Paradise* provides only a cursory look at the issues raised in the film and at what it really means to be suddenly homeless and jobless. How does one move on? While the real Erin Brockovich, portrayed by Julia Roberts in her biopic, galvanises the residents over PG&E's culpability and we hear from a contrite spokesperson, his fate, PG&E's bankruptcy, the lawsuit, the derisory fine, and the settlement – apparently some residents received PG&E shares in lieu of cash – are omitted. While Butte County Assembly Member James Gallagher looks for funding in Sacramento, Laura Friedman asks whether "we have a responsibility to stop building in areas which are indefensible." This debate, held every year when Somerset floods, receives no real consideration in Sacramento either.

Clearing out.

YVONNE THOMAS SORTS THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF ON LOCKDOWN CLEAR-OUTS



Right: The “White Face” Rupert annual from 1973 and the more usual appearance of Rupert on the 1971 edition.

Guess who’s 90 years old this year? Rupert Bear! Remember him and his pals – Percy Pig, Bill Badger, Edward Trunk, Algy Pug and the Wise Old Goat...? Starting as a cartoon strip in the *Daily Express*, they’ve featured in books, and annuals and the old friends haven’t aged a bit. They still have their fans. The “Followers of Rupert Bear” club founded 43 years ago has more than a thousand members.

Remember the childhood delight at having their annual at Christmas? Where are all those once cherished books now? Somewhere in the house, in an attic, maybe hidden on crowded bookshelves... Could be worth a bit perhaps? These locked-down days many people are clearing out cupboards and shelves and wondering whether long-forgotten things could turn out to be more valuable than they thought. Are there treasures in your attic?

Auction houses like Sotheby’s and Christies often have “treasures” brought to them that turn out to be “very nice and I’m sure you’ll want to keep it, but ...” As anyone who watches the *Antiques Road Show* on TV knows, there can also be some surprises. Those Rupert Bear books for instance: old,

but not in bad shape? No, lots of people have them: the local children’s library would love them. But if you have one of the 1973 annuals where Rupert Bear has a brown face, you’ve got a rare one! Only about 12 copies were ever printed before Rupert’s face was changed to white. The last one to come to auction sold for £20,000.

As for other books, how about Churchill’s one and only novel written in 1897 and dedicated “to the officers of the IVth (Queen’s Own) Hussars in whose company the author lived for four happy years”? It is full of sound and fury, featuring a brave charismatic leader, a beautiful woman... in battered condition, but still... A dealer wasn’t impressed. Nor by my well-worn editions of bound and illustrated weekly magazines, the *Household Edition of Dickens’s stories*, two shillings each in the late 1800s. So what do they want?

Transports of delight

For books, pristine condition is important. Mr Alan Canham who is a book dealer in York says anything to do with transport like railways sells: ‘They may not even have been read, but some people are fanatical about them. Sometimes they just like to have them.’ Science fiction sells, too. As for other

popular old books, are they in perfect condition – even better with their paper dust-covers intact? The author’s signature is a plus depending on the importance of the author. Roald Dahl’s signature is especially valued because he so seldom signed his books.

Personal treasures often turn out to be worth nothing much financially but that doesn’t matter because the owners weren’t going to sell them anyway. But sometimes when clearing out old stuff there is a surprise. Andrew Currie of Bonhams the auctioneers says some old dishes from a car boot sale which the owner bought for £8 the lot, included two Chinese bowls that eventually sold for £32,000. And a routine examination of some indifferent old paintings revealed a long-lost Velasquez worth £3million. Such rare findings make headlines. But reality is different.

Trash in the attic

Clearing out the attic usually means looking at old things that bring back memories and putting them back again. In an old tin trunk I found a leaflet air-dropped by the Japanese during the war to our soldiers fighting in Burma advising them to surrender: “You are caught like fishes in a net” (the “fishes” won.) I put it back, then handed it to the local museum. But old tickets, old bills (butter for four pence a pound) old menus, Victorian greetings cards... sometimes clearing out has to be ruthless though members of the Ephemera Society collect them. They are a record; so are some letters.

