

Dangerous lengths women have gone to look beautiful

*From tapeworms to
tuberculosis, the beauty hacks
women have taken part in*

Also:

Porn Consumption in Ireland
Responsible for increase in attacks on females

Colin Rosie - How a Top Hat Changed My Life
It's very easy becoming homeless....

Annie Walsh: The last woman hanged in Ireland

The Ballyseedy Massacre
A brutal act!

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Going Forward: A New Challenge

The Covid-19 pandemic has taken its toll on us, like it has on many other magazines, organisations and businesses globally.

Unfortunately we are faced with a landscape that has irreversibly changed since the Big Issue first hit the streets in 1995. To meet this challenge Ireland's Big Issue must also change.

We have reluctantly decided, albeit with a heavy heart, to host the magazine digitally only for the foreseeable future.

From now on, Ireland's Big Issue will focus our support on the Irish Homeless Street Leagues. This volunteer-driven, non-profit has been using the power of sport to transform the lives of men and women who've found themselves affected by social exclusion all across Ireland - north and south. By continuing to support the magazine online you'll be helping to develop resilient individuals and stronger communities, connecting people and promoting equality and diversity, inspiring and motivating those affected by social issues.

We will also be adjusting the content to reflect the times we live in whilst endeavoring to provide an informative and enjoyable read.

We thank you for your support to date and ask that you continue to help us. As there is no charge for Ireland's Big Issue we do need your support to continue highlighting the issues that impact our lives and bring you a truthful, balanced view of what is happening in our world.

For as little as a cup of coffee (€3) you can subscribe.



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Letter to my Younger Self - Jill Mansell

Each issue, we ask a well-known person to write a letter to their 16-year old self. This issue, Jill Mansell (68), listed by The Daily Telegraph as “one of the best-selling authors of the decade” takes on the challenge.

Hello, 16-year-old me!

You won't believe this, but you're now 68. I know, completely ancient, an actual OAP, and still alive! You were always convinced you'd die young, but you didn't – and you're so glad that didn't happen. Life hasn't turned out how you expected, but the good news is that it's turned out better.

At school, remember how all you ever wanted to do was be an artist? Your lovely art teacher took you to the art college he said you'd attend, and you didn't doubt for a moment that it would happen... until at 16, you took your O-levels and got the lowest grade in the whole year for art. Which completely devastated you, and stopped you painting for the next forty-odd years. Instead of persevering, you gave up!

Shortly after that, you left school and went to work in the completely different field of clinical neurophysiology, in a neurological hospital



where every day was different and you had to learn all about physics, electronics and all the sciences you'd most hated at school. But despite not expecting to enjoy any of this, you found yourself loving it and staying there for the next 18 years.

Working for the NHS meant money was always tight. You lived in some grim flat shares, got used to eating mainly toast and tins of ravioli, and when there

was no cash left for the electricity meter you all just had to sit in the dark and eat bread and cold ravioli instead.

**Life hasn't turned out
how you expected, but the good news
is that it's turned out better.**

Time went on, though. You and your friends continued to make the most of what little you all had. Managing to eventually save up enough money to buy a tiny car was a definite highlight, even if it did break down alarmingly often. Oh how you loved that rusty mustard-yellow Mini! And of course there was no money for holidays either, so you didn't go away anywhere for over 20 years, but life was still good. You had fun.

Then one day at work you picked up a tatty old magazine, a Sunday colour supplement that had been left in the hospital waiting room, and took it to read during your lunch break. Inside it was an article about four women whose lives had been transformed by becoming best selling novelists, and it made you realise this was something you could maybe have a go at. (You had previously considered becoming a brilliant songwriter like George Michael, before remembering you could neither play any kind of musical instrument, nor write music, nor sing in tune, which in pre-Internet days had made it a plan doomed to failure.)

Writing, however, was something you could definitely try, although whether you'd be any good at it was another question altogether. So you joined an evening class in creative writing and did your best to write for Mills and Boon, a successful publisher of romantic fiction, because that was the company a couple of the women in that magazine article had written for with such mind-blowing success. Except it turned out your best wasn't good enough for them. You tried, tried and tried again, but kept getting your manuscripts – six or seven of them in total - turned down. For several years, in fact.

This time, though, you were determined not to give up. Instead, you kept going then eventually realised you needed to change your writing style and attempt to produce the kind of novel you actually enjoyed reading yourself. Since your favourite author was the wonderful Jilly Cooper, you decided to write a much longer blockbuster-style book with multiple characters, that

contained a mixture of drama, tangled relationships, lots of humour and non-stop shenanigans.

So this was what you did, and it was after this that life began to change, because following a couple of rejections you managed to get yourself signed with a literary agent and within weeks she had struck a deal to have you write for a top publisher. It wasn't for a life altering amount of money, but you carried on working at the hospital and wrote the next novel in your spare time. (Before going out each evening, you and your flat-mates had always watched the soaps on TV, so you gave up watching them and would disappear to your room for an hour to write the next few hundred words instead.) And gradually, over time, producing a new book each year became your new career. You've just finished writing number thirty-seven now. Your books are translated into many different languages and you receive wonderful messages from readers all over the world, telling you your work brings them joy or helps them through hard times in their lives. You have a family, a home of your own and a car that doesn't break down every week.

Oh, and one more thing: a few years back, you bought yourself some acrylic paints and canvases and in your spare time started painting again. You probably always knew you were never really good enough to make a career out of it, but that's fine. Sometimes it's better to do things just for fun.



You tried, tried and tried again, but kept getting your manuscripts – six or seven of them in total - turned down. For several years, in fact.



An Almost Perfect Summer by Jill Mansell (Headline Review) is available in all good bookshops, online and on Audible.

Violent Porn

and its Impact on Females Across Ireland

Sineád Dunlop looks at the correlation between the increase in femicide in Ireland and violent pornography depicting abuse towards females.

A newly published Irish report highlights how the explicit violence portrayed in mainstream pornography is contributing to rising levels of physical and sexual aggression toward women. Titled Facing Reality: Addressing the Role of Pornography in the Pandemic of Violence against Women and Girls, the report asserts that much of the freely available pornography on the internet amounts to sexual violence. This, in turn, shapes attitudes and behaviours among consumers, perpetuating harmful cycles that disproportionately affect women.

Since 2020, 24 women have been violently killed in Northern Ireland, underscoring the urgency of addressing gender-based violence. This grim statistic highlights the broader cultural and societal factors that contribute to such violence, one of which, the report suggests, is the influence of pornography in normalising and promoting aggressive behaviour toward women.

In the Republic of Ireland femicide is also on the increase with the study 'Femicide in Ireland 2012-2023' finding that homicides referred to the Office for the State Pathologist rose from 19 per cent between 2012 and 2020 (1 in 5) to 29 per cent from 2021 to 2023 (3 in 10). Over half, 56

per cent of women, were killed by a current or former intimate partner.

The report, commissioned by Women's Aid and prepared by the Sexual Exploitation Research and Policy (SERP) Institute, was funded by Community Foundation Ireland.



It examines the nature of pornography, its widespread consumption, and its impacts on gender equality, sexuality, and gender-based violence. The research draws on consultations with both domestic and international experts, as well as an analysis of existing studies

on pornography and its societal effects.

....pornography blurs the line between consensual sex and sexual violence, negatively affecting both adults and young people.

The Impact of Violence and Misogyny in Pornography

The report stresses that pornography blurs the line between consensual sex and sexual violence, negatively affecting both adults and young people. This distortion fosters unhealthy relationships, deepens gender inequality, and normalises hostile misogyny. Regular consumption of pornography, the report warns,

can desensitise viewers to sexual violence, making abusive behaviours seem acceptable or even desirable,

“There is a significant body of research evidence demonstrating the relationship between consumption of pornography, particularly regular consumption, and the perpetration of violence against women and girls,” the report states.

Studies have shown a clear link between exposure to violent sexual content and increased aggression in intimate relationships. One particularly troubling finding is the frequent

depiction of strangulation and verbal degradation in pornography. An analysis of 300 scenes from popular pornographic videos revealed that nearly 90 percent contained physical aggression aimed at women. The report argues that these portrayals glamorise violence and convey a message that women should tolerate or even derive pleasure from abuse.

Recent research from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) found that 64% of 20-year-old men in the Republic of Ireland use online porn and this study found that these individuals were “more aggressive” and cope with stress by using negative strategies like excessive drinking and and/or drug-taking or staying in bed. The findings from the ESRI indicate that we need to be having appropriate conversations with young people around sex and expectations, enthusiastic consent (a half-hearted ‘ok then’ does not mean yes) and ensure open environments in the home, school and college so that questions can be asked about what one has viewed online. There’s no doubt that many young men may be confused when they see a porn actress seemingly ‘enjoying’ a sexual encounter whilst being choked, degraded or beaten for instance and having someone to speak to about this could potentially hinder a young man attempting this in the bedroom

without his partner’s enthusiastic consent.

The Dark Side of Online Pornography

In addition to the violence depicted, the report highlights several other concerning trends within the pornography

industry. One is the growing prevalence of content featuring incestuous relationships, which can be alarmingly easy to access on mainstream pornographic websites. The availability of this content raises serious concerns about the impact on viewers,

especially young people, and the potential for harmful fantasies to lead to real-world violence, which was the case in a small Northern Irish village recently when a 24-year-old man with a long history of porn addiction attempted to rape his 19-year-old sister after becoming addicted to incestuous content.

An analysis of 300 scenes from popular pornographic videos revealed that nearly 90 percent contained physical aggression aimed at women.

