CITY A.M.

BUSINESS WITH PERSONALITY

HIGH END DINING WE MEET THE HEAD CHEF FROM OBLIX IN THE SHARD **FOOD P25**

GORDON'S GOLD DID BROWN GET HIS BIG SELLOFF WRONG? **P21**

WEDNESDAY 8 MAY 2019 | ISSUE 3,366 CITYAM.COM FREE

TROUBLE AH€AD

EU SLASHES ITS GERMAN GROWTH FORECAST IN HALF

FRESH CLASH LOOMS WITH ITALY OVER BUDGET DEFICIT

BRUSSELS FEARS 'MAJOR SHOCK' FROM TRADE WAR

HARRY ROBERTSON

@henrygrobertson

THE EUROPEAN Union yesterday halved its growth prediction for the German economy as it forecast lower growth for the Eurozone as a whole, laying bare the extent of the bloc's economic challenges ahead of a leaders' summit in Romania this week.

Official forecasts from the European Commission (EC) said Italy's budget deficit will reach 3.6 per cent of GDP in 2020 – breaking the EU's three per cent limit – in a development likely to cause further rows between Rome and Brussels.

The Commission said the euro area will grow by 1.2 per cent in 2019, its slowest rate since the Eurozone crisis. In autumn 2018 it had predicted growth of 1.9 per cent this year. It also warned the continent's economy risks receiving a "major shock" from escalating global trade tensions.

The Commission became the latest forecaster to slash Germany's growth predictions, in a fresh blow for the industrial giant.

Europe's biggest economy – formerly the powerhouse of the single currency area – is now forecast to grow just 0.5 per cent in 2019, compared to the 1.1 per cent growth the EC predicted in February.

Both the Commission and the German government have pointed to new car emissions tests as causing industrial hold-ups and hurting German output in recent months.

Meanwhile, Italy's underperforming economy is projected to grow just 0.1 per cent this year.

The Commission's spring economic report blamed weakness in manufacturing for the euro area's poor recent economic performance. It said "rising protectionism" globally and tighter financial conditions had "weighed on investment, activity and trade".

It also warned that "substantial risks" to growth remained in place.

"As initial deadlines for US-China trade negotiations and Brexit have passed without resolution, various uncertainties continue to loom large," it said.

An escalation of trade tensions with the US that ratcheted up tariffs on EU products "would have a significant and very disruptive impact," the report said.

The report found concerns over high rates of debt among some member states could also damage growth in Europe.

TRUMP'S TARIFF THREATS SEND US MARKETS INTO A TAILSPIN, P7

Investor says no to NSF's hostile bid

CALLUM KEOWN

@CallumKeown1

SUBPRIME lender Provident was handed a boost in its battle to fend off Non-Standard Finance (NSF)'s £1.3bn offer yesterday as Schroders refused to support the hostile takeover.

The UK fund manager, the third-largest Provident shareholder with a 14.6 per cent stake, said the offer risked destabilising the company's recent recovery and was not in the best interest of shareholders.

Provident investors have until 15 May to accept the offer from NSF.

NSF has so far gained the support of more than 50 per cent of Provident shareholders, including Neil Woodford, Invesco Asset Management and Marathon Asset Management.

The trio also hold a stake in NSF.

In a letter to Provident chairman Patrick Snowball, Schroders fund manager Kevin Murphy and global head of stewardship Jessica Ground said they were concerned that the rights of minority shareholders were "not being protected."

The rival subprime lenders have been locked in a war of words in recent months, with Provident urging investors to reject what it called a "risky and flawed" takeover bid.

FTSE 100▼ 7,260.47 -120.17 FTSE 250▼ 19,465.69 -239.48 DOW▼ 25,965.09 -473.39 NASDAQ▼ 7,963.76 -159.53 £/$▼1.307 -0.003 £/€▼1.168 -0.002 €/$▼1.119 -0.001

CITY A.M.

THE CITY VIEW

Stamp duty makes the housing crisis worse

THERE is no silver bullet to fixing the nation's housing crisis, short of the obvious but politically challenging solution of building a lot more houses. Nonetheless, certain taxes and regulations make an already flawed market even more distorted and act as additional barriers to those seeking to buy and sell homes. And in the case of the much-hated stamp duty, they do so at a cost to the Treasury. Last week, consultancy firm London Central Portfolio crunched the numbers, and found that tax receipts for stamp duty in the first quarter of 2019 are down 26.2 per cent on the previous quarter, and have fallen by almost £750m over the last year. Why? Because transactions have slumped by 21.4 per cent. Brexit is often blamed for cooling the market, but the counter-productive impact of stamp duty cannot be underestimated. By adding tens of thousands of pounds to the price of a home, it acts as a deterrent to move. This incentivises people to stay in properties that may no longer be suitable for their needs – such as parents with grown-up children who might otherwise consider downsizing, or those with job offers in another part of the country. This means that the UK's existing housing stock cannot be used most effectively, worsening the existing shortage and trapping workers in the wrong places (housing is cited as one factor behind the UK's weak productivity). In fact, the Adam Smith Institute has estimated that stamp duty is four times more harmful to economic efficiency than income tax, and eight times more harmful than VAT. The government seems to be aware of stamp duty's distortive effect – hence Philip Hammond's move to exempt first-time buyers in 2017. But since most people selling a home will also be looking to buy one, the impact trickles down – even transactions involving first-time buyers' relief fell by 23 per cent in 2019. The current system encourages people to either stay put in unsuitable homes, or to buy not on the basis of what they need now, but what they might need in decades' time, as moving every few years is prohibitively expensive. People at every rung on the ladder, from first-time buyers to young families to retired downsizers, suffer as a result, and so do the government's coffers. If politicians want to smooth out this distorted market, they should make moving house as easy as possible for everyone. Scrapping stamp duty completely and making up the difference elsewhere – whether with more progressive council tax bands or a new land tax – is the only way to get the market moving again, regardless of Brexit.

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'HIGH AND TERRIBLE DRAMA' Inquest begins into the deaths of the eight people killed in the June 2017 London Bridge attack

THE INQUEST into the deaths of the eight people killed in the London Bridge terror attack began yesterday at the Old Bailey. The families of the victims, killed when three men drove a van into pedestrians and then stabbed others in Borough Market, gave statements on an emotional day in court. Chief coroner Mark Lucraft said lives were torn apart in "ten minutes of high and terrible drama" on 3 June 2017. The attackers were shot dead by police officers at the scene.

City warned over getting caught in EU regulations

CALLUM KEOWN

@CallumKeown1

THE CITY must avoid remaining in the same regulatory structure as the EU without a say on future changes, the Bank of England's deputy governor Sir Jon Cunliffe warned yesterday.

The Bank's financial stability boss said the UK could be at risk after Brexit if regulation was cut or if its financial services sector remained tied to the EU regime with no say on future regulation.

Cunliffe said weakening regulation could lead to financial stability risks but suggested future regulation could become less complex and rigid after the UK leaves the EU.

His comments came after City watchdog chief Andrew Bailey said the UK could benefit from a "lower-burden" regulatory regime after Brexit.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) chief executive said the UK could return to a more flexible, principles and outcomes-based system.

He added he was sceptical about calls for a light-touch regime, aimed at boosting the UK's competitiveness on the world stage.

Speaking at a conference yesterday, Cunliffe said a situation in which the UK, home to the largest and most complex financial centre in the world, had no say on regulation was "very uncomfortable."

He added: "By the same token, pressure to weaken regulation post Brexit would create financial stability risks.

"The Financial Policy Committee has made clear that given the size and complexity of its financial sector, post Brexit the UK will need a level of resilience at least as great as that currently planned, which itself exceeds that required by international baseline standards."

He added there was scope to address the rigidity of regulation, primarily set at the EU level.

He said: "At some point post-Brexit, we will need to address this rigidity and hard wiring of detail to ensure we have a coherent, effective and flexible regulatory system with appropriate accountability."

Bailey's approach was welcomed by industry body UK Finance, which called for an approach centred on competition and the best consumer outcomes.

Bailey has said laws could be loosened

WHAT THE OTHER PAPERS SAY THIS MORNING

FINANCIAL TIMES

RISING TINDER USERS DRIVE MATCH GROUP REVENUE

An increase in the number of people looking for love – or something a little less long-term – online via dating app Tinder underpinned forecast-topping revenue growth for Match Group in its first quarter. While the company's push for international growth appears to be bearing fruit, the flipside is that foreign exchange effects stripped a few percentage points from sales growth.

EA LIFTED BY NEW 'BATTLE ROYALE' GAMES

Electronic Arts (EA) recorded stronger sales than expected as it cashed in on the popularity of "battle royale" games, allaying investors' worries over Fortnite competition. EA said yesterday net bookings for the March quarter were up 8.7 per cent year-over-year to $1.36bn (£1.04bn), handily beating analysts' average estimate of $1.2bn.

THE TIMES

UKIP CANDIDATE FACES INQUIRY OVER RAPE 'JOKE'

A Ukip candidate is facing a police investigation over a video he released in which he suggested that he might rape a Labour MP. Carl Benjamin, who is standing for Ukip in the European elections, made comments about Jess Phillips in social media messages. In the first he said that he "wouldn't even rape" her. In the second he said that "with enough pressure I might cave".