At an auctioneer’s valuation meeting some years ago I met a lady who had a letter written in 1842 by one of her husband’s forbears, a young naval lieutenant describing Queen Victoria’s visit to his ship, HMS Queen in Portsmouth. The woman had given the rest of his letters to charity and kept this one “because it was the most interesting. He wrote so well. He was killed when he was 26 in Malta saving some children in a runaway pony cart.” The letter gave a charming picture of the queen.

“She was dressed,” the young sailor wrote to his mother, “in a dress very like blue silk with a red velvet bodice made extremely like a shooting coat and fitting quite close. It looked uncommon pretty; a blue satin bonnet and white feathers completed her costume. Our decks are all covered in red baise and had an immense quantity of gilt over them. As the Queen embarked she shook hands with (the captain) and said, ‘God bless you sir. I am happy to have seen you on your own quarter deck.’ This almost upset him and I heard the first lieutenant say to one of the officers, “I could sit down and cry”... What delighted our crew most was that she ate some of their soup out of one of their basins with a common iron spoon. The Admiral instantly sent it to his cabin with an order that it should be put on one side and never used again...’

The owner had decided to sell the letter. The auctioneer thought it might sell for about £25 (perhaps more now) but advised, ‘Why don’t you keep it and put it in a double frame so that you can read both sides?’ Wise advice. Clearing up and sorting out is one thing. Keeping memories is another.

Collecting bricks

This workroom faces a brick wall. It could be an inducement for getting on with things instead of looking out of the window, but it’s not. This is because a few workmen have been knocking a hole in the wall to put in a window, and watching them shape the bricks to make an arch with such skill, and the different shades of the bricks, cream and browns is completely distracting

Just up the road is a long Tudor wall built with smaller dark red bricks, then a modern wall of blue-grey. The familiarity of bricks can make one forget the extraordinary stories behind them, but it is no wonder some people collect them.

You need a bit of space, of course. It’s not like collecting stamps. Mr Nick Cranston, a former police sergeant was only looking for one brick to keep the garage door open and he has finished up with 3,500. He had to build a special shed in his garden to hold them all. Why are they so collectable? Because of the history, the variety, the clay colours...

Itinerant brick-makers since the Romans have introduced bricks to Britain and old hand-made bricks can be identified from the so called “frog marks” (soft clay was pushed by hand into a mold which had a raised name at the bottom.)

Mr Anthony Mugridge, a retired brickmaker who gives lectures on the subject says this pre-industrial method meant the maker’s handprint would be on the top of the clay as he pushed it to the mold and today gently rubbing the top of the brick can sometimes reveal it. This he tried on a brick he found on a walk by Castlemorton near Malvern in Worcestershire which was once a royal hunting ground. It was made in about 1430 and he found the handprint that emerged was puzzling because it showed a large right hand with long fingers but there was a deformity of the first two, and a small cut. It turned out it was a bowstring mark. The man had been an archer, probably in the battle of Agincourt, and after returned to his job as a brick-maker.

Flemish refugees brought bricks to East Anglia. Yellow bricks, common in London and yellow “London stock” were made of clay from the Thames basin formed 56 million years ago and were cheapest; reds came from clay with iron in it, and turned blue with longer intense heat... Every area had its own bricks. Hundreds of brickmakers in industrial areas with local clays were turning them out from molds with the names of the companies or areas on the frogmark at the back before modern methods took over in the late 1800s and you can see the different bonds: Flemish, English, stretcher... But collecting them? You do need a bit of space but you can see why Mr Cranston finished up with 3,500 of them!

Below: 1893 Worlds Faver paver. Image: Worthpoint.com



Book reviews

KATE GOODMAN REVIEWS A LOCKDOWN LOVE STORY AND A LOCKED-UP DRAMA

Out of darkness, a friendship shines bright ...

What makes a person brave? Is it a lack of fear, or overcoming fear? Belgian WWI hero's daughter Simone Lyon is terrified at the thought of a Nazi invasion, and yet proves herself as brave if not braver than many of her compatriots in her loyalty and defence of Hava, a Jewish girl she meets working at the Red Cross. The two form an instant bond – sharing their girlish hopes and dreams, acting out the plays of Shakespeare, dancing under streetlamps – to the disapproval of locals who think General Lyon's daughter should behave in a more seemly manner – and giggling over their fantasies about their Hollywood idols. Simone even meets Hava's charming family and learns about the rites and rituals of Jewish life.