The report also emphasises the growing problem of non-consensual pornography, such as videos filmed without the participants’ knowledge or consent.

Examples include upskirting videos and recordings of sexual assaults, which are shared and monetised on various platforms.

This exploitation violates the rights and privacy of victims while contributing to a culture that commodifies abuse for profit.

A prominent case of non-consensual content came to light in 2020 when a New York Times investigation exposed the presence of unlawful material on Pornhub, one of the world’s largest pornography websites.

The investigation revealed that the site was hosting videos involving rape and child sexual abuse, leading to widespread outrage. In response, major financial companies Visa and Mastercard suspended services on Pornhub, cutting off a significant revenue stream for the



24-year-old man with a long history of porn addiction attempted to rape his 19-year-old sister after becoming addicted to incestuous content.

platform.

candid conversations about sexual consent, respect, and healthy relationships.

Women's Aid Calls for Action

Following the publication of the Facing Reality report, Women's Aid issued an urgent call to counter the harms caused by pornography. The organisation recommended a combination of public education, stronger child protection measures, and efforts to disrupt the business model of the multibillion-euro pornography industry. Sarah Benson, chief executive of Women's Aid, acknowledged that dismantling the entire

industry may not be possible, but said that concrete steps could still be taken to mitigate its damaging effects,

"We are not saying we can dismantle it," Benson explained, "but we can look to other jurisdictions where efforts to regulate and disrupt the industry have been implemented."

She pointed to the suspension of Visa and Mastercard services on Pornhub as an example of how targeted financial actions can impact the industry. By cutting off the financial lifelines that sustain these platforms, significant progress can be made in curbing the spread of harmful content.

Benson also emphasised the importance of open, honest discussions about pornography's effects on society. She called for public education campaigns aimed at raising awareness of the dangers associated with pornography consumption, especially for young people. Furthermore, she encouraged parents and educators to engage in

The Broader Implications for Gender Equality



Sarah Benson, chief executive of Women's Aid, believes targeted financial actions impact the porn industry, helping to curb the spread of harmful content.

The Facing Reality report underscores that pornography is not merely a matter of individual choice but a societal issue that exacerbates gender inequality. By portraying women as objects of violence and degradation, pornography reinforces harmful stereotypes that undermine women's status in society. This contributes to a broader environment in which gender-

based violence becomes more normalised. The tragic deaths we've seen in the north and south in recent years serve as stark reminders of the real-life consequences of such violence.

She pointed to the suspension of Visa and Mastercard services on Pornhub as an example of how targeted financial actions can impact the industry.

In the past year alone there's been a huge increase in schoolboys (as young as primary school age) using misogynistic language towards female teachers with Andrew Tate-themed insults hurled at female teachers and classmates.

As a society, we do need to do more to create safer environments for women and girls and that's starts with realising we are dealing with a very big problem - pornography.

What do you think?

**Have your say on X (formerly Twitter)
@BigIssueIreland**

World IBD Day on Monday May 19

Gut to Know...New Conversation Guide on Talking to People with IBD about IBD

“You look fine, are you sure you’re really that sick?”

The lived reality for many people with inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD), such as Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis, is that they often feel judged because their symptoms aren’t always visible.

Gut to Know is a new conversation guide which aims to help people be understanding, better informed, and ultimately more empathetic, when speaking to someone who has IBD.

It is estimated that there are approximately 50,000 people in Ireland living with IBD where the immune system doesn’t work properly and the body starts attacking itself, causing ulcers, swelling and inflammation of the gut.

While IBD is a lifelong, unpredictable condition, and there is currently no cure, early diagnosis and treatment can help to stabilise the disease and provide for a normal quality of life.

The aim of the guide is to support the person with IBD in our lives in a way which is considerate and thoughtful, and let them know that they are understood and, perhaps most importantly, believed.

Published by Crohn’s and Colitis Ireland to mark World IBD Day on Monday May 19, it is intended to provide a useful starting point and go-to resource for family, friends and colleagues, on navigating a range of situations in everyday life.

Saying the Wrong Thing

For psychologist, Dr Jennifer Wilson O’Raghallaigh, family members and friends are also embarking on a journey of IBD discovery of their own:

“Unless they’ve had a similar experience with IBD, and even sometimes if they have, our loved ones are learning alongside us on how to talk about health, symptoms, treatments and fears. Most of the time, they feel compassion but don’t know exactly how to express it. They worry that they are interfering, or being nosey, or that they might say the wrong thing.

“When we have a chronic condition like IBD, we don’t want to burden our loved ones or lose our autonomy. At the same time, we might need help sometimes. Using good communication strategies such as those outlined in the Gut to Know conversation guide can help smooth over some of the rough patches in negotiating tricky conversations.”



Dr Jennifer Wilson O’Raghallaigh

Major Webinar

Dr Wilson O’Raghallaigh will be speaking at a major webinar, IBD 101, organised by Crohn’s and Colitis Ireland and taking place on Monday May 19 from 6.30-8.30pm. Among those also contributing to the discussion will be two people living with IBD, Armagh GAA star, Niall Grimley, and Gogglebox Ireland TV critic, Sarah Reilly.

It is estimated that there are approximately 50,000 people in Ireland living with IBD

The webinar will also feature a keynote contribution from consultant gastroenterologist, Prof. Anthony O’Connor, based at Tallaght University Hospital, who will provide an introduction to IBD, including symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, coping strategies and supports available.

Registration for the free webinar, which is supported by Pharmacosmos, can be made at www.crohnscolitis.ie.

If you’re concerned about IBD, call the Crohn’s and Colitis Ireland Support Line on 01 531 2983 (Mon/Wed/Fri, 9.30am to 12.30pm).

Colin Rosie

How a Top Hat Changed A Life

Colin Rosie bought a top hat from a market stall back in 2010, little realising that wearing it would change the course of his life - even helping to keep him safe when he found himself homeless. Samantha Bailie-McMurdock reports.

Colin Rosie is incredibly upbeat. I catch him on a busy day in his 'The Last Stop For The Curious' shop in Spitalfields Market. He has the gift of the gab and the gusto and spark of a teenager, despite being 60.

Colin's store has every hat you could ever imagine - top hats (of course), fedoras, caps, bowlers etc and there's headwear for every budget, from £20 caps to silk top hats for £35,000 and Colin is as attentive to the customer considering a twenty quid purchase as he is to the wealthy businessman with his eye on the top priced stock. Life is good for Colin Rosie - but this has not always been the case.

Colin grew up "a nomad" and "never called any place home" throughout his childhood,

"My father was in the military, so unless you understand that life, you don't realise that you never have a place to call home."

Despite being born on the Orkney Islands, his childhood would be constant flitting every 18 months,

"we could be anywhere from Norway to Northumberland... but then I left home very young,

so I've been doing my own thing and travelling a lot myself since then...."

Colin worked hard from the day he left home and eventually opened a highly successful photography business with a business partner. He would work and have his art showcased around the globe, from Paris to New York and within a few years the pair were very wealthy men with, "all the houses, the cars.... all the usual trappings."

Things would change in a heartbeat though. One Monday morning he returned from a weekend away seeing his children and discovered, "...my business partner had taken everything and fled to Chile." [Editor's note: We must add allegedly as the man in question has

now returned from South America and there will be a court case in due course]. Colin wondered why his mobile was not operational whilst he'd been away but soon discovered his business partner had cancelled all the contracts, emptied the studio of its expensive equipment, shipped



It's very easy becoming homeless.... I think people need to realise just how close we all are to having nothing.

everything to Chile, cancelled all on-going contracts and emptied the business bank accounts,

“On my way home I went to use my bank card to pay for something and it didn’t work, but I thought nothing of it, just imagined it was some sort of error but when I got home I was hit with the truth... that he had left me penniless.”

Colin lost everything, his home, his cars.... everything... over the coming months.

How long ago did this happen?

“That was 12 years ago.”

It must have been a huge shock finding yourself homeless.

“It’s very easy [becoming homeless].... I think people need to realise just how close we all are to having nothing. I ended up with no paperwork, no bank account, nothing to prove I once had a highly successful company. I had proof of nothing.”

What do you do in a situation like that?

“When the shock started to fade, I realised I needed to control my thinking - I needed to stop telling myself I’d lost everything and instead adopt the mindset that I’d nothing left to lose.”

The only way is up as they say.

“Exactly! And then the more pressing needs begin to hit I remember becoming aware of my hunger and the

cold realisation hitting that I’d no money to feed myself... I’d just lost my home, the cars were taken....I needed solutions...I remembered there was a soup kitchen down the King’s Road because I’d done photography work

down there and recalled seeing it. I walked there and they brought me in and fed me and after that I walked and I just continued walking trying to figure out what to do next.”

And what did you do next?

“It was a process.... There was a certain peace in knowing it couldn’t get any worse and I’d tell myself over and over,

‘this is just a moment in time, it won’t be forever, and whether it takes a week, a month or a year, I will find a way around it, so get on with it and keep walking.’”

You walked for hours and hours each night.

“You never feel safe sleeping at night so you learn to nap, even in freezing cold situations, so with a

lot of time on your hands you just walk, which I did. I’d always tell myself how appreciative I would be when I would have a bed in the future and somewhere to call home - I constantly believed things would get better.... I just needed to find a way, a plan.... And walking helped me think.”

You found a way to remain more secure than many other homeless people.