BLAME POLITICIANS FOR FAKE NEWS, SAYS RT CHIEF

Anna Belkina, a RT executive, claimed her channel had been unfairly accused of spreading misinformation at a talk with Whitehall chiefs yesterday.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

EXPENSES WATCHDOG TRIED TO STOP NEW EXPOSÉ

Parliament's spending watchdog tried to prevent the public being told that 377 MPs, including nine Cabinet ministers and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, have had their official credit cards suspended for breaking the rules on expenses.

GOOGLE SPIN-OFF OFFERS RIDES THROUGH LYFT APP

Uber rival Lyft has begun offering driverless taxi rides in a tie-up with Waymo, the autonomous car company owned by Google parent Alphabet. Waymo will deploy 10 driverless vehicles that can be ordered through the Lyft app in Phoenix, Arizona.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

SPRINT REPORTS STEEPEST CUSTOMER DROP IN YEARS

Sprint lost 189,000 of its most lucrative phone connections in the first three months of the year, the steepest such decline since at least late 2015. Some analysts had expected the mobile service provider to lose about 50,000 postpaid phone connections.

US LIFTS SANCTIONS ON VENEZUELAN GENERAL

The Trump administration yesterday lifted sanctions on a Venezuelan general who broke ranks with the Maduro regime and warned 25 Venezuelan supreme court magistrates they will be held accountable unless they back opposition leader Juan Guaido.

Ex-Autonomy US boss tells court of HP deal strain

JESSICA CLARK

@jclarkjourno

HEWLETT Packard (HP) is not suing Autonomy's former US manager in order to use his evidence against British businessman Mike Lynch in the biggest fraud trial in UK history, a court heard yesterday.

HP is suing Lynch, the former chief executive of software firm Autonomy, and ex-finance chief Sushovan Hussain for $5.1bn (£3.9bn), alleging that the pair falsely inflated Autonomy's reported revenue ahead of its 2011 acquisition of the firm.

Christopher Egan, the former US head of Autonomy, admitted wrongdoing to the US Department of Justice.

Robert Miles QC, for Lynch, questioned why Egan, who gave evidence to London's High Court via video link, was not being sued by HP for his involvement in the alleged fraud.

"You're someone who had got several properties, you have wealth of over $10m. You're worth suing," Miles said during the cross-examination.

"Can you explain why HP has never threatened to sue you in respect of these events?"

"I can't speak for their legal strategy but I'm aware of my own wrongdoing and I don't think it amounts to something I would sue," Egan said.

Miles added: "The reason that HP has not sued you is because they just want your evidence. You're willing to give them that evidence to save yourself from being sued."

Egan's evidence claims that Lynch and Hussain were behind a scheme to increase Autonomy's revenue in order to meet market expectations.

"It was my impression that Mr Hussain was under even more pressure from Dr Lynch to achieve the revenue goals," Egan wrote in a statement.

"I recall a discussion with Mr Hussain in which he told me that if I thought there was a lot of pressure on me, it was even worse for him.

"Over time, that pressure led to the four types of transactions that... were used to meet revenue goals that were different from the standard software licensing and data hosting deals."

The trial continues.

WE'RE OFF Trade minister and whip quit as government resignations keep piling up

FORMER BBC boss Rona Fairhead (pictured) and government whip Zahida Manzoor resigned from government last night for "personal reasons". Baroness Fairhead's resignation as trade minister means Liam Fox will step into the role for the third time since the department was created after the EU referendum. Manzoor has stepped down from her role as government whip in the House of Lords.

Wealthy investors more optimistic on Brexit impact despite uncertainty

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

WEALTHY investors have grown more optimistic about the impact Brexit will have on the UK economy, despite ongoing uncertainty.

The number of high-net-worth individuals that believe Brexit will be good for the economy – 41 per cent – has overtaken those with a negative outlook, 35 per cent.

Business owners are also more optimistic, with 44 per cent believing Brexit will be positive and 28 per cent saying it will have no impact at all, according to UBS Wealth Management's latest investor sentiment survey.

The results came as cross-party Brexit talks resumed and the government confirmed European Parliament elections in the UK would definitely go ahead yesterday.

Mark Goddard, head of the firm's high-net-worth London segment, said: "Between multiple meaningful votes in parliament and pivotal European Council summits, it has been a challenging quarter for our clients, who are looking to minimise the impact of domestic political and market factors on their investments and businesses.

"Despite this, this survey shows that UK investors and business owners have a much more positive mindset than towards the end of 2018."

Porsche hit with €535m fine over Dieselgate test-cheating scandal

ALEX DANIEL

@alexmdaniel

PROSECUTORS in Germany have slapped a €535m (£485m) fine on sports car maker Porsche, as a punishment for lapses in supervision which let the company cheat diesel emissions tests.

The luxury brand's development department neglected its legal obligations and ultimately led to Porsche selling diesel cars which gave off excessive levels of pollution, said prosecutors in Stuttgart.

Porsche, a unit of Volkswagen Group, was caught up in its owner's decade-long emissions cheating scandal, known as Dieselgate, after some of its cars used Audi and VW engines.

The fine against Porsche comes after Volkswagen was hit with a €1bn fine over management lapses, and an €800m penalty was issued against Audi in October last year.

Former Volkswagen chief executive Martin Winterkorn was last month charged with fraud for his alleged part in the scandal.

Facebook taps London talent for its global Whatsapp payments drive

EMILY NICOLLE
@emilyjnicolle

FACEBOOK has chosen London as the global centre of a payments push for messaging platform Whatsapp, as the capital gains another boost in tech workers and post-Brexit confidence.

Whatsapp, which is owned by Facebook, will hire around 100 people in an expansion of its workforce by about a quarter, the Financial Times first reported.

Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg announced last week that Whatsapp will launch mobile payments in several countries this year.

The hires will largely be highly-skilled technical engineering staff, with most positions based in London. Additional operations staff will also be brought on at Facebook's European headquarters in Dublin.

Whatsapp said the recruitment effort will be led by senior engineers from the messaging app's founding team, who were sent to London late last year to scout for talent.

Facebook said it settled on the UK as the future hub for expansion because of its multicultural workforce from countries where Whatsapp is popular, such as India. The app, which has 1.5bn users globally, is also far more popular in the UK than in the US.

A QUICK GETT-AWAY Firm eyes 2020 for listing as it targets profitability by October

TAXI-HAILING firm Gett said it has raised $200m (£153m) in additional funding yesterday, with a flotation on the cards "as soon as the first quarter of 2020". It added it is on track to become profitable globally by the fourth quarter of this year.

Thomas Cook's shares soar after Lufthansa bid

ALEXANDRA ROGERS
@city_amrogers

SHARES in Thomas Cook soared yesterday following Lufthansa's decision to bid for its Condor airline business.

The German airline will make a non-binding offer for the travel giant's Condor airline arm, chief executive Carsten Spohr said yesterday.

Shares were up 12.13 per cent at one point in the afternoon, and closed up more than six per cent higher at market close.

Thomas Cook's deadline for all potential bidders to declare their interest in the firm's airline arm was yesterday.

Aviation investor Indigo Partners, which was in talks with Wow Air before the Icelandic operator went bust in March, is also expected to bid.

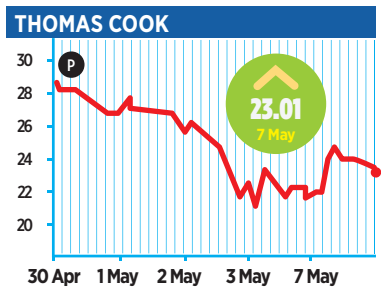
At Lufthansa's annual general meeting, Spohr said: "We decided yesterday in the meeting of the management board to bid for all of Condor with the option to be able to extend this [bid] to all Thomas Cook airlines."

Thomas Cook has been under the weather following soaring temperatures in the UK last year, which caused many customers to hold off booking holidays abroad.

Last week, the company confirmed it was in discussions to lock down debt funding of up to £400m from its lenders as it comes under pressure to bolster its finances.

A sale of the airline business would enable the operator to pay down debt and invest in its hotels and online sales operation.

It has already overhauled various parts of its business this year by closing high street outlets and reviewing its money arm, as it shifts it focus to its core holiday operation.



Chris Grayling ducks questions from MPs over Stagecoach row

ALEXANDRA ROGERS
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EMBATTLED transport secretary Chris Grayling did not show up yesterday for questions from MPs about his controversial decision to bar Stagecoach from three rail franchises, sending a junior minister instead.

Grayling had been asked to answer concerns that he misled parliament over the decision, which disqualified Stagecoach from bidding for the east midlands, west coast and south eastern franchises for not agreeing to share pension liabilities with the government. The east midlands franchise, which Stagecoach currently runs in partnership with Richard Branson's Virgin Trains, was instead awarded to its rival Abellio.

A legal disclosure from the DfT has said that all bids contained some non-compliances, which McDonald said contradicted previous statements made by Grayling to MPs.

Rail minister Andrew Jones, who stood in for Grayling, replied that any non-compliances in Abellio's bid were non-material.

Euro elections are definitely on, says top MP

OWEN BENNETT

@owenjbennett

THE UK will definitely take part in European Parliament elections on 23 May after the government admitted time had run out to deliver Brexit before polling day.