But Simone's own family and friends aren't so welcoming of Hava. Her aunt makes her disapproval clear, as does Simone's suitor,



Corporal De Waden. Hava can charm the birds from the trees, but she can't escape her Jewishness at a time when to be friendly with a Jew could

lead to death. But as the bombs fall on Brussels, Simone refuses to abandon her friend. And so they begin a dangerous journey across Europe, hoping to escape the long shadow of the Nazis.

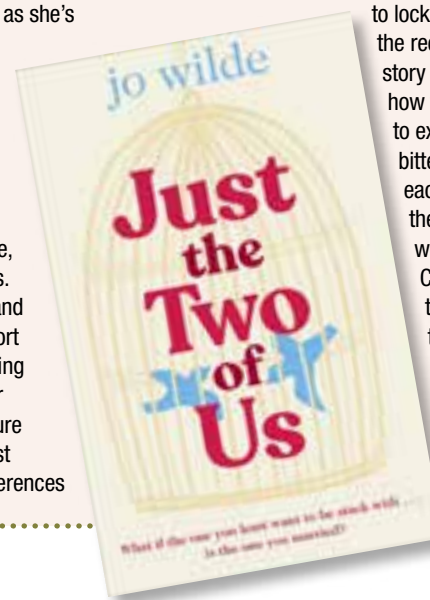
What an enthralling story! De Vinck's inspiration came from his own family history, and details of the German invasion vividly and realistically portray the widespread horror, panic and fear of the Belgian people. Amidst the chaos, the girls scurry hither and thither to save themselves and each other. Relief comes in a quiet moment, when Simone reflects on their shared friendship, and here again the author's penmanship comes to the fore in beautiful, descriptive prose.

Hava is a wonderful character, but the story would be nothing without Simone! Fearful she may be, but she is no coward. Stalwart in her determination to save Hava, she makes no heroic avowals, but is a true heroine in dreadful times. Inspiring and heartbreaking by turn, *Ashes* is a glorious story of courage, friendship and defiance in the face of war.

***Ashes* by Christopher de Vinck is published by Harper Inspire in paperback, RRP £8.99.**

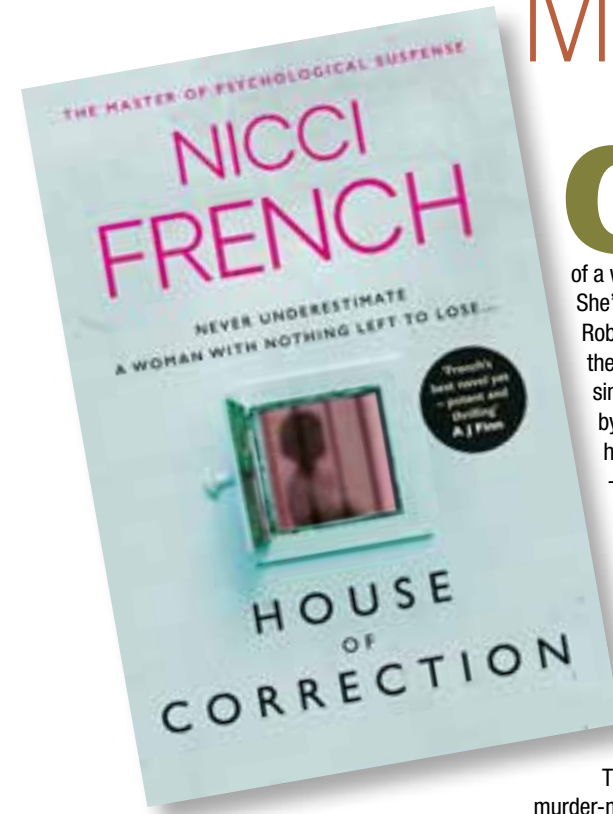
Lock yourself down with this love story for our times...