“I would walk to Mayfair, Kensington, Chelsea and all the other wealthy areas where I felt safer. I’d look at the mansions that are probably the most expensive real estate



“I literally had what I stood up in, an iPhone that was no longer operational and 56p to my name.”

in the world, and on a corner there'd be a bench and I could sit there for an hour or two and doze. I'd know that there's no real traffic and there's no people going about. And if I did feel that there was something going on, or I was uncomfortable, I'd just put my top hat back on my head and carry on walking. Isn't it funny how the posher areas have nicer benches? I always dressed well, no one every picked me out as homeless because I didn't look out of place there."

That was clever.

"It was all down to appearance and remaining well-groomed."

How did you remain so clean and well-groomed?

"I used to go into a rather nice hotel that had an entrance from Victoria Station, without drawing attention to myself and not looking out of place. I'd use their facilities, their toilets, and I got to know their cleaners. If a room was vacant they used to let me duck in and have a shower or sleep for an hour. They started washing a few of my tops so I could stay presentable."

Colin was desperate to get a job so he could get somewhere to live but a whole new raft of problems emerged. He didn't know where to find a Jobcentre and

had no phone to look it up so had to walk for hours until he located one. But then when he tried to walk inside, he was stopped by a security guard who said he needed an appointment. Rosie explained that he didn't have one and asked if he could make an appointment in person. He was told that he had to do it online. He asked if he could use the Jobcentre's computer but the security guard said they did not allow that and he'd have to go to his local library, so Rosie walked until he found one but when he asked to use a computer the librarian informed him he would need to register for a library account. To register, he needed a fixed address,

"All this and at the same time, you're trying to survive, working out where

you can eat, where you can use a toilet ... all the things we take for granted."

Colin was desperate to get a job so he could get somewhere to live but a whole new raft of problems emerged.

After seven months, Colin was found sleeping under a doorway in Victoria (using his top hat as a pillow) by homeless charity Outreach. They drove him to a shelter in North London that was managed by the support service No Second Night Out,

"It was just a big open hall, but at least it was off the street, and I could sleep on the floor."



No Second Night Out helped Rosie get an appointment at a Jobcentre, where he was signed on for Jobseeker's Allowance and also offered a £100 discretionary clothing grant to buy a suit for interviews.

Rosie, who always wore a suit each day anyway, had another proposal; he asked the Jobcentre if he could spend the suit allowance on hats,

"I'd sell those hats, generate enough money to buy more, then sell those, and ultimately start my own business and make myself sustainable."

The Jobcentre had reservations,

"they agreed to it, but not officially – so they were giving me the money to buy hats but officially it was to get a suit."

So, Rosie bought eight hats from a wholesaler in Tower Hamlets and arranged to share a stall at a market, however, after walking for four hours, carrying all his stock was told the guy had changed his mind, so he had to walk four hours home again.

Determined not to give up, he got talking to a clothes seller at Spitalfields, Mal Hallett, and he agreed to let him use a section of his stall, however, Rosie was staying in the YMCA and couldn't afford a bus so he had to leave the house at 4am, walking for three hours until he arrived at Spitalfields. He laid out his hats and by the end of the day, they'd all been sold and he'd made £150 from his initial £100 expenditure.

Rosie returned to the wholesaler, buying more hats and returned each day to



Spitalfields. Despite estimating that he'd need to be signed on for a year, within just 30 days, Rosie was in profit, off benefits and renting a flat. The Jobcentre had never seen anything like it - and when he returned and gave them the £100 back they were speechless.

The man who cared enough to share his stall is now Colin's business partner and the pair run their highly successful store at Spitalfields together - even employing other members of staff.

Colin Rosie ensures a percentage of their turnover goes to a selection of homeless charities because,

"I never thought it would be possible to be homeless... but it happened. It could happen to absolutely anyone."

**I have learned to be happy
and to survive whatever life throws
my way**

As we finish our chat Colin leaves me with a bit of advice,

"Do you know what I have learned? I can be happy with lots or with little. I know I can survive, I know I will survive."

Dangerous Lengths Women Have Gone to Look Beautiful

The ‘morning shed’: Louise N Hanson looks at a brief history of the sometimes dangerous lengths women have gone to look beautiful.

In TikTok’s latest viral beauty trend “the morning shed,” beauty influencers “shed” hair and skin products that have been worn overnight. These include hair styling items, skin masks and creams, and physical products such as chin straps and mouth tape, which are intended to help with breathing through the night and keep away the drooping of the jaw that happens with age.

While this trend has come under fire for alleged unsustainability and over-consumerism, it is only the latest beauty fad in a long line of time and money consuming “hacks” that women have been undertaking for centuries. From tapeworms to tuberculosis, women have taken part in a laundry list of beauty hacks in order to meet appearance ideals, many of which have been dangerous, painful and even deadly.



As far back as the ancient Egyptians, women ground up toxic substances to make eyeliner and eye shadow.

These were dangerous when inhaled as a powder (such as during the grinding process) and could cause irritation of the skin when applied. And yet somehow, heavy metal poisoning is among the least dangerous of these historic beauty trends.

In China, foot binding is an example of a painful and life altering treatment first recorded around the 10th century. The feet were usually bound before the arch of the foot had developed (aged four to nine).

From tapeworms to tuberculosis, women have taken part in a laundry list of beauty hacks in order to meet appearance ideals

The process involved forcefully curling the toes towards the sole of the foot until the arch broke then the foot would be tightly bandaged to keep it in this position. Small feet were coveted at the time. Thankfully, this practice was banned in the early 1900s after almost 200 years of opposition from both Chinese and western sources.

In Europe, the Renaissance period saw a new wave of beauty hacks, from arsenic baths (which bleach the skin to a near translucent white) to Belladonna drops (literal poison) used on the eyes to induce an aroused or watery-eyed look. Many women who used these tactics ended up poisoned or blind.

During the reign of Elizabeth I, the “English rose” look was all the rage. Women would blood let for a perfectly pale pallor, or paint their faces with “Venetian ceruse” or “Venetian white” – otherwise known as lead paint. The use of Venetian ceruse is one of the suspected causes of death of Elizabeth I.

In the Victorian era and early 1900s, women often engaged in dangerous practices to achieve the coveted pale skin, red lip and small waist that was the height of fashion. This aesthetic could be achieved by contracting tuberculosis (a lung infection that was often fatal), taking tapeworm pills, consuming mercury to look forever young, or chewing arsenic wafers to make skin pale.

My own research has shown that sociocultural pressures to look a certain way are experienced differently across the world. I found that white western women experience some of the highest appearance pressures, followed by east Asian women. Although these decline a little with age for white western women, they persist in Asian women and never reach the lower levels seen elsewhere. I found the lowest levels of sociocultural pressure and the highest levels of body appreciation in Nigeria.

As the “morning shed” proves, women still go to great

lengths to meet culturally shaped standards, particularly under conditions of higher economic inequality – something that is getting worse in many countries. For example, in the United States, cities which have higher economic inequality see higher spend on beauty products and services, such as beauty salons or women’s clothing.

With the advent of social media, especially short-form content like TikTok, Reels and YouTube Shorts, the speed at which beauty trends rise and fall has been expedited and globalised. These trends range from the painful lip suction women undertook to get big lips like the celebrity Kylie Jenner, to the normalisation of botox and fillers, to laser hair removal of every unwanted follicle.

The “morning shed” is just the latest evolution in skin care trends, which started as health-focused, with an emphasis on sun protection and

moisturisation. It has since morphed into a study in over-consumption and over-commitment of time and money in the pursuit of staying ever youthful.

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A Chinese woman with bound feet



white western women experience some of the highest appearance pressures, followed by east Asian women.

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Barry Lyndon

A Masterpiece in Visual Storytelling

Shaun Anthony takes a look at the Stanley Kubrick classic *Barry Lyndon*, a film that will be 50 years old this year and explores themes of ambition, social class, and moral decay as the titular character's pursuit of wealth and status leads to disillusionment and personal downfall.

Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*, released in 1975, remains one of the director's most under-appreciated films. While *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *The Shining*, have been endlessly dissected in books and essays, *Barry Lyndon* has received little scholarly analysis

A period drama based on the novel by William Makepeace Thackeray. Set in the 18th century, the film tells the story of Redmond Barry (Ryan O'Neal), a young Irishman who rises and falls in the aristocratic

society of Europe. Characterised by its lush visuals, meticulous attention to historical detail, and a distinctive storytelling structure, *Barry Lyndon* offers a profound exploration of themes such as ambition, fate, and the superficiality of social status.

Narrative Structure and Character Development

Barry Lyndon follows the life of its titular protagonist, Redmond Barry, from his humble beginnings as a young Irish lad to his eventual rise to the status of an English

aristocrat. The narrative is structured in a quasi-chapters format that mirrors the literary origins of the story, each segment serving as a distinct chapter in Barry's life. This episodic approach allows Kubrick to explore different facets of Barry's journey, revealing how his character

evolves (or devolves) in response to the world around him.

Barry is an archetypal anti-hero, a character driven by ambition and a desire for status. His journey begins when he falls in love with his cousin, Nora, only to find his desire thwarted

by a rival suitor. This quest for love quickly transitions into a broader quest for social elevation. Throughout the film, Barry displays both cunning and naïveté, making decisions rooted in impulsive emotions that ultimately lead to his downfall. His character becomes a vessel for examining the themes of ambition and the futility of desire: despite achieving his aristocratic aspirations, Barry's life is marked by emptiness and disillusionment.