David Lidington, the de facto deputy prime minister, confirmed yesterday it would not be possible to pass all the legislation needed for the UK to leave the EU by the election date, meaning the UK will have to take part in the vote later this month.

Some 73 MEPs will be elected, but Lidington claimed the government was aiming to have a Brexit deal passed before they take up their seats on 2 July.

Lidington said: "Ideally we'd like to be in a situation where those MEPs never actually have to take their seat at European Parliament, certainly to get this done and dusted by the summer recess."

The announcement came just hours after former Ukip leader Nigel Farage launched the election campaign for his new outfit, the Brexit Party.

At a press conference in London, he said: "A vote for the Brexit Party is a vote for a [World Trade Organisation rules] Brexit – no ifs, no buts."

Opinion polling carried out in recent weeks suggested the Brexit Party is on course to top the vote, with Labour in second place and the Conservatives languishing in third.

With the Tories on course for another election drubbing just weeks after losing more than 1,300 councillors in local votes across England, pressure is growing on Theresa May to set out a detailed plan for her departure from Downing Street.

While the Prime Minister was discussing her future, representatives from Labour and the Tories were once again locked in talks over a potential compromise agreement to deliver Brexit.

RAPID CONNECTION Virgin Media grows customers amid superfast network rollout

VIRGIN Media posted a robust set of results for the first quarter yesterday as it focuses its efforts on a £3bn plan to rollout superfast broadband across the UK. Sales remained flat on the previous year at £1.3bn, while operating profit slipped.

Purplebricks feeling blue after founder steps away from duties

JAMES WARRINGTON

@j_a_warrington

11.85%

SHARES in online estate agent Purplebricks fell dramatically yesterday after it revealed founder and chief executive Michael Bruce is stepping down.

Purplebricks said Bruce has resigned with immediate effect and will be replaced by chief operating officer Vic Darvey.

The hybrid estate agency said it is withdrawing from the Australian market due to challenging conditions and "execution errors".

Non-executive chairman Paul Pindar apologised to shareholders, saying the firm was conscious its performance had been disappointing.

Government slammed for crime reforms

JAMES BOOTH

@Jamesdbooth1

TREASURY Select Committee chair Nicky Morgan has criticised the government today for refusing to create a register of politically-exposed persons (Peps) to help fight economic crime.

"It is disappointing that the government has chosen not to endorse the committee's recommendation for the creation of a register of politically-exposed persons," she said, commenting on the government's response to the Committee's recent report on economic crime.

"The reality for many firms is that they lack the resources to identify all those who may be considered to be a Pep," she said.

"By not endorsing a central register, the government is making the work of especially smaller firms in preventing economic crime more difficult."

In its report, the government said a centralised database would "lead to a less dynamic and appropriate treatment of Peps than under the current approach," adding it "therefore does not accept the committee's recommendation."

THIS WEEK

BEAUTIFULLY SIMPLE PULLED BEEF SALAD WITH MINT & AVOCADO

Pick up all the ingredients in the Beautifully Simple chiller.

Cook the beef for 30 minutes, then pull apart the meat using two forks.

Combine the lemon juice, sweet chilli sauce and a little cooking jus with the sliced shallots.

Toss the pulled beef, avocado, mint leaves and chilli, then pour over the shallot dressing.

Serve with sticky rice.

SIMPLE TO SHOP
SIMPLE TO COOK

WAITROSE & PARTNERS

Slow cooked beef brisket 380g, was £5, £13.16/kg, now £4, £10.53/kg (offer ends 21 May), echalion shallots 400g, £1.35, £3.38/kg, essential Lemon, 39p each, Cooks' Ingredients Thai Sweet Chilli Sauce 295ml, £1.99, 67.5p/100ml, Waitrose 1 Perfectly Ripe Extra Large Avocado £1.90 each, Cooks' Ingredients Mint 25g, 85p, 34p/10g, Cooks' Ingredients Mixed Thai Chillies 30g, 99p, £33/kg, Thai sticky rice 350g, £1.99, £5.69/kg. Prices may vary in Channel Islands and Little Waitrose & Partners. Excludes Shell and Welcome Break stores. Minimum online spend applies. Ingredients available in the Beautifully Simple chiller until 21 May. Selected stores. Subject to availability.

Wall Street rout rolls on as US-China tension rises

CALLUM KEOWN

@CallumKeown1

THE DOW Jones suffered its worst day in four months yesterday as Wall Street was hit by mounting US-China trade tensions for a second consecutive day.

The industrial-focused index fell 1.8 per cent on its second worst day of the year, the S&P 500 closed 1.65 per cent down, while the Nasdaq slid by two per cent.

It comes after US President Donald Trump threatened to ramp up tariffs on Chinese goods this Friday.

China confirmed last night it would dispatch its top trade negotiator, vice premier Liu He, to the US later this week for crunch talks in an urgent bid to avoid the increased tariffs, which are set to go live at midnight on Friday.

On Monday, US trade representative Robert Lighthizer confirmed Trump's threat that tariffs on $200bn (£153bn) worth of Chinese imports would be cranked up to 25 per cent, from the current rate of 10 per cent.

Washington officials accused China of reneging on previous commitments made during the months-long talks between the world's two largest economies.

Trump tweeted: "The United States has been losing, for many years, 600 to 800 billion dollars a year on trade. With China, we lose 500 billion dollars. Sorry, we're not going to be doing that anymore!"

The President's intervention saw a dramatic return to volatility in US markets on Monday, which carried through to another damaging day yesterday.

Wall Street rallied late last night but still posted its worst losses since the very start of the year.

China has attempted to play down the dispute as Liu heads for the US to smooth things over.

Foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said: "Talks are by their nature a process of discussion.

"It's normal for both sides to have differences.

"China won't shun problems and is sincere about continuing talks."

FAIR-WEATHER SPEND Warm weather pub trips boost tepid consumer spending growth in April as British outlook improves

CONSUMER spending growth slowed in April but was boosted by last month's sunshine, resulting in double-digit growth in the amount spent at restaurants and pubs, according to the latest data from Barclaycard. Overall consumer spending grew 2.5 per cent in April compared to a year earlier, after registering growth of 3.1 per cent in March year-on-year.

Botox lifts Allergan as pharma giant raises full-year forecasts

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

PHARMACEUTICAL giant Allergan hiked its profit and revenue expectations for the year yesterday after reporting rising sales of its flagship Botox product.

Booming demand for the group's anti-wrinkle injectible Botox drove a better-than-expected rise in its quarterly profit.

Allergan said that it now expects to report full-year 2019 sales between $15.1bn (£11.6bn) and $15.4bn, higher than its prior forecast of $15bn to $15.3bn.

"Many key research and development programmes have made steady progress and we now anticipate five regulatory approvals over the next 18 months," said Brent Saunders, the company's chief executive.

At the beginning of this month, Saunders survived a shareholder vote to keep his role at the helm of the firm despite a leading hedge fund arguing the drug maker had a questionable business strategy and excessive executive pay.

Concerns over the drug maker's pipeline also mounted in March after its much-touted depression treatment Rapastinel failed three late-stage studies.

US begins return of $200m in 1MDB seized assets to Malaysia

JOSEPH SIPALAN

THE US government has begun returning to Malaysia some $200m (£153m) recovered from asset seizures linked to state fund 1MDB, with about a quarter of the amount already repatriated, the two countries said yesterday.

Malaysian and US authorities say $4.5bn was allegedly siphoned from 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), a state fund founded in 2009 by then Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak.

Since losing a general election last year, Najib has been charged with over 40 criminal offences. *Reuters*

PARTNER CONTENT

CFA INSTITUTE TALK

Writing for **CFA Institute**, Alissa Amico, managing director of GOVERN, looks at the recent corporate governance scandals and why investors need to look at the risks of investing in state jewels.

CFA Institute

What do the recent corporate governance scandals involving the Italian oil company Eni, the Franco-Japanese auto alliance Renault-Nissan-Mitsubishi, and the Canadian construction giant SNC-Lavalin all have in common?

They each have a surprising culprit lurking behind them: the state. While corporate governance is intended to describe a system by which firms protect shareholder and stakeholder rights, an actor that appears to have been forgotten is neither the board nor management, but rather the state itself.

And "the state" here is not the government as regulator or arbiter as envisioned by Adam Smith. Rather, the state that has raised its head above today's sea of capitalists is the government as shareholder. The conflicts of interest that emerge when a government is simultaneously shareholder, regulator, and arbiter have propelled the recent flood of corporate drama spilling out across the financial news pages throughout the globe. Given the growth in state ownership in recent years, this should indeed come as little surprise.

Over the past decade, governments have expanded their shareholdings, first through investments by sovereign funds and state-owned enterprises (SOEs), especially those domiciled in emerging markets, and then through bailouts of financial firms in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Yet few have connected this trend to current scandals, even though OECD research indicates SOEs are more likely to engage in opaque and corrupt transactions. Certainly, the above firms all operate in distinct sectors, countries, and markets, but they all are listed on their respective national stock exchanges and all have direct or indirect government shareholders.