Julie Marshall's timing couldn't be worse! Just as she's decided to leave her husband of 34 years – she's even picked up divorce papers from her lawyer's office – lockdown is announced and she faces weeks of being stuck at home alone with a man she no longer loves. With a heavy heart, she shuts down her florist shop, waves goodbye to her sister and heads for home with nothing to look forward to but days and nights of painfully polite silence, punctuated by Zoom calls with her three grown-up kids. How has it come to this? Though polar opposites, she and Michael were once so in love, so happy, up to a few short years ago. So what went wrong? Told from the alternating points of view of Julie and Michael, it would be easy for the reader to blame Michael at first, but as the full picture emerges, it seems Julie has not been completely honest either with her husband or herself. Punctuated with references



to lockdown as it is, this book transcends the story of the recent pandemic to become the heartbreaking story of two warm, lovely people who have forgotten how to communicate. Thrown together, they begin to examine their memories, some happy, some bittersweet. But can they recover their feelings for each other and discover a happier "second wave" for their marriage? Author Jo Wilde – who also writes wonderful historical novels under the name Joanna Courtney – wrote this in just six short weeks after the start of lockdown in March, and has come up trumps with a gentle, touching story that's very pertinent to our times.

***Just the Two of Us* by Jo Wilde is published by Piatkus in paperback, RRP £8.99**



Meet Prisoner A03573

Crow Grange Prison is the last place 30-year-old Tabitha Hardy expects to find herself, yet here she is, right at the beginning of this enthralling story of a woman fighting a lone fight for her freedom. She's been accused of the murder of Stuart Robert Rees, whose body was found in one of the outhouses of her run-down home. With the single road into the coastal village blocked by a fallen tree that day, only a villager could have been responsible for the heinous crime – and, according to CCTV and eye-witness accounts, only Tabitha had the motive and opportunity. For Stuart was her ex-teacher, the man who groomed and abused her as a 15-year-old schoolgirl, leaving her with a legacy of low esteem and depression. Though her memory of the day is hazy, Tabitha can't believe she's a murderer – and sets out to discover the truth ... no easy task from inside a prison!

The prison setting makes the plot of this murder-mystery refreshingly original, adding a layer of interest as we discover just what life is like

for a previous law-abiding citizen on remand. In her descriptions of the cells, the routine, the other inmates and the prison staff, Nicci French creates a disturbing atmosphere of claustrophobia and corruption, despair and even danger, as Tabitha adjusts to life on the inside. She makes enemies, but she makes a good friend, too, who becomes her eyes and ears on the outside as our heroine prepares her own defence for the upcoming murder trial. When the action switches to the courtroom, the drama becomes even more intense as Tabitha strives to tease the truth out of erstwhile neighbours – many of whom have their own reasons for lying – and outwit the prosecution. Though her behaviour in the court sometimes stretches credibility – like the judge we're left shaking our head at her antics – it's nail-biting stuff, dark and sometimes even funny, but always incredibly compelling as we will Tabitha on in her bid to escape not just prison, but the dark shadows of her past.

***House of Correction* by Nicci French is published by Simon & Schuster in hardback, RRP £14.99.**

An eighteenth century tale of gritty mother courage

In eighteenth century London, an unmarried mother had few choices. She could leave her baby to die in the gutter or take it to the Foundling Hospital, hoping it would live until she had saved enough money for them to be reunited. But when shrimp-seller Bess Bright returns to the institution with scrimped savings to reclaim her daughter after six long years, she's told that baby Clara was taken away the very day after she'd left her, by a woman claiming to be the child's mother.

Bess's desperate quest for her missing daughter takes her from the mean slums of Billingsgate to upper-class Devonshire Street, where widowed Alexandra Cassons hires nursemaid Eliza Smith to look after her six-year-old daughter Charlotte...

Stacey Hall's debut novel *The Familiars* was a masterclass in historical drama, capturing the atmosphere of Jacobean England at the time of the Pendle witch trials. *The Foundling* is a

worthy follow-up with both the elegant and less salubrious side of eighteenth century London vividly described in sights, sound and smell. Like *The Familiars*, the story concentrates on the strength and endurance of two very different women. Both have suffered tragedy, yet neither can comfort the other. For their only common bond is the child they both adore.

Other characters flit in and out – alcoholic Ned, stoic Abe, Bess's friend Kezia, lamplighter Lyle, Alexandra's sister Ambrosia – all add to the noise, life and colour of the story. Each have their part to play, but in the end Bess must rely on her own wits to escape danger and reclaim her daughter.

***The Foundling* by Stacey Halls is published by Manilla in paperback, RRP £8.99**