The themes of ambition and class struggle are reinforced by the film's supporting characters, who serve both as



**Kubrick
crafts a narrative that
critiques the very systems of
power and privilege that Barry
desperately tries to infiltrate.**

accelerators of Barry's rise and as reflections of the social hierarchy he aspires to penetrate. Characters such as the wealthy and self-indulgent Lady Lyndon (Marisa Berenson) become embodiments of the superficiality and moral decay of the aristocracy. Barry's relationships with them—both romantic and competitive—paint a stark portrait of his gradual moral decline and the hollow nature of the status he seeks. In this sense, Kubrick crafts a narrative that critiques the very systems of power and privilege that Barry desperately tries to infiltrate.

Aesthetic and Cinematic Techniques

One of the most striking aspects of *Barry Lyndon* is its visual composition, which has led to extensive analysis and admiration. Kubrick and cinematographer John Alcott employed a revolutionary approach to lighting, famously using natural light and candlelight to achieve an authentic and immersive aesthetic. The film's indoor scenes were primarily shot with modified lenses developed by NASA for the Apollo missions, allowing them to capture clearer images in low-light conditions. This technique results in a unique softness and warmth in the images, effectively transporting viewers to the 18th century.

The meticulously composed frames in *Barry Lyndon* echo the style of 18th-century paintings, with Kubrick intentionally referencing the works of artists like Thomas Gainsborough and Joshua Reynolds. Each shot is a carefully curated tableau that evokes the grandeur and opulence of the era while also emphasising its inherent emptiness. The careful framing, use of symmetry, and rich textures resonate with the themes of artifice and illusion, underscoring the film's exploration of the

superficial nature of wealth and social status. The film's pacing and editing further contribute to its contemplative tone. Kubrick employs slow dissolves and extended shots, allowing the audience to absorb the lush visuals and reflect on the unfolding narrative. This deliberate pacing

can be challenging for some viewers, as it eschews the conventional storytelling rhythm typical of Hollywood cinema. However, it serves to deepen the audience's engagement with Barry's internal conflicts and the existential themes that permeate the film,



inviting a more meditative viewing experience.

**At
its core, the movie is a
meditation on the themes of fate,
chance, and moral consequence.**

Music and Sound Design

The soundtrack of *Barry Lyndon*, composed primarily by Leonard Rosenman, also plays a significant role in shaping its atmospheric quality. The film features selections of classical music from composers such as Handel, Vivaldi, and Schubert, which complement both the visual style and emotional tone of the narrative. The music often stands in stark contrast to the unfolding drama, creating a sense of irony; while the visuals may depict the beauty and grandeur of the aristocratic life, the music can evoke feelings of melancholy or foreboding.

Kubrick's use of sound design is equally noteworthy. The film relies on ambient sounds to create an immersive experience, drawing the audience into the world of 18th-century Europe. The crackling of fire, the clinking of glasses, and the distant sounds of nature contribute to the authenticity of the setting. This attention to sound complements the visual aspects, reinforcing the film's

overall aesthetic coherence.

Themes of Fate and Morality

At its core, the movie is a meditation on the themes of fate, chance, and moral consequence. Barry's journey suggests that while ambition can drive individuals to great heights, it can also lead to their downfall when guided by selfish desires. The film poses a philosophical question: to what extent can individuals control their destinies? Barry's continuous missteps, fuelled by impulsive decisions and misguided aspirations, ultimately lead to a series of tragic outcomes—his descent becomes emblematic of the idea that ambition, devoid of integrity and self-awareness, leads to ruin.

The use of narrational commentary by Michael Hordern, who provides a quasi-omniscient perspective, adds another layer to the storytelling. His remarks often foreshadow events and reflect on the futility of Barry's pursuits, creating a sense

of detachment and inevitability. This narrative device reinforces the perception of Barry as a pawn in a larger game, subject to the whims of fate and the moral decay of the society he seeks to enter.

Cultural and Historical Context

Set against the backdrop of the 18th-century European aristocracy, Barry Lyndon captures a period marked by excessive wealth, political complexity, and social stratification. Kubrick's attention

to historical detail serves to highlight the stark contrasts of class and the moral ambiguity inherent in the pursuit of status. The film provides not only a glimpse into the lives of the aristocracy but also serves as a critique of the societal structures that upheld and perpetuated such inequalities.

The exploration of the American Revolution and the wars of the period intersects with Barry's personal journey, positioning him within a broader historical context that invites exploration of themes like colonialism and national identity. Barry's experiences

resonate with the disillusionment of an era transitioning away from monarchical power toward modern notions



Barry Lyndon serves as a reminder of the power of patience, structure and artful execution in film



of democracy and individualism. This alignment of personal and political narratives is a testament to the depth of Kubrick's vision.

Reception and Legacy

Upon its release, Barry Lyndon received mixed reviews, with some critics celebrating its bold artistic choices and others finding it slow and unengaging. Over time, however, the film has come to be regarded as one of Kubrick's masterpieces, renowned for its craftsmanship, ambition, and thematic depth. It has influenced countless filmmakers and artists, standing as a poignant example of how cinema can transcend mere storytelling to explore profound existential inquiries.

The legacy of the film is also reinforced by its impact on contemporary cinema. Its daring visual style and unique narrative structure have inspired filmmakers to embrace longer, more contemplative storytelling techniques and to explore artistic expression within the confines of the cinematic medium. In an era often dominated by fast-

paced narratives and blockbusters, Barry Lyndon serves as a reminder of the power of patience, structure and artful execution in film and in doing so solidifies its status as a classic—one that transcends its time and continues to influence and inspire generations of filmmakers and audiences alike and in an age of influencers, fame-seeking and instant gratification, there's great pearls of wisdom to be garnered from this film.

Ireland was one of the movie's primary filming locations, Thomastown, Carrick-on-Suir, Ballynatray, Powercourt House in Wicklow and Dublin Castle were also featured along with Kells Priory and other locations in Kilkenny. Ryan O'Neal (Love Story) was cast as Barry after Robert Redford declined the role, Kubrick needed a bankable star and Ryan with his Irish heritage fit the bill. The film however was a commercial flop the timing was all wrong for the release of a period film as 1975 saw the blockbuster film Jaws hit cinema screens electrifying audiences, a period drama like Barry Lyndon never stood a chance.



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The Ballyseedy Massacre

March 1923 was almost the end of the Irish Civil War, but Co. Kerry residents saw some of its most brutal acts in what they dubbed ‘the terror month.’ Samantha Bailie-McMurdock reports:

When the Civil War broke out at the end of 1922, what might have been a short fight between opposing IRA parties instead carried on for many months in a ruthless guerrilla and counter-insurgency operation between the Free State government and the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. As 1922 came to an end and the New Year

had commenced, it became clear that paramilitaries were not going to overthrow the Free State, which had taken drastic action, including indiscriminate internment and selected executions of seized Anti-Treaty fighters.

At the end of February of 1923 the top men of the Anti-Treaty I.R.A. met in Ballingearry (an out-of-

the-way spot in Tipperary). Liam Lynch (I.R.A. Chief of

Staff) was informed that the guerilla army was on the brink of failure. Their 1st Southern Division were reporting that they would soon have no men left due to the great numbers of arrests and fatalities. The Cork division reported a similar case with



National Army soldiers march through Listowel in August 1922.

Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

Daly proclaimed that in the future he would be using Republican prisoners to clear mined roads.

countless men killed and seized. Lynch stood firm and told his men that the war would continue.

The following month (March) – known in and around Co. Kerry, as ‘The Terror Month’ would be the lowest point of the Civil

War in the area. It started that month with an Anti-Treaty attack on Cahirciveen where the

Republicans were caught out before they could attack the town, and so disseminated into the hills to get away; 3 National Army and 2 Republican soldiers were slain and 6 I.R.A. men seized.

The next day a group of National Army Officers drove to Knocknagoshel (a village in Tralee) where they were informed there was a Republican dugout. As they entered the trench they triggered a booby-trap mine which blew up the group and killed 3 Dublin Guard officers and 2 soldiers; 2 of the deceased were ex-I.R.A. mates of Paddy Daly (who was in charge of the Free State's Kerry Division). Daly proclaimed

that in the future he would be using Republican prisoners to clear mined roads. He justified this by declaring, "... the only alternative left to us to prevent the wholesale slaughter of our men." He ensured that they were all "fairly anonymous, no priests or nuns in the family, those that'll make the least noise." The following day (6th March) 9 Republican prisoners were taken from Ballymullen barracks in Tralee (having already been badly beaten) to Ballyseedy crossroads and tied to a landmine, which was then detonated, after which the survivors were machine-gunned down. One of the prisoners, Stephen Fuller was blown to safety by the blast and carefully maneuvered himself clear from sight and was taken in at the nearby home of Michael and Hannah Curren. Although badly

injured, the Curren's did everything they could for him and he survived. (Fuller would later become a Fianna Fáil TD). The Free State troops had prepared 9 coffins,

but in fact they only had 8 bodies – not that they would have realized this, as the bodies were blown to smithereens, (the Free State troops shoveled the bits they could find into the 9 coffins and drove back to Tralee with the story that they had been accidentally killed).

When the coffins were laid out in the town, there was a huge riot when the incensed families of the

slaughtered prisoners forced open the coffins as a statement of hatred for the Free State and its troops, and also to identify their dead.

There are no conclusive figures for the number of unofficial executions of captured anti-treaty fighters

This incident was followed by a series of similar occurrences with mines within a day of the Ballyseedy slayings; 5 Republican prisoners were blown up with another landmine at Countess Bridge (outside Killarney) and 4 more at Cahersiveen. Seamus Taylor (another Republican prisoner) was taken to Ballyseedy forest and shot dead by the National Army troops.