Each of the associated scandals has its own script and each has landed the associated boards and governments in hot water. Eni is engulfed in a blockbuster confrontation over the alleged bribery of foreign officials in exchange for contracts, Carlos Ghosn has fallen from his perch atop the Franco-Japanese auto partnership, and

What do the recent corporate governance scandals all have in common?

corruption allegations involving SNC-Lavalin have ensnared Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau and his cabinet.

If governance of international companies becomes politicised, as it has in the recent Air France-KLM case, it may send the wrong message to emerging market SOEs and their government shareholders. Investors in SOEs should note these cautionary signals. Since listed SOEs tend to have high market capitalisations, they are often included in the MSCI indices tracked by some of the largest global investors.

Yet, clouds are gathering. Leading exchanges such as the London Stock Exchange have recently attempted to exempt companies with state ownership from governance requirements. Instead, listed SOEs should be held to the same governance standard as other listed companies, as the OECD, the gatekeeper of international SOE governance standards, recommends.

That governments consider SOEs "too big to fail" may reassure some investors. It should be equally a cause for caution since the same motivations that lead governments to "protect" SOEs may result in unintended consequences. As the recent corporate governance scandals demonstrate, investors must understand the benefits as well as the risks of investing in state jewels, even if these are listed.

All posts are the opinion of the author. As such, they should not be construed as investment advice, nor do the opinions expressed necessarily reflect the views of CFA Institute or the author's employer.

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London courts attract record case numbers

JAMES BOOTH

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LONDON's commercial courts heard a record 258 cases in 2018-19, up 63 per cent on the previous year.

There was also a 54 per cent increase in the number of litigants using the courts in the year to March, with claimants coming from 78 countries, a report published yesterday by Portland Communications shows.

US individuals and companies are the heaviest overseas users of London's commercial courts, followed by litigants from Kazakhstan, with Russian and Indian litigants the joint-third highest overseas users, and litigants from Cyprus and Ukraine in fifth and sixth place.

The continuing popularity of the London courts with litigants from Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine came despite increasing scrutiny by the UK government of high-profile nationals from those countries.

The growth defied increased competition from overseas rivals and the looming prospect of Brexit.

Since 2017, five European courts have announced the launch of English-speaking commercial courts.

These join English-speaking commercial courts in Singapore, Qatar, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and China which have all opened in recent years.

Julian Acratopulo – a partner at Clifford Chance and president of the London Solicitors' Litigation Association – said: "We continue to be incredibly attractive but we need to be mindful of making sure our system remains fit for purpose going forward."

Acratopulo argued that the factors that made London a popular dispute-resolution centre would not be affected by Brexit.

"The reason why this jurisdiction has been attractive and attracted international disputes will remain the same, notwithstanding the spectre of Brexit," he said.

Brazil's Fundao dam collapsed in November 2015, killing 19 people

BHP Billiton faces a landmark $5bn claim over dam disaster

ALEX DANIEL

@alexmdaniel

MINING giant BHP Billiton is facing a record $5bn (£3.8bn) lawsuit for being "woefully negligent" before a 2015 dam collapse that led to Brazil's worst-ever environmental disaster.

The damages claim, served today in Liverpool, will be the biggest group action to be heard in Britain. BHP is the world's largest mining company by market value.

The claim is on behalf of 235,000 Brazilian people and companies, including government, utility firms and indigenous tribes, said law firm SPG Law. BHP spokesperson Neil Burrows said the miner will defend itself against the proceedings.

IN BRIEF

EX-DANSKE BOSS CHARGED OVER MONEY LAUNDERING

Danish prosecutors have charged former Danske Bank chief executive Thomas Borgen over his involvement in one of the world's biggest money-laundering scandals, newspaper Borsen reported, citing his lawyer. Borgen is the first person to be charged in a case that involves suspicious transactions of some €200bn (£171.1bn) that passed through Danske's Estonian branch between 2007 and 2015.

SIEMENS TO SPIN OFF STRUGGLING DIVISIONS

Siemens is spinning off its gas and power business, which has dragged on the German engineering firm's performance as the rise of renewable power hits demand for gas turbines. The new firm would be a "major player" in energy with revenues of €27bn (£27.1bn) and more than 80,000 employees, Siemens said yesterday, adding that it would now focus on its digital industries and smart infrastructure businesses.

TAX EVASION PROBE INTO UBS GERMAN UNIT

German prosecutors are seeking to fine Swiss bank UBS €83m (£71m) for helping clients to evade taxes, Bloomberg reported yesterday. UBS managers allegedly helped clients evade tax by making cross-border bank transfers appear to be from within Germany. UBS said it would "vigorously oppose" the claim. UBS was fined €4.5bn following a tax fraud trial in France earlier this year.

Profits grow at top UK firms as rest fall behind

HARRY ROBERTSON

@henrygrobertson

AVERAGE profits at the UK's 40 biggest companies rose 11 per cent in the first quarter of this year while those outside the group saw a fall of 18 per cent, new analysis has shown, laying bare a stark division in the fortunes of British companies.

Pre-tax profits among UK companies rose four per cent in the first quarter year-on-year, analysis released today by stockbroker the Share Centre has shown. This was the tenth quarter of growth in a row.

However, the first quarter profit figure was a much weaker performance than recent scores of double-digit growth, the Share Centre said.

The top 40 "super-league" of companies far outperformed the wider index, the Share Centre said, with companies such as HSBC, Diageo, and Glaxosmithkline pulling away from smaller firms.

Economists have long worried about the phenomenon of "frontier firms" outperforming "laggards" due to their access to superior technology and opportunities helping them pull away from smaller rivals.

Banking profits more than doubled in the first quarter as RBS swung from loss territory this time last year into profit, the analysis showed, with Lloyds, Barclays and HSBC all sharply increasing their earnings.

Indeed for the whole of 2018, banking profits reached their highest level since 2007, rising to a total of £27.7bn, according to the Share Centre.

Richard Stone, Share Centre chief executive, said: "The divergence of late between the performance of the largest 40 companies and those outside the super-league is quite stark."

He said the drop in profits for smaller firms "was exaggerated by big losses at a handful of companies, but even without the more extreme cases they still underperformed".

The LME is unusual in still operating an open outcry trading floor.

London Metal Exchange in talks over China warehouse expansion

HARRY ROBERTSON

@henrygrobertson

THE LONDON Metal Exchange (LME) is in talks with the government of Guangdong province in southern China to expand its warehousing operations into the country, its parent company said yesterday.

The plan would see the Hong Kong stock exchange (HKEX), which owns the LME, realise a major step in its plan to expand into the mainland Chinese market. It was revealed in Hong Kong by Charles Li, HKEX's chief executive.

The first warehouse in China would let the country's LME buyers to have metals delivered much closer to them, driving business.

Premiums up at Hiscox as rates increase

JAMES BOOTH

@Jamesdbooth1

INSURER Hiscox grew gross written premiums in the first three months of the year as rates improved in the London market.

The Lloyd's of London insurer said gross written premiums grew 3.3. per cent in constant currency to $1.2bn (£880m) in the first quarter.

It said rates in the London market had increased four per cent in the year to date, which it put down to two consecutive years of heavy market losses and a crackdown by Lloyd's on unprofitable syndicates.

Cargo, marine hull and US public company directors and officers' insurance rates all grew by double digits, Hiscox said.

Chief executive Bronek Masojada said: "In the London market and in reinsurance, where conditions are improving, we are growing in the right areas and maintaining our focus on writing profitable business."

The company said in the first quarter it had seen a "more normal claims experience" compared to a benign start to 2018.

Finance boss to quit post at Kier after torrid year

ALEX DANIEL

@alexmdaniel

EMBATTLED construction outsourcer Kier's shares fell 1.3 per cent yesterday after it announced its finance boss will quit later this year.

Bev Dew, who stayed in post earlier this year amid the ousting of chief executive Haydn Mursell by a rebel shareholder group, is to follow his former boss out of the company by the end of September.

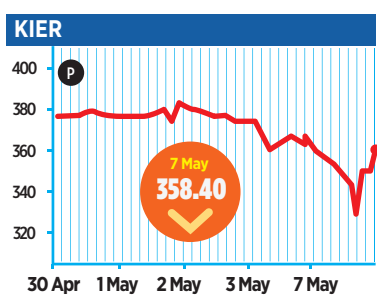
Dew will leave the firm after it delivers its full-year results for the year ending 30 June.

Chairman Philip Cox said: "Bev has been our finance director for over four years and I would like to thank him for his contribution over this time.

"Bev remains firmly committed to the company and will be working with the board to deliver the 2019 results."

Dew has overseen Kier lurching from one crisis to another in the last 12 months, after mounting debt levels caused it to become the most shorted stock on the London Stock Exchange late last year.

After just 38 per cent of shareholders took up an issuance of new stock designed to raise £264m in December, lead shareholder and veteran investor Neil Woodford spearheaded a move which saw former boss Mursell removed from his post in January as a result of the failed fundraise.



PEAK FITNESS Fundraisers break two world records for highest game of rugby

A TEAM of intrepid rugby players, including former internationals Ollie Phillips and Shane Williams raised more than £250,000 for disabled and disadvantaged children by playing on Mount Everest.

Uber drivers stage nationwide protest against public listing

ALEXANDRA ROGERS

@city_amrogers

UBER drivers will stage a national boycott of the app today in protest at the firm's highly anticipated public listing later this week.