On 28 March, 5 I.R.A. men captured in an attack on Cahersiveen on 5 March were executed in Tralee. Another, seized the same day was instantly shot and



The sole survivor of Ballyseedy massacre, Stephen Fuller, right, went on to serve as a Fianna Fáil TD. He is pictured campaigning in the 1938 general election.

Picture: NLI/Military Archives/Owen O'Shea

killed. 32 Anti-Treaty fighters died in Kerry in March 1923, of whom 5 were killed in combat. Free State officer Niall Harrington has suggested that retaliation murders of Republican prisoners continued in Kerry right up to the end of the war.

The Free State unit, the Dublin Guard, and specifically their

commander Paddy Daly were widely held to be accountable for these murders. They, however, maintained that the prisoners had been killed whilst clearing roads by landmines placed by Republicans. When

interrogated in the Dáil by Labour Party

leader Thomas Johnson, Richard Mulcahy (the National Army's commander-in chief) backed up

Daly's account of things. A military Court of enquiry conducted in April 1923 cleared the Free State troops of the charge of killing their prisoners. It has since come to light however that prisoners were beaten, tied to explosives and then murdered. At Cahersiveen, the detainees were reportedly shot in the legs before blown up to hinder them from escaping. Two Free State officers, Lieutenants Niall Harrington and McCarthy, (who both later resigned over the incidents) later stated that not only were the explosives detonated by the Free State troops, they had also been made by them and put there for this purpose! Paperwork which came to light a few years back show that the Free State Cabinet knew that the army's version of events was inconsistent. An investigation decided that the prisoners had been murdered by a party of National Army soldiers from Dublin, known as the 'visiting committee' and those at Cahersiveen had been badly beaten and shot before being blown to smithereens.

Why the outbreak of malicious assassinations in March 1923? While the National Army troops in Kerry

were infuriated by the killings of their comrades in Knocknagoshel, a total of 68 Free State soldiers had been killed in the county and 157 wounded up to that point. (A total of 85 would die in Kerry before the war was over). In addition to the events in Kerry, 2 similar episodes took place elsewhere in the country the same month; on 13 March 3 Republican fighters were judicially executed in

Wexford.

In revenge, Bob

Lambert, the local Republican leader had

3 National Army soldiers

captured and killed.

On 14th March at

Drumboe Castle in Co.

Donegal, 4 anti-treaty

I.R.A. fighters,

Charles

Daly, Sean

Larkin, Daniel Enright and Timothy O'Sullivan who

had been captured and held in the castle since January were shot in

retaliation for the death of a National Army soldier in an ambush.

There is no doubt that the executions of the Civil War left a sting in the air for many decades

Even after the end of the war in May 1923, Free State troops

continued killings of anti-Treaty fighters, for instance, Noel Lemass, a captain in the anti-Treaty I.R.A. was abducted in Dublin and shot by Free State forces in July 1923 (2 months after the war had 'ended'.) His body was dumped near Glencree (in the Dublin Mountains) where it was discovered in October 1923. (His brother would later become Taoiseach (1959-1966). There are no conclusive figures for the number of unofficial executions of captured anti-treaty fighters, but Republican officer Todd Andrews put the figure for 'unauthorized killings' at 153.

There is no doubt that the executions of the Civil War left a sting in the air for many decades and even today many feel deeply impassioned – none more so than those of Kerry who had a massacre on their doorstep.





Single swan swim in the city. Grand Canal, Dublin Ireland at Sunset

Screen Scene

Nonnas **

Starring: Vince Vaughn, Susan Sarandon

Run Time: TBA

Streaming: Netflix

Available: 9th May

Nonnas, featuring Vince Vaughn, offers a heartwarming and comedic exploration of family, food, and the importance of traditions. Set in a quaint Italian-American neighborhood, the film follows Vaughn's character, whose life is turned upside down when he inherits his grandmother's beloved restaurant after her passing. Vaughn delivers his signature blend of humour and sincerity, portraying a man caught between the hustle of modern life and the cherished customs of his childhood. His comedic timing shines through as he navigates the challenges of maintaining the restaurant amidst a rapidly changing culinary landscape, where fast food chains threaten to overshadow authentic dining experiences.

What elevates Nonnas is its authentic portrayal of familial bonds and the generational clash between old-world values and contemporary pressures. The scenes featuring Vaughn interacting with his grandmother's cooking secrets are particularly touching, showcasing the warmth and wisdom passed down through generations. Well worth a watch.



Bono: Stories of Surrender ***

Starring: Bono, Jacknife Lee

Run Time: TBA

Streaming: Apple TV+

Available: 30th May

Bono: Stories of Surrender is a vivid reimagining of Bono's critically acclaimed one-man stage show, "Stories of Surrender: An Evening of Words, Music and Some Mischief..." As he pulls back the curtain on a remarkable life and the family, friends and faith that have challenged and sustained him, he also reveals personal stories about his journey as a son, father, husband, activist and rock star. Along with never-before-seen, exclusive footage from the tour, the film features Bono performing many of the iconic U2 songs that have shaped his life and legacy.

U2 fans will love this.



Another Simple Favor **

Starring: Anna Kendrick, Blake Lively
Streaming: Prime Video
Run Time: 120 mins
Available to watch: 1st May

Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning ***

Starring: Tom Cruise, Hayley Atwell
Streaming: At the cinema
Run Time: 120 mins.
Available to watch: 21st May

Another Simple Favor brings us back into the stylish and suspenseful world of Stephanie (Anna Kendrick) and Emily (Blake Lively). Directed by Paul Feig, the sequel builds on the charming yet darkly comedic foundation of its predecessor. Lively reprises her role as the enigmatic friend who dances between charm and danger. Kendrick's performance remains delightful, striking a balance between naïve enthusiasm and the gravity of her increasingly tumultuous relationship with Emily.

The narrative explores deeper themes of betrayal, friendship, and the lengths one might go to protect loved ones. The storytelling is tight, with twists that keep viewers on the edge of their seats. The sharp dialogue and witty banter resonate well, making for an engaging viewing experience.

Visually, the film is a treat, with lush cinematography and a stylish aesthetic that mirrors the characters' flamboyant personalities, however, Lively's recent PR nightmare does cast a dark shadow over the film.

Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning delivers a heart-pounding conclusion to the iconic spy franchise, reminding audiences why it has remained a cinematic staple for over two decades. Directed by Christopher McQuarrie, this installment stars Tom Cruise as the ever-determined Ethan Hunt, who faces his most formidable adversary yet in a game of cat and mouse that spans the globe.

The film shines with breathtaking stunts and action sequences, pushing the limits of physical performance, especially with Cruise's commitment to spectacular practical effects. From adrenaline-pumping rooftop chases to a jaw-dropping helicopter sequence, each moment is expertly crafted to keep viewers on the edge of their seats. The supporting cast, including Rebecca Ferguson and Simon Pegg, adds depth and humour, creating a dynamic camaraderie that fans have come to love.

While the plot is intricate, weaving together multiple threads of espionage and betrayal, it occasionally strays into convoluted territory. However, the gripping action and character development more than compensate for any narrative hiccups.



Annie Walsh

The Axe Wielding Gold-Digger

The only woman hanged after the foundation of the Free State, Annie Walsh believed she would never face the gallows – she wasn't prepared however for some political changes that would see her face the hangman. Samantha Bailie-McMurdock reports:

Annie Barrett grew up in abject poverty in a small village in Limerick. She had never known a time when she had enough to eat and a comfortable existence – but she dreamt of one.

Annie was logical enough to realize that there was only one way to a comfortable life – and that would be through finding an elderly, well to do husband. She heard people say that employment was an escape from poverty, but she had been working for years as a servant for a rich family and was really no better off. She had no means of improving her situation with very little schooling and being almost illiterate. She felt impotent and feared for the future – she knew she could not go on living this hand to mouth existence. She ran through her options in her head – she knew lots of girls her

age who were marrying old farmers – some of them had only been married a short period of time when their husbands died and they inherited farms of land. She knew of other girls who had been dirt poor like her, and now ate well and dressed in nice clothes. That was it – she decided that she would start looking for a rich old farmer – the older the better.

One day in the village she happened upon Ned Walsh, a 61-year-old widower. Annie flirted a little and it was not long before Ned knew that the 30 year old was interested. After seeing each other for a short time the couple decided to marry. Annie

told Ned that she would tell her employers that she would not be back. Ned was just happy he was getting a second chance at love and it did his self-esteem no harm having the young woman



**....she
decided that she would start
looking for a rich old farmer – the older
the better.**

on his arm, as they walked through the village.

After the wedding Annie took well to life in the farmhouse. She missed having someone her own age to talk to, but that was a small price to pay for a beautiful home and financial security.

Ned hired some young men locally to tend to his land – one of them was his nephew Mick Talbot, a 24-year-old with delusions of grandeur. One day Annie looked out of the window and spotted the lad. He stirred romantic notions in her, notions she had forgotten she had, such was her drive for money, nice home and security. She looked out, stealing glimpses every now and again, and over a period of time she noticed Mick looking back at her in the same way. The pair started spending time together, cups of tea here, flirty chats there – Annie wished she could keep her lifestyle but have a young, muscular man like Mick to cuddle up to at night, and not Ned, whom she felt no physical attraction to whatsoever.

Late one-night shots were fired through the front window

of the farmhouse – nobody knew who had done it or why it had happened, but Annie got hurt a little (nothing at all serious) and received quite a large compensation.