Uber drivers in London, Birmingham, Nottingham and Glasgow will not log into the app between 7am and 4pm. They claim the initial public offering (IPO) will result in payouts to venture capitalists and executives while their own pay issues remain unresolved.

They will be joined by drivers from rival Lyft, which is facing a backlash from drivers over pay.

Uber's IPO could value the firm at around $91bn (£70bn).

IN BRIEF

SEVERN TRENT CHAIRMAN RESIGNS AMID NEW PLAN

Water firm Severn Trent said yesterday its chairman Andrew Duff is to step down after nine years at the helm. The departure comes amid the company gearing up to implement its new business plan after being awarded fast track status by Britain's water industry regulator Ofwat. Duff hopes to stay in the role until a new chairman is brought in. London listed Severn Trent's shares fell 0.3 per cent yesterday.

G4S POTENTIAL BUYER: 'WE'RE NOT INTERESTED'

Shares in security giant G4S dipped after it emerged Canadian rival Garda World had decided against a potential takeover deal over the bank holiday. G4S said it acknowledged Garda's decision, adding it had not received any requests to extend the 8 May deadline to state a firm interest in a deal. The firm's shares fell 2.8 per cent yesterday.

VECTURA CHEERS PATENT CASE WIN VERSUS GSK

British pharma group Vectura shares rose 12.5 per cent yesterday after it won a patent infringement litigation case against Glaxosmithkline (GSK) in the US. The drug maker has been awarded $89.7m (£68.8m) in damages after a jury trial in Delaware found one of its patents was infringed by three GSK products between August 2016 and December 2018. GSK, also a UK based pharma firm, willfully infringed the patent, said the jury.

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING

Ad boss Eduardo Maruri has 'zero fear' of being fired, reports **James Warrington**

LOOKING back, Eduardo Maruri is glad he didn't run for president. The Ecuadorian, now 52 years old, claims he had a good chance of being elected in his home country, but ultimately did not feel he was in a position to pull off the role. "You're only president once, so you have to make sure you do a good job," he says.

The close brush with presidential power is just one twist in a colourful career path that has carried Maruri – nicknamed El Presidente – through the contrasting worlds of advertising, politics and football, to his latest role as European boss of ad agency Grey.

Maruri's advertising career began in 1991, when he decided to set up an agency with his father Jimmy.

"We quickly gained the reputation of being the most creative agency in the market," says Maruri, who is never one to play down his achievements.

While working at the nascent firm, Maruri became president of Ecuador's Chamber of Commerce. He soon established a foothold in politics, and formed Uno (short for A New Option), a brand-new political party.

Uno's ascendency catapulted Maruri into the spotlight, and his prospects for the presidency began to gain pace until, eventually, he decided to pull the plug. Maruri insists that, despite having enough support, he would not have been able to carry out the role effectively within the country's ruling establishment.

After serving in Congress and helping to draft Ecuador's new constitution, Maruri decided to turn his hand to another passion: football.

The politician was elected president of Barcelona Sporting Club, and set out on a mission to drag Ecuador's most successful football club from its long-running title drought.

But Maruri's reign proved disastrous for the club, which suffered its worst-ever season and only narrowly avoided relegation.

In 2010, Maruri returned to his agency and, five years later, sold a majority stake to advertising giant WPP.

"I wanted to prove to my kids that I wasn't a failure, because I felt like a failure after Barcelona," he says.

As part of the deal, Maruri joined WPP-owned agency Grey as head of its Latin America division, before taking over as Europe boss in January.

In the face of growing disruption across the industry, Maruri has a dogged commitment to creativity, and wants the top roles to be held by creatives rather than suits.


GREG SIGSTON/CITY AM

Maruri took over as chief executive of Grey Europe in January

Maruri also recognises that advertising firms need to be simpler and leaner if they are to adapt to the changing demands of clients, echoing the words of new WPP boss Mark Read who has begun a transformation plan at the company to merge divisions and slash jobs.

But for Maruri, Brexit poses the biggest challenge to advertising.

"I think having different cultures, different opinions and different experiences brought into our industry will make it better," he says.

"If Brexit prevents the UK industry from having more talent from around the world, I think it will miss the bus on the evolution of creativity."

Regardless of the outcome of Brexit, however, it seems Maruri will be looking for another change of scenery before too long.

"Maybe I'm going to go back into politics," he says. "Maybe I'll do something else in the industry, maybe I'll start my own business again – I don't know." The only certainty is that he won't be returning to football.

"I think one of the good things is that I have zero fear of getting fired," he says. "After leaving all this pressure, everything is manageable; no crisis is too big."

BMW profit falls as it braces for €1.4bn EU fine

JAMES WARRINGTON
@j_a_warrington

2.32%

GERMAN car manufacturer BMW has posted a steep fall in first-quarter profit after it put aside €1.4bn (£1.2bn) for a possible EU antitrust fine.

Pre-tax profit plunged 76 per cent to €762m, while group revenue slipped a marginal 0.9 per cent to €22.5bn.

The German firm had previously warned profit would be impacted after the European Commission issued an initial verdict concluding BMW had colluded with Volkswagen and Daimler to block new emissions technology.

Despite the provision, BMW said it will contest the allegations with "all the legal means at its disposal".

The potential fine comes amid growing expenditure for the car manufacturer, which has unveiled a €12bn cost-cutting plan to counteract rising technology investment. BMW's first-quarter research and development costs totalled €1.4bn, up 8.4 per cent on the previous year.

However, the firm has continued to boost its market share, and posted a record number of vehicle deliveries for the first quarter.

BMW said its target margin range for the year will be between 4.5 per cent and 6.5 per cent, down from the six to eight per cent range originally forecast. Full-year profit before tax is also expected to be "well below" last year as a result of the fine.

Shares in BMW fell almost three per cent following the update.

"We remain firmly on course and expect business to benefit from tailwinds, especially in the second half of the year, as numerous new models become available," said chairman Harald Krueger.

"At the same time, we are experiencing the impact of high levels of expenditure in numerous areas affecting the entire automotive sector."

Domino's Pizza said its international division will not break even this year

Warning on undercooked sales overseas prompts Domino's dip

JAMES WARRINGTON
@j_a_warrington

1.30%

SHARES in Domino's Pizza dipped yesterday after the firm warned it will no longer break even in its international division.

Domino's first-quarter group sales rose 4.3 per cent to £324.4m, but overseas sales fell two per cent to £25.1m and the firm warned it expects to make a loss in its international business this year.

Domino's has opened 11 stores so far in 2019, taking its total up to 1,271, but has been hampered by an ongoing row with franchisees.

Chief executive David Wild said the international performance was "disappointing".

April retail data puts cloud over the high street

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY
@SebMcCarthy

TROUBLES mounted for many of Britain's embattled retailers last month as sales rose at a slower rate than expected.

Computers, shoes and household appliances struggled in particular to sell during the Easter period as the UK's high street firms continued to battle industry pressures, according to new British Retail Consortium and KPMG study.

While sales growth in April was comfortably above the three-month and 12-month averages, it was just 0.4 per cent when compared with the two-year average, which corrects for an Easter timing distortion, slowing down from 0.9 per cent in March.

Helen Dickinson, chief executive of the British Retail Consortium, said: "Retail sales were below expectation this month as the sunshine over the Easter weekend persuaded many to pursue recreational, rather than retail, activities. Department stores, as well as clothing and footwear shops, were harder hit by the warmer weather, while food-to-go fared much better from it."

GERMANY'S LEFTWARD LEAN

Rainer Zitelmann examines the left's impact on Merkel

AS ANGELA Merkel's junior coalition partner, the Social Democrats (SPD) have been governing Germany since 2013. Now they are lurching ever more sharply to the left.

Kevin Kuhnert, chairman of the SPD's youth organisation (the Jusos or Young Socialists), recently called for major companies, including BMW, to be brought under collective ownership. He also insisted that the private rental housing market should be abolished. Unsurprisingly, his demands have triggered a heated discussion in Germany.

"Is this GDR-light or full-on GDR?" tweeted Oliver Luksic of Germany's free-market FDP party.

"Without collectivisation, there is no conceivable way we can overcome capitalism," Kuhnert recently said.

"I'm not interested in whether the sign above BMW's doorbell says 'state-owned automobile company' or 'cooperative automobile company'. Or even whether the collective decides it doesn't need a company like BMW at all," he continued.

Kuhnert's main concern is that company profits should be distributed democratically: "That would rule out any chance of the business remaining under capitalist ownership."

He also said that the rental housing market should have only one landlord: the state.

"I don't think making a fortune from providing housing to other people is in any way a legitimate business model."

The politician continued: "The logical conclusion is that each person should own at most their own dwelling."

So why is the SPD lunging towards the far-left? Well, the SPD, which took 40.9 per cent of the vote in the 1998 general elections, has shared the fate of almost all European Social Democrats and had its share of the vote decline ever since.

At the last general election in 2017, the SPD won just 20.5 per cent of the vote. And, according to recent surveys, the Social Democrats have lost even more ground and are now hovering around the 15 to 17 per cent mark.

The SPD has been haemorrhaging votes to almost every other party. In addition to the SPD, Germany has two other left-wing parties. First there's the "Left Party" (Die Linke), East Germany's former ruling communist party, which has renamed itself twice since the collapse of communism.

Secondly, the Greens, a left-wing environmentalist party. In some German regions, these three left-wing parties have already formed coalition state governments, including in Berlin.

The Social Democrats are now open to forming a tripartite alliance with the Greens and the Left Party – not just in local-level politics, but also at a federal level. The most recent opinion polls register Germany's three left-wing parties taking a combined share of between 45 and 46 per cent of the vote.

According to German electoral law, 48 per cent would be enough to win a majority of seats in Germany's parliament and thus form a government.

Kuhnert has also been enthusiastic about Jeremy Corbyn. Just last year, he said: "There are examples from which we can draw strength. Jeremy Corbyn might not be the best role model in all fields of politics, but he has certainly succeeded in inspiring masses of young people with his social democratic values.

"In the last general election, Labour took more than 40 per cent of the vote. The collapse of social democracy is certainly not pre-ordained."

When I recently criticised Kuhnert for being an "admirer of Jeremy Corbyn", he contacted me to ask where I got this idea from. I sent him the above quote (and a second one) and asked him if he had changed his mind since then. Unfortunately, he didn't respond.

Dr Rainer Zitelmann is the author of 22 books. His two most recent books are 'The Power of Capitalism' and 'The Wealth Elite'.

City watchdog changes mortgage rules to increase consumer choice

JAMES BOOTH

@Jamesdbooth1

THE FINANCIAL Conduct Authority (FCA) yesterday announced changes to mortgage advice rules to try and increase choice for consumers.

The City watchdog identified a number of ways its advice rules were acting as a barrier to the development of new tools to help consumers choose and buy a mortgage. The new rules are aimed at removing these obstacles.

Proposed changes include making it clear that tools which allow customers to search and filter mortgages are not necessarily giving advice.

The new rules will also make clear that some forms of interaction, such as helping customers with applications, do not require advice.

If a mortgage adviser recommends a mortgage which is not the cheapest available that meets a customers needs, they will be required to explain why.

The proposals are part of a package of remedies from the FCA's mortgages market study, which was published earlier this year and aims to encourage innovation and make it easier for consumers to find a mortgage that suits them.

Christopher Woolard, executive director of strategy and competition at the FCA, said: "The mortgage market is working well for most customers but we have identified some areas where our rules are acting as a barrier to innovation."

The rule changes are intended to improve choice for mortgage customers

Government's online ID system is 'failing' users

JAMES WARRINGTON

@j_a_warrington

THE GOVERNMENT'S flagship digital identification programme is failing users and has not delivered value for money, a new report has concluded.

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has slammed the Verify programme, which it said has been hampered by a catalogue of problems and has failed to deliver the benefits originally promised.

The software, which allows users to verify their identity online, has so far been adopted by only 19 government services, under half the number expected, according to the PAC.

In addition, only 3.9m people have signed up as Verify users since it launched in 2013, well behind the target of 25m users by 2020.

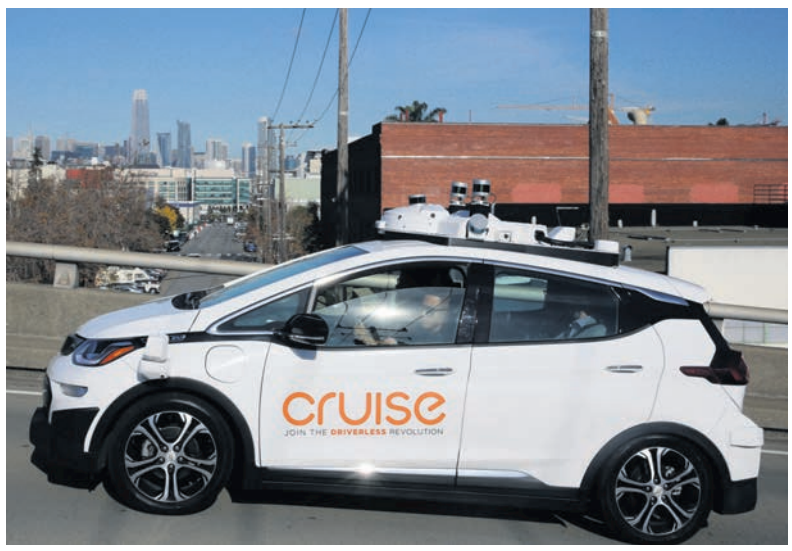
The spending watchdog said those members of the public who have signed up have been plagued by technical issues, including difficulty signing up and accessing multiple government services.

"Once again, the government has not delivered on a project that was over-ambitious from the start," said PAC chair Meg Hillier. She added: "This is a verdict the Public Accounts Committee are making all too often on large government projects."

The PAC slammed the government for overestimating the benefits Verify could achieve, accusing the Cabinet Office of failing to take responsibility for its programme's failings. It added that some of the most vulnerable users, such as those applying for Universal Credit, are among the worst affected by the programme's technical issues.

A Cabinet Office spokesperson said: "Verify has saved taxpayers more than £300m and is a world-leading example of how to enable people to use services securely online.

"The PAC report reflects that this has been a challenging project - but challenges like these are to be expected when the government is working at the forefront of new technology.



Cruise hopes to launch vehicles into commercial circulation by the end of 2019

General Motors' self-driving car unit grabs $1.2bn from investors

BERNARD ORR

GENERAL Motors' majority-owned Cruise self-driving division said on Tuesday fund manager T Rowe Price and a group of existing investors put down $1.15bn (£880m) in new equity, valuing the unit at $19bn.

Funding for Cruise comes weeks after T Rowe Price said it has sold 92 percent of its stake in rival Tesla.

The latest funding for Cruise includes existing investors General Motors, Japan's Softbank Vision Fund and Honda, and should give the firm much-needed cash as it aims to launch vehicles by the end of this year.

The additional capital comes at a crucial time as a host of car makers and technology companies weigh how quickly autonomous vehicles can be marketed and sold in large volumes, and find ways to share rising costs for hardware and software development.

Cruise's current valuation is equivalent to about 35 per cent of GM's market capitalisation despite no significant revenue. *Reuters*

Axel Springer profit falls amid long-term plan

JAMES WARRINGTON

@j_a_warrington

GERMAN media group Axel Springer posted a sharp drop in first-quarter profit yesterday, as strong trading in its online classifieds business failed to offset a decline in news media.

Net profit dropped 35 per cent to €55.4m (£47.4m) in the first quarter, while group revenues slipped marginally to €771.8m.

The decline in profit comes as the German media giant looks to focus on long-term future growth from its classifieds and media divisions.

The firm, which owns news brands including Die Welt, Bild and Business Insider, said it will strengthen its news business in a bid to increase the company's future value.

The Berlin-based company reiterated its expectations for full-year earnings, but cut its forecast for revenues due to the sale of its majority stake in holiday rental company @Leisure.

"The first-quarter results show that digital classifieds and digital journalism are delivering significant growth for Axel Springer," said chief executive Mathias Doepfner.

Carlsberg hopes to change perceptions with new brew

Stephan Shakespeare

DANISH brewer Carlsberg sparked confusion after promoting a series of tweets ridiculing the taste of their own beer, likening it to bath water.

Yet this wasn't some serious error from Carlsberg's social media team, but the start of a carefully-brewed marketing campaign, one amended with a tweaked version of their famous slogan: "Probably not the best beer in the world."

The brewer announced that it would be creating a new beer from scratch, with a hope to challenge drinkers to re-trial Carlsberg by acknowledging the 'truth' about the previous quality of Carlsberg.

Since the launch of the campaign in April, Carlsberg's Buzz score (a net measure of whether consumers have heard anything positive or negative about the brand in the last fortnight) has responded quickly.

Buzz and media coverage generated by the promotion of the tweets led to scores increasing from -0.3 to +2 in the first week of April.

However, these scores then declined to -0.7, perhaps as a result of the confusion this caused for some Twitter users who believed the tweets to be an error.

Once Carlsberg clarified the strategy as deliberate by releasing videos of Carlsberg staff reading aloud 'mean tweets', scores rose to +1.8 and then even further to +2.5 with the final announcement of the new brew.

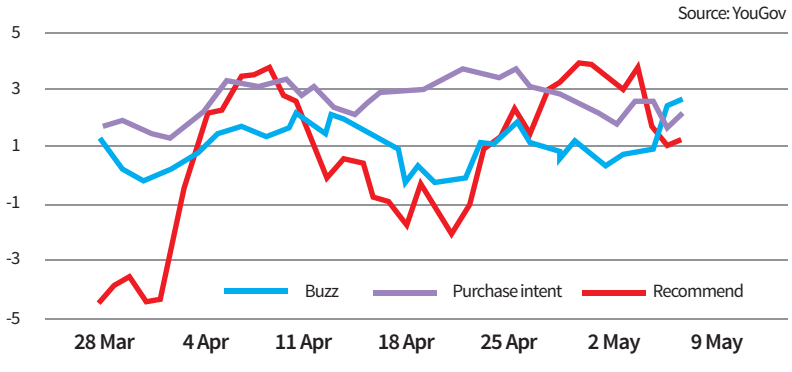
The +2.4 point increase in Purchase Intent scores (which brand is someone's first choice to purchase from) and +8 point increase in Recommendation scores (whether someone would recommend a brand to a friend or not) suggests that Carlsberg's campaign has been largely effective in getting drinkers to re-consider the brew.