She enjoyed the lifestyle this windfall gave her – shopping and buying everything she laid her heart on – but within a relatively short period of time she had spent all the money and became discontent when she could no longer enjoy the highlife. One evening, furious that her windfall was gone,

angry that Ned would not give her a big enough allowance and smitten with young Mick, Annie

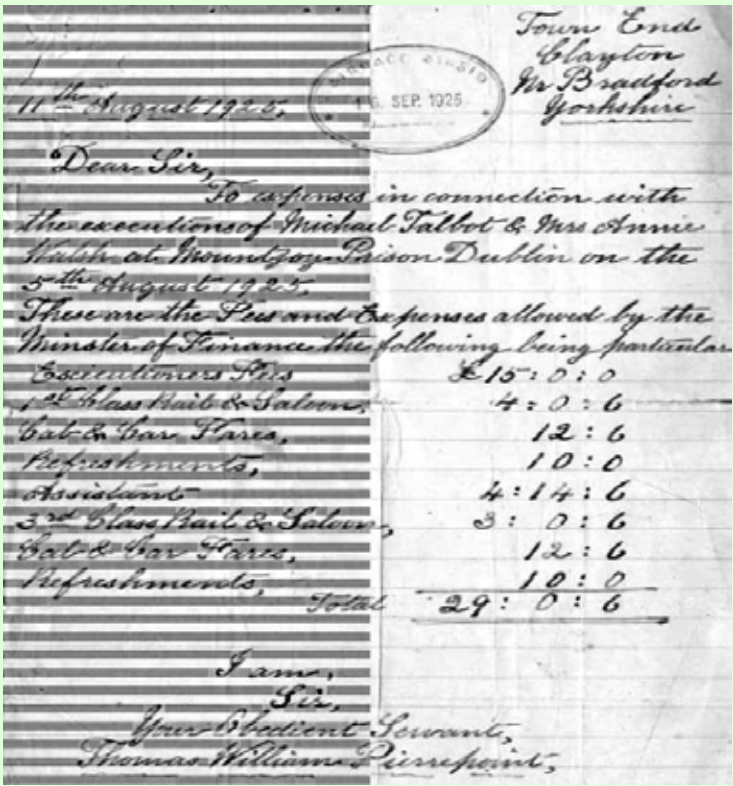
decided something must be done. As she and Mick sat chatting, she joked that the two of them should murder her husband. Mick jokingly replied he would only help her kill his uncle if he got a share of the cash. The longer the pair joked, the more the two of them realized that killing Ned would solve both their problems, financially and romantically. As Mick headed home that night Annie said she would make the plans and the murder could take place in the next couple of days.

Sleeping on their decision to murder the pensioner did not change their minds, and next morning both Mick

and Annie could think of only one thing – the perfect



...Annie wished she could keep her lifestyle but have a young, muscular man like Mick to cuddle up to at night...



murder. When Mick was leaving for home the following afternoon after work, Annie invited him to the house the following night for a drink with herself and her husband. Mick must have known that Annie planned the murder for that night, but she did not mention it.

The following night Ned, Annie and Mick sat in the living room drinking around the fire. After a couple of hours, Annie told Ned that the fire was dimming, and that he should go out to the yard for some firewood. As he left the room, Annie went over to the fireside and picked up a small axe, hiding it under her apron. Ned returned from outside, his arms full of timber; he placed some wood on the fire, and set the rest on the fireplace before retiring to his chair. Annie got up out of her seat, walked slowly round the back of her husband's chair, took the axe from her apron and savagely brought it down on his skull. Ned fell from the chair, his body shaking violently on the floor. Annie screamed at Mick to hold his uncle's arms down, as they were waving frantically, and she did not want him to grab her. As he held his arms tight to the ground, Annie brought the axe down again, and continued to strike him until he ceased fighting for his life and his limbs became limp.

When they were sure Ned was dead, Annie took Mick by the hand and led him to bed. Mick later told the police that Annie informed him they would report Ned's death

the next morning.

The next day Annie told the police her husband was dead. They suspected her instantly. She had obviously not thought her story through as during questioning she got into a muddle and said that Mick had killed her husband – she said he had shot him dead with a gun!

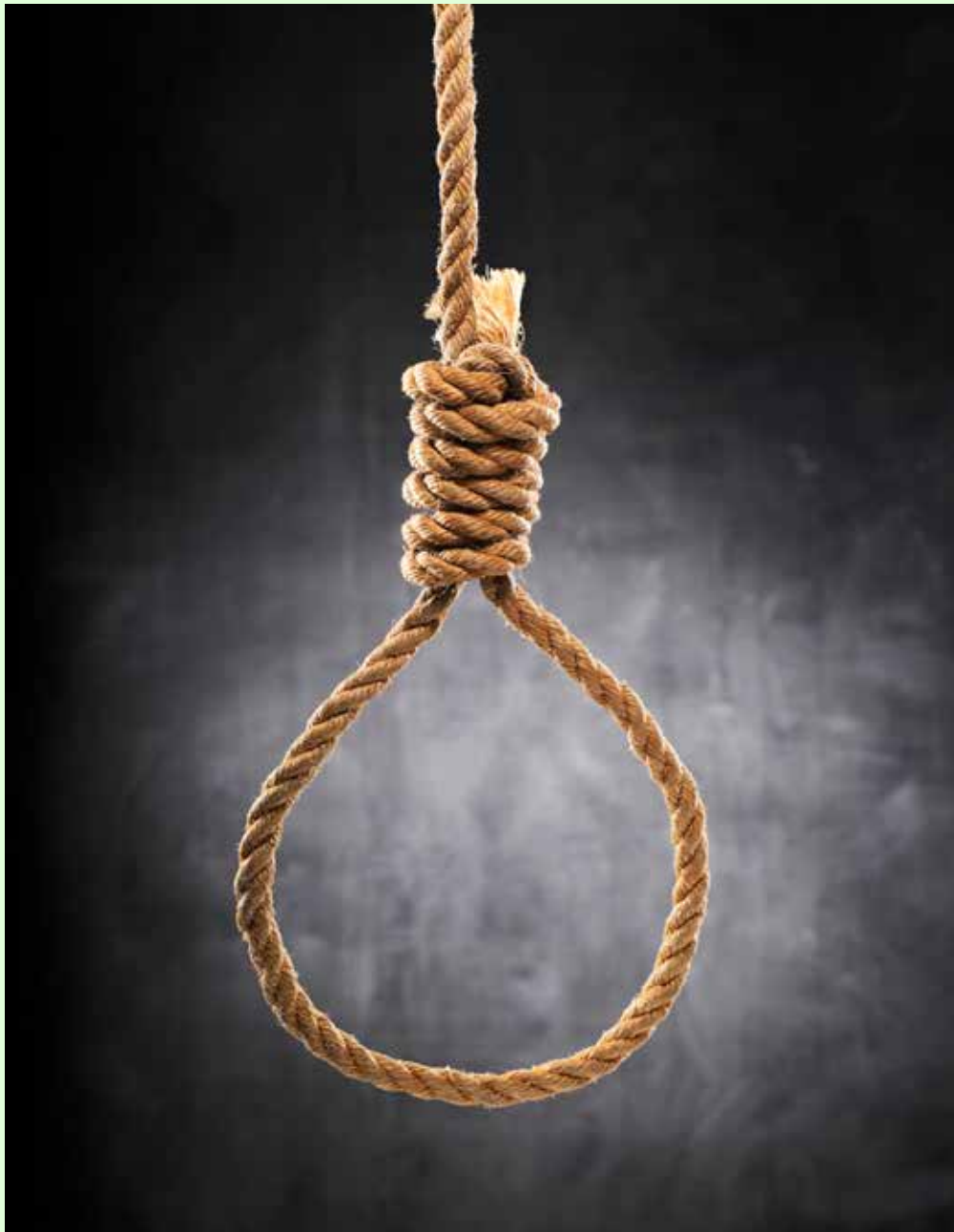
Both Annie and her young lover were charged with murder, and after the charge was read, Annie asked if she would receive a cheque for compensation!! At the trial the jury took only ten minutes of deliberation and returned to find them both guilty of the murder of Ned Walsh.

Annie was convinced she would not hang, the press predicted she would be pardoned – the British had reprieved all six females sentenced to death in the last seventeen years prior to independence, but the new Irish government were determined she would pay her debt to society.

The next day Annie told the police her husband was dead. They suspected her instantly.

Annie and Mick were both hanged on 5 August 1925 – Annie the only woman to hang during the reign of the death penalty.

The public was stunned on the day of the execution at Mountjoy Prison – everyone believed that there would be a reprieve, but most believed Annie and Mick deserved to die as they had cold-heartedly planned and executed a man who had done nothing except fall in love with a gold-digger.





Bicycle on Balearic island of Formentera near Barbaria Cape Lighthouse

Jokes

Because laughter is
the best medicine!



A Priest was being honoured at his retirement dinner after 25 years in the parish. A leading local politician and member of the congregation was chosen to make the presentation and to give a little speech at the dinner. However, he was delayed, so the Priest decided to say his own few words while they waited: 'I got my first impression of the parish from the first confession I heard here. I thought I had been assigned to a terrible place. The very first person who entered my confessional told me he had stolen a television set and, when questioned by the police, was able to lie his way out of it. He had stolen money from his parents, embezzled from his employer, had an affair with his boss's wife, taken illegal drugs. I was appalled. But as the days went on I learned that my people were not all like that and I had, indeed, come to a fine parish full of good and loving people...' Just as the Priest finished his talk, the politician arrived full of apologies at being late. He immediately began to make the presentation and gave his talk: 'I'll never forget the first day our parish Priest arrived,' said the politician. 'In fact, I had the honour of being the first person to go to him for confession.'

Moral : Never, Never, Never Be Late

Two factory workers are talking.
The woman says, "I can make the boss give me the day off."
The man replies, "And how would you do that?"
The woman says, "Just wait and see." She then hangs upside-down from the ceiling.
The boss comes in and says, "What are you doing?"
The woman replies, "I'm a light bulb."
The boss then says, "You've been working so much that you've gone crazy. I think you need to take the day off."
The man starts to follow her and the boss says, "Where are you going?"
The man says, "I'm going home, too. I can't work in the dark."

INTERESTING EXCHANGES AND COMMENTS

An exchange between Churchill & Lady Astor:
"If you were my husband I'd give you poison,"
to which he replied, "If you were my wife, I'd drink it."

A member of Parliament to Disraeli: "Sir, you will either die on the gallows or of some unspeakable disease."

"That depends, Sir," said Disraeli, "whether I embrace your

policies or your mistress."

"I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure." -- Clarence Darrow

"I didn't attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it." --Mark Twain

"He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends." -- Oscar Wilde

"He had delusions of adequacy." -- Walter Kerr

"He has all the virtues I dislike and none of the vices I admire." --
Winston Churchill

"A modest little person, with much to be modest about." --
Winston Churchill

"He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary." -- William Faulkner (about Ernest Hemingway).

"Poor Faulkner. Does he really think big emotions come from big words?"
-- Ernest Hemingway (about William Faulkner)

"Thank you for sending me a copy of your book; I'll waste no time reading it." -- Moses Hadas

"He can compress the most words into the smallest idea of any man I know." -- Abraham Lincoln

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend... if you have one." -- George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill

Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second... if there is one." -- Winston Churchill, in response.

"I feel so miserable without you; it's almost like having you here." --
Stephen Bishop

A LITTLE BIT OF IRISH

PHRASE	TRANSLATION	PRONUNCIATION
There's no fireside like your own fireside	Níl aon tintean mar do thinteán féin	Neel eyn tin-tawn mar duh hin-tawn fayn
Enjoy!	Bain sult as!	Bawn soolt ass!
Look at that!	Féach ar sin!	Fay-akh ar shin!
I love it	Is breá liom é	Is bray lum ay
Are you okay?	An bhfuil tú ceart go leor?	An wil too kairt go lore?
Excuse me	Gabh mo leithscéal	Gaw mo lesh-kale
Wonderful	Go hiontach!	Guh hee-un-takh!
I invite you	Tugaim cuireadh duit	Too-gim kwir-eh duit
Open your eyes!	Múscail do shúile!	Moo-skal duh hoo-lay!

Word Power

Over the next few issues we'll be attempting to increase your word power. Have a look at the words below and afterwards see if you know their meaning.

Word	Pronunciation	Answers
1. Insipid	in-zip-id	1. Lacking flavour, vigour, or interest; dull.
2. Vicissitude	vuh-si-suh-tyood	2. A change of circumstances or fortune, typically one that is unwelcome or unpleasant.
3. Recalcitrant	ruh-kal-suh-truhnt	3. Having an obstinately uncooperative attitude.
4. Disparate	di-spuh-ruht	4. Essentially different; not allowing comparison.
5. Propinquity	pruh-ping-kwuh-tee	5. The state of being close to someone or something; proximity.
6. Intransigent	in-tran-suh-jnt	6. Unwilling or refusing to change one's views or to agree about something.
7. Indefatigable	in-duh-fa-tuh-guh-bl	7. Persisting tirelessly; unable to be fatigued.
8. Abstruse	uhb-stroos	8. Difficult to understand; obscure.
9. Perfunctory	puh-fuhngk-tuh-ree	9. Carried out with a minimum of effort or reflection; done routinely.
10. Misanthrope	mi-zuhn-throwp	10. A person who dislikes humankind and avoids human society.
11. Banal	buh-naal	11. So lacking in originality as to be obvious and boring.
12. Zephyr	zeh-fuh	12. A gentle, mild breeze; often used to refer to the west wind.

How did YOU score?
10 or more – Perfection!
6-9 Brilliant.
3-5 Well done.
0-2 Must do better.

Cashless Society

Sweden is a nearly cashless society-Moa Petersén and Lenas Halldenius explains how it affects people who are left out.

Around the world, cards and apps are the default way to pay – but nowhere is the transition away from cash more obvious than in Sweden. The Bank of Sweden notes that the amount of cash in circulation in the country has halved since 2007.

Part of this is due to a unique Swedish law that prioritises “freedom of contract” above any legal requirement to accept cash. In other words, it is up to businesses – including banks – whether they take cash. Public transport, stores and services typically do not accept cash as payment, and there is no infrastructure for paying bills over the counter.

The transition to cashlessness accelerated when a group of banks created the mobile payment app Swish in 2012. By 2017, Sweden was using less cash than other European countries. Today, more than 80% of the population has a Swish account.

For most Swedes, the cashless economy is swift and convenient. As long as you have a bank account and can access the technology, you probably live a cashless life already. But for the few people who still depend on cash, life is getting harder.

Our recent research shows how this affects the worst-off groups in Sweden’s cashless society. Our interviewees live in poverty-induced cash dependence, meaning they rely on cash payments because they are unbanked, lack

credit or cannot afford digital technology.

While it is difficult to measure just how many people depend on cash, older people, particularly, are struggling to pay bills digitally.

Some of those we interviewed are homeless or have mental health issues.

Others live on a very low income. The obstacles they face are both practical and cultural. They feel like delinquents, undervalued and locked out of participating in much of daily life.

Being cash-dependent in Sweden

If cash is the only money you have or the only money you can manage without help, you are confined to “cash bubbles”. Cash works like a local currency, isolated from the rest of the economy.

In the cash bubble, you can buy necessities and go to



Public transport, stores and services typically do not accept cash as payment

no-frills cafes, but you can't pay for parking and you can't pay bills without help. Volunteers at local community groups told us that they spend most of their time doing people's banking for them.

A Ukrainian refugee, who can't get a bank account because of their migration status, worried about a bill from the local health clinic that they had no technical means of paying.

Homeless people who sleep in cars can't use the cashless parking meters, so an illicit market has emerged where people with smartphones and bank accounts pay for their parking at a substantial extra cost. It's expensive to be digitally poor.

Our interviewees felt left behind in a society that does not care about their ability to participate. With a mix of shame, anger and resignation, they described everyday humiliations. One woman saved up to buy her grandchild a gift she wanted, only to be told at the till – grandchild in hand – that they didn't accept her money. "I felt like a thief," she told us.

Sweden's cashless transition

Swedes are known to be early and uncritical adopters of technology – this has become part of the country's self-image. In 2017, business researchers predicted that cash would be irrelevant in Sweden by March 2023. It didn't quite happen, but near enough.

Over the last 150 years, technological innovations and entrepreneurship have propelled the country from severe poverty to being one of the richest in Europe.

The Swedish case is even more special due to the pervasive role of banks in the payment and identification infrastructure. Banks created the widely used payment app Swish, and also issue the electronic ID needed to access public services like the tax authority and benefits for illness, disability and unemployment.

Consequently, if you are not a bank customer, you can't access these public services.

During the pandemic, fears of contamination made handling physical money seem like a health hazard. "I hate cash. It's dirty," as one Swedish tech entrepreneur put it.

All of these factors combined have led to a modern Swedish society where digital money is good and cash is associated with crime and dirt. For people who still depend on

cash payments, this stigma adds to their sense of being left out.

In Sweden, as in many other countries, a fully cashless economy feels inevitable in the coming years. But as we have found,

people who rely on cash due to poverty are left without the means to manage independently or even to pay their bills.

This is not just a practical issue, but an emotional one. There is a sense of loneliness, of loss of community and human connection in the digital economy. As one of our interviewees said: "It's not just cashlessness. I feel that human beings have disappeared. We live like robots; click here, click that. Digitisation has made people lonely."

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First published on The Conversation.



One woman saved up to buy her grandchild a gift she wanted, only to be told at the till – grandchild in hand – that they didn't accept her money. "I felt like a thief," she told us.

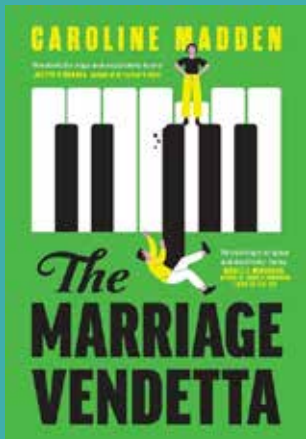
Patricia Scanlan's Book Club



Patricia Scanlan was born in Dublin, where she still lives. She is a #1 bestselling author and has sold millions of books worldwide. Her books are translated in many languages. Patricia is the series editor and a contributing author to the award winning Open Door Literacy series.

This issue, Patricia brings her favourite books of the moment.