The amount that Carlsberg invested in their brand with this campaign is substantial, and promoting negative views of your product is undoubtedly a risky move.

However, the improvements seen by our brand health tracking data suggests that the risk was successful. Carlsberg just have to maintain the improvements after the campaign ends, and make sure that this new beer goes down well.

Stephan Shakespeare is the chief executive of YouGov.

CARLSBERG'S CAREFULLY BREWED CAMPAIGN HELPS REBRANDING



Vodafone signs German deal to bolster takeover

JAMES WARRINGTON

@j_a_warrington

VODAFONE will grant Telefonica Deutschland access to its broadband network in a bid to stave off competition concerns over its $22bn (£16.8bn) takeover of Liberty Global assets.

The telecoms firm said yesterday rival Telefonica will be able to market broadband services to its customers using the combined cable network of Vodafone and Liberty's Utilitymedia if the merger is approved.

The move is part of Vodafone's efforts to increase competition in the German market after the European Commission raised competition concerns about the firm's acquisition of Liberty's businesses in Germany, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania.

"The cable agreement will enable us to connect millions of additional households in Germany with high-speed internet in the future," said Markus Haas, chief executive of Telefonica Deutschland.

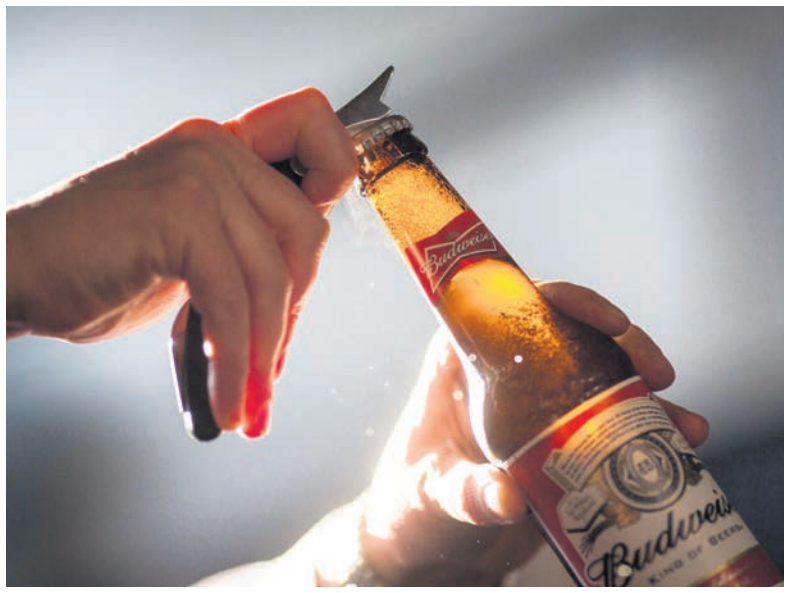
"By adding fast cable connections, we now have access to an extensive infrastructure portfolio and can offer to even more O2 customers attractive broadband products for better value for money."

The deal, which has been signed on a long-term basis, will give Telefonica access to a network that covers almost 24m households in Germany.

EU competition regulators last year launched an investigation into the mega-merger, which is Vodafone's largest deal since its £112bn takeover of Mannesmann.

Rival operator Deutsche Telekom has complained the acquisition would damage competition in the sparsely-populated German market, while antitrust concerns have also been raised in the Czech Republic.

The EU is expected to carry out market testing of the deal and issue a final decision by July.



The brewer, which also owns Stella Artois and Corona, said it is attractive to bidders

Budweiser owner 'exploring' Hong Kong listing of Asian arm

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

BUDWEISER owner Anheuser-Busch Inbev (AB Inbev) is exploring a public listing of its Asian business in Hong Kong, the drinks giant confirmed yesterday as it reported its results for the first quarter of the year.

The company said it was weighing a minority listing of its Asia Pacific arm to create a "champion in the consumer goods space". The firm said its brand portfolio and position in the beer industry makes it an attractive platform for the region.

Reports earlier this year suggested that the listing could raise more than $5bn (£3.8bn), with the Asian arm worth $70bn. Sources told Reuters a flotation of between $2bn and $3bn was more realistic.

Savers could be losing up to £100m a year

JAMES BOOTH

@Jamesdbooth1

UK ADULTS could be losing out on a combined £100m a year by not investing their savings, according to research published yesterday.

A survey of over 2,000 adults by money app Yolt found one in four leave their savings in their current account and 14 per cent do nothing with their savings at all.

On a nationwide scale, that could mean almost 7.4m UK residents are overlooking their savings.

According to Yolt and economics consultancy CEBR, if the estimated 7.4m adults who do not invest their savings placed £83 per month (£1000 per year) in a fixed rate ISA at 1.43 per cent, then their potential combined earnings could exceed £100m a year.

The research showed a lack of monetary confidence among UK adults with fewer than half of respondents feeling comfortable about making investments.

Cristel Lee Leed, chief marketing officer at Yolt, said: "Saving is the first step in developing healthy money habits and if more people have the confidence to do so, they can then experiment with diversifying their savings."

CITY DASHBOARD YOUR ONE-STOP SHOP FOR BROKER VIEWS AND MARKET REPORTS

LONDON REPORT

Trade concerns trigger selloff on FTSE index

THE MAIN stock index tumbled to a near six-week low yesterday as investors returned from a long weekend to a threat of more US tariffs on China that triggered a selloff led by oil majors and banks.

The FTSE 100 slumped 1.6 per cent, while midcaps were 1.2 per cent lower.

HSBC and **Prudential** fell as US President Donald Trump's threat to impose additional tariffs on Chinese goods hit Asia-exposed financial stocks.

Oil majors **Shell** and **BP** suffered their worst day since early December as the trade nerves fanned concerns about global growth and demand.

Industrial groups **Melrose** and **Ashtead** lost 5.8 per cent and 3.5 per cent respectively.

All but one blue-chip sector ended in the red as investors steered away from riskier assets and moved to defensive stocks, viewed as better bets in times of economic uncertainty.

That benefited utilities **SSE** and **Centrica**, and pharmaceutical groups **Hikma** and **Astrazeneca** were also higher.

A further blow to equities was the European Commission cutting its growth forecast for the Eurozone.

The more domestically-focused midcaps were also weighed down by a weaker pound, which dipped on rising concerns about the progress of Brexit negotiations and worries Prime Minister Theresa May is facing a challenge to her leadership.

Security group **G4S** gave up nearly three per cent after Garda World said on Sunday it would not make an offer for the company, while **Essentra** skidded 4.8 per cent after a rating downgrade by Stifel.

Oil major Shell suffered its worst day since early December

Domino's Pizza dipped 1.5 per cent as the company said it no longer expected its international business to break even this year. It earlier fell as much as 12 per cent.

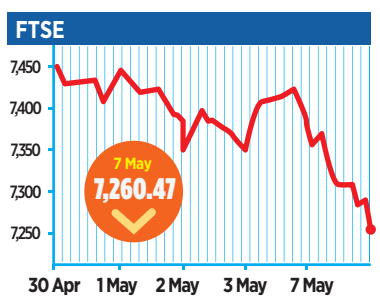
AIM-listed **Purplebricks** tanked 11.9 per cent after the online estate agent said its founder and chief executive, Michael Bruce, would quit immediately as the company winds down its Australian operations and reviews its US business.

TOP RISERS

1. **Hikma** Up 1.02 per cent
2. **SSE** Up 0.96 per cent
3. **Smith & Nephew** Up 0.83 per cent

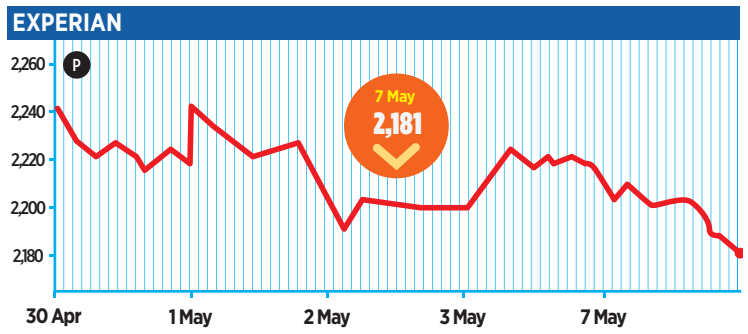
TOP FALLERS

1. **Melrose** Down 5.84 per cent
2. **Mondi** Down 3.89 per cent
3. **RDS** Down 3.88 per cent

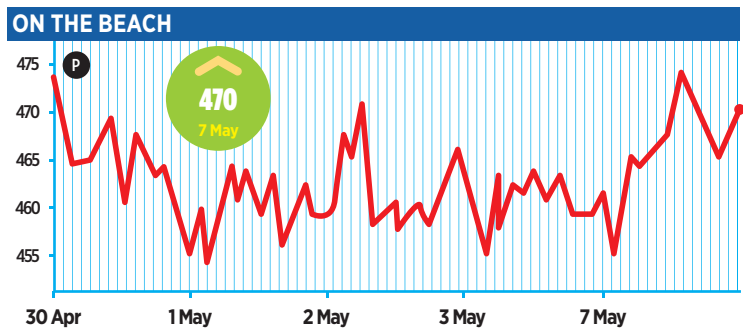


BEST OF THE BROKERS

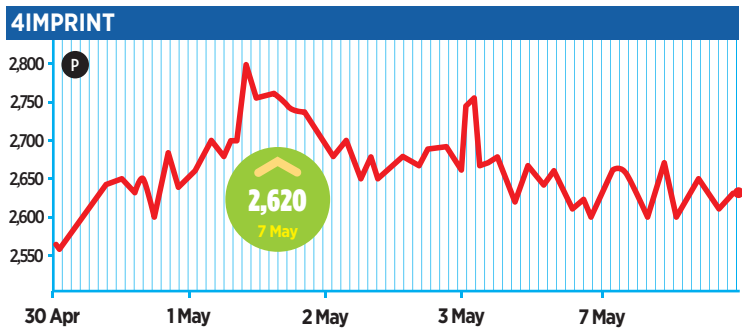
To appear in Best of the Brokers, email your research to notes@cityam.com



FTSE 100 consumer credit reporting giant Experian deserves credit of its own for what analysts at Shore Capital describe as a "compelling story" for shareholders. It is not a surprise that the broker has therefore retained its "buy" rating at 2,216p for the firm, saying that its ability to give investors exposure to core data metrics and engineering across the financial world will lead to sustained growth. Having remained a strong performer through the year so far, Experian will now be looking to charm investors with its full-year results in a fortnight.



The forecast is looking sunny for On The Beach, the UK-based travel retailer that specialises in short and medium haul holidays to Europe. While trading has been tougher in recent months, the group has enjoyed a good start to the year, reporting strong revenue after marketing growth during the four months to January. Analysts at Peel Hunt remain bullish, believing that "there is still further upside to come" despite the group's share price already bouncing by over 100p since its January low point. The broker has reiterated its "buy" rating and a target price of 550p.



While 4Imprint Group is known as a direct marketer of promotional merchandise, its own image has come into the spotlight recently as first-quarter sales growth beat expectations. According to analysts the group's brand awareness project has kept investors smiling after delivering organic sales growth, while market conditions remain buoyant. Continued progress has resulted in Liberum raising its target price from 2,300p to 2,500p, while share price movements mean it has switched its rating from "buy" to "hold".

NEW YORK REPORT

Wall St slides as US-China tariff fears rise

US stocks slid yesterday as escalating trade tensions between the United States and China triggered global growth fears and drove investors away from riskier assets.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average posted its second-biggest daily percentage drop of the year, while the S&P 500 and Nasdaq registered their third-biggest percentage drops, even as the major indexes pared losses to end off their session lows.

US trade representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin said late on Monday that China had backtracked from commitments made during trade negotiations.

Investors expressed concern that additional tariffs, if imposed, could interrupt supply chains and hamper economic growth.

Trade-sensitive industrial and technology stocks marked the biggest percentage declines among the S&P 500's major sectors. All 11 sectors were in the red, with only utilities and energy falling less than one per cent.

Shares of **Boeing**, the largest US exporter to China, slipped 3.9 per cent, and shares of **Caterpillar**, another industrial stalwart sensitive to China, declined 2.3 per cent. Among technology stocks, **Microsoft** shares slid 2.1 per cent, while **Apple** shares dropped 2.7 per cent. Apple and Microsoft were the top two drags on the S&P 500.

In a bright spot, **American International Group** shares jumped 6.8 per cent after the insurer reported a quarterly profit that blew past expectations.

With earnings season now in its homestretch, first-quarter profits are now expected to rise 1.2 per cent, a sharp improvement from the 2.3 per cent decline expected at the start of the earnings season.

Conversely, **Mylan** shares tumbled 23.8 per cent, the most among S&P 500 companies, after the drugmaker reported lower-than-expected quarterly revenue and failed to provide greater clarity on a potential revamp of the company's strategy.

CITY MOVES WHO'S SWITCHING JOBS

HERE EAST

Here East has appointed Louise Conolly-Smith as head of special projects (creative) with a focus on video games and e-sports for the tech and innovation campus. The move comes as Here East becomes home to a growing video games and e-sports cluster, and is set to become the first hub dedicated to video games and e-sports in the UK, with the likes of leading video games and e-sports businesses Sports Interactive, Bidstack and BT Sports already situated at the campus. Louise will be on secondment at Here East from London & Partners, where she is currently head of creative, promoting London internationally as a leading world city in which to invest, work and visit. She will continue her creative sector work for London & Partners during this secondment. Louise will be joining Here East with a focus on video games and e-sports to support the growth of the hub, ensuring the relationship between Here East and the booming video games and e-sports sector continues to grow.

FARADAY GRID

Faraday Grid, the energy technology company, has appointed Kris Beyens as its chief operating officer (COO), and Jan Juhasz as vice president engineering, UK, as the company pushes ahead with global expansion. Kris will oversee Faraday's global engineering, supply chain and operations. Previously Kris was at Ebay for eight years in several senior roles, most recently as vice president & COO for Ebay International. Before Ebay, Kris worked for GE Healthcare. Kris has extensive global finance and operational experience and is ideally positioned to help Faraday Grid scale. Jan will be responsible for expanding the current engineering team and working across Faraday's global innovation centres. Jan has spent his professional career managing complex utility and industry projects, and prior to joining Faraday Grid he was a Group Engineering Manager in Schneider Electric managing and covering European projects.

MAJEDIE ASSET MANAGEMENT

Majedie Asset Management has announced Cindy Rose is joining the firm in a newly created role as head of responsible capitalism. Cindy joins from Aberdeen Standard Investments, where she was head of ESG, clients and products; she was previously co-head of ESG & stewardship at Aberdeen Asset Management. Cindy will lead and further develop Majedie's commitment to responsible capitalism. Since Majedie launched its first funds in 2003, the firm has embraced active ownership of its client investments, voting on proposals at all investee company meetings and engaging with management teams on behalf of all stakeholders. Majedie adopted 'Responsible Capitalism' formally as its ESG ethos in 2012.

To appear in CITYMOVES please email your career updates and pictures to citymoves@cityam.com

FTSE 100	FTSE 250	FTSE ALL SHARE	DOW JONES	NASDAQ	S&P 500
7260.47	19465.69	3985.21	25965.09	7963.76	2884.05
↓ 120.17	↓ 239.48	↓ 61.65	↓ 473.39	↓ 159.53	↓ 48.42

£					
/€	1.1681	↓ 0.0016	€/$	1.1192	↓ 0.0002
/$	1.3074	↓ 0.0019	€/£	0.8559	↑ 0.0012
/¥	144.21	↓ 0.7092	€/¥	123.46	↓ 0.4391

GILTS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Tsy 3.750 19	100.99	-0.03	104.1	101.0
Tsy 2.000 20	101.49	-0.04	103.0	101.5
Tsy 4.750 20	103.30	-0.06	107.4	103.0
Tsy 3.750 20	103.97	-0.06	107.1	103.9
Tsy 2.500 20	356.33	-0.04	362.3	356.1
Tsy 8.000 21	115.06	-0.11	122.0	114.7
Tsy 4.000 22	109.12	-0.08	112.2	109.0
Tsy 0.500 22	99.13	-0.07	99.6	97.5
Tsy 1.875 22	116.02	-0.25	119.2	115.5
Tsy 2.250 23	105.99	-0.11	106.8	104.7
Tsy 2.500 24	362.33	-0.31	369.1	357.5
Tsy 0.125 24	112.29	-0.31	114.1	110.9
Tsy 5.000 25	123.17	-0.16	125.9	122.1
Tsy 4.250 27	126.29	-0.19	128.3	122.6
Tsy 1.250 27	132.54	-0.52	135.6	128.4
Tsy 6.000 28	144.18	-0.22	146.6	140.5
Tsy 0.125 29	124.42	-0.60	127.6	118.7
Tsy 4.750 30	137.63	-0.23	140.2	132.1
Tsy 4.125 30	370.41	-0.56	379.4	354.8
Tsy 4.250 32	134.57	-0.20	137.4	128.5
Tsy 1.250 32	151.83	-0.69	156.9	144.1
Tsy 0.125 36	143.43	-0.80	149.8	133.4
Tsy 4.250 36	140.43	-0.22	144.0	133.1
Tsy 4.750 38	153.29	-0.26	157.8	144.9
Tsy 0.625 40	164.57	-0.95	172.7	152.8
Tsy 4.500 42	155.57	-0.29	161.0	145.9
Tsy 3.500 45	137.79	-0.31	143.0	128.0
Tsy 4.250 46	156.40	-0.39	162.7	145.7
Tsy 4.025 49	161.98	-0.39	169.0	150.0
Tsy 0.500 50	193.56	-1.37	207.7	173.7
Tsy 0.250 52	189.84	-1.49	204.9	168.8

AEROSPACE & DEFENCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BAE Systems	471.9	-9.6	676.4	445.5
Cobham	115.1	-0.6	131.7	96.8
Meggitt	545.4	-3.6	572.0	458.0
QinetiQ Group	303.6	-3.4	311.4	228.6
Rolls-Royce Holdi	912.6	-21.6	1094.0	759.2
Senior