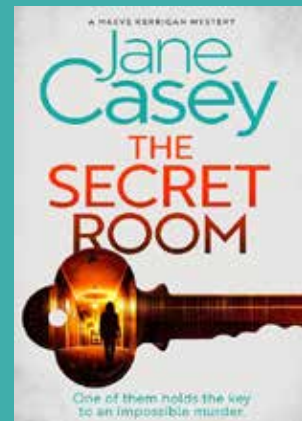
The Marriage Vendetta – Caroline Madden – Eriu



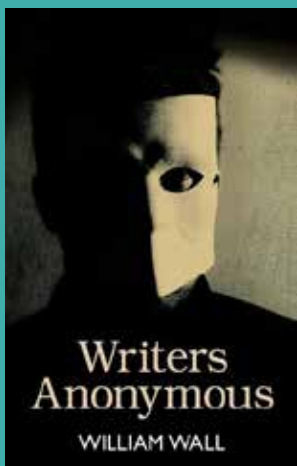
Eliza's playwright husband Richard Sheridan has accepted the career opportunity of a lifetime: running a prestigious theatre in Dublin. Eliza plays the role of the supportive wife - uprooting their daughter Mara, relocating from England to Dublin, running the household and managing Richard's paperwork - but inside, she's burning with resentment. Eliza was once a globe-trotting classical pianist; now, her time is consumed by the dramas of the judgmental 'momfluencers' at the café across from Mara's school, where she spends hours anxiously watching her lonely daughter during playtimes. When she's sent a suggestive photo of Richard with another woman, it's the last straw. She turns to mysterious marriage therapist Ellen Early for help. But Eliza has no idea just how far Ms. Early is willing to go to get results ...

The Secret Room – Jane Casey – Hemlock Press

A closed door. An impossible murder. 2:32 p.m. Wealthy, privileged Ilaria Cavendish checks into a luxury London hotel and orders a bottle of champagne. Within the hour, her lover discovers her submerged in a bath of scalding water, dead. At first glance it looks like an accident. No one went in with her. No one came out. But all the signs point to murder. For DS Maeve Kerrigan, the case is a welcome distraction. But when shock news hits close to home, affecting her partner, DI Josh Derwent, she faces the toughest challenge of her career. And if she fails her world will never be the same again...



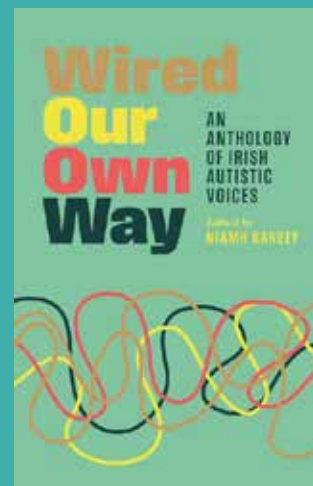
Writers Anonymous – William Wall – New Island Books



In the summer of 1980, a lonely boy is found murdered in the graveyard of his quiet fishing town. Forty years later, a writer finds himself forced to confront the one story he's refused all his life to tell. Fighting off the boredom of lockdown, acclaimed author Jim Winter decides to share his skills by setting up an anonymous online writing workshop – but his generosity will cost him more than he knows. Right away, the work of a talented student known only as Deirdre stands out. Her novel concerns the death of Mattie Lantry, a lonely seventeen-year-old found murdered in the now-distant summer of 1980, in the local cemetery of his quiet fishing town. The writing is brilliant, but there's one problem: Jim grew up with Mattie, and Deirdre knows things that only he and his schoolfriends should know. Chapter by chapter, she's revealing a story that he's worked all his life to repress. Who is Deirdre, and what will her novel uncover? To find out, Jim must return to the town he fled all those years ago. As his buried past and perfect present collide, the stories he's told about his own nature – to his reading public, to his loved ones and to himself – begin to fall apart.

Wired Our Own Way: An Anthology of Irish Autistic Voices: – Niamh Garvey (Ed) – New Island Books

2025 figures show that one in twenty Irish schoolchildren are now identified as autistic, and society's understanding of neurodiversity is evolving rapidly. As awareness grows, many adults are also discovering this aspect of themselves, finding greater clarity and self-compassion in the process. This bestselling anthology explores the profound impact of receiving a diagnosis and highlights the wide range of experiences within the neurodivergent community in Ireland. Through deeply personal and insightful essays, the contributors reveal the many ways this identity shapes their lives – proving there is no single way of being autistic. From meltdowns to mental health, from early diagnoses to late-in-life revelations, and from cultural stereotypes to workplace challenges, this collection offers a rich, multifaceted perspective on life beyond the neurotypical lens. A celebration of individuality, resilience, and self-discovery, it shines a light on voices that deserve to be heard. *Contributors include: Jen Wallace Liam Coulson Nuala O'Connor Jane M Owens Eric Crowley James McClean Roisin Riley Fiacre Ryan Justin Bakker Naoise Dolan Colm Brady Freya von Noorden Pierce Jen O'Connor Stefanie Preissner Chandrika Narayanan-Mohan Emil Elliot Nawrocki Stuart Neilson Caoimhe O'Gorman Adam Harris Priyangee Guha Mike McGrath-Bryan Aisling Walsh Cliona Kelliher*



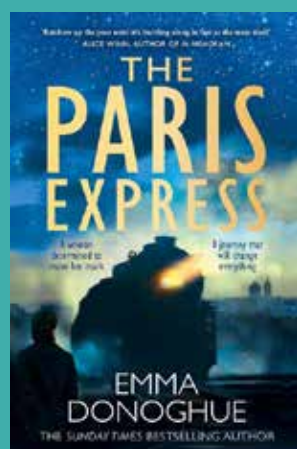
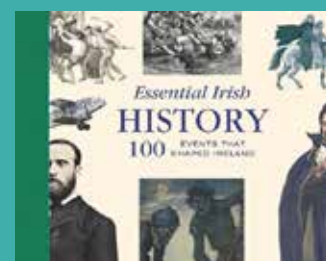
Sunrise on the Reaping (A Hunger Games Novel) – Suzanne Collins – Scholastic

When you've been set up to lose everything you love, what is there left to fight for? As the day dawns on the fiftieth annual Hunger Games, fear grips the districts of Panem. This year, in honour of the Quarter Quell, twice as many tributes will be taken from their homes. Back in District 12, Haymitch Abernathy is trying not to think too hard about his chances. All he cares about is making it through the day and being with the girl he loves. When Haymitch's name is called, he can feel all his dreams break. He's torn from his family and his love, shuttled to the Capitol with the three other District 12 tributes: a young friend who's nearly a sister to him, a compulsive oddsmaker, and the most stuck-up girl in town. As the Games begin, Haymitch

understands he's been set up to fail. But there's something in him that wants to fight . . . and have that fight reverberate far beyond the deadly arena.

Essential Irish History – Tony Potter (Ed) – Gill Books

Discover the long and rich history of the island of Ireland, from the very earliest Mesolithic inhabitants to Vikings and Celts and the modern 21st-century nation of today. Encompassing stories of some of Ireland's best-known characters, as well as pivotal moments in Ireland's past, this compact history recalls the country's struggles through difficult times of war, famine and strife as well as its successes, people and places. The wealth of Irish culture and tradition is also beautifully captured in this highly illustrated and informative book. Essential Irish History is the perfect introduction to Ireland's fascinating history for Irish people and visitors alike.



The Paris Express – Emma Donoghue – Picador

A woman determined to make her mark. A journey that will change everything. Paris, 1895. Glamour hides a city on the brink. One morning, a young woman boards the Granville express with a deadly plan. On the journey lives intertwine in explosive ways. There are the railway crew who have everything to lose, a little boy travelling alone for the first time, an elderly statesman with his fragile wife and a lonely artist far from home. The train speeds towards the City of Light and into a future that will change everything . . .

The Podcast Review

We source the best selection of podcasts each issue. This time we bring you, What's up Docs?, Journey Through Time, The Lulu Podcast and What Did you Do Yesterday?

What's up Docs? (Health)

Drs Chris and Xand van Tulleken are on a mission to help us take better care of ourselves in this weekly podcast.

When it comes to looking after our own health, it can be confusing. With new statistics and treatments coming out every week, it feels impossible to decide what works best for us. So each episode Chris and Xand are joined by an expert guest to examine the latest science, insights and data, to help you navigate the overwhelming amount of information and advice out there. From willpower to hunger, from dodgy knees to bad breath, they'll sort fact from fiction and tussle over their understanding of it all.

Journey Through Time (History)

History from the ground up — the stories you didn't learn, the people you never knew, shaping history in ways you never expected. Hear about the ordinary people from history and the extraordinary impact they've had on the present. Hosted by historians David Olusoga and Sarah Churchwell, Journey Through Time will show how everyday actions have the most remarkable unintended consequences that ripple through time.



The Lulu Podcast: Turning Points (Personal Development)

Singing legend Lulu has been in the music industry for over 60 years. She's seen people come, she's seen people go. She's seen people make it, break it, fake it. She has seen them rise, and she has seen them fall. And all the while she's had a curiosity - what is it that makes people tick? How have they got to where they are? Where does their motivation come from? Where do they get their resilience? When life throws curveballs, how have they overcome them? What are their turning points? In this podcast, Lulu sits down with guests to discuss the pivotal moments in their lives that have shaped them into the people they are today.

What Did You Do Yesterday? (Comedy)

Irish comedian David O'Doherty teams up with TV and radio presenter Max Rushden for this simple but effective premise: the pair either discuss what they themselves did yesterday, or invite a well-known name (previous guests include actor/comedian Joe Wilkinson, actress Natalie Cassidy and author/TV presenter Richard Osman) to do the same. There is hilarity in mundanity.

How to:

Search "Google podcasts" in the Play Store app (if you've an Android phone). iPhones comes with Apple podcasts app installed. Open the app and type in the name of the podcast you want or you can just browse categories whilst there.

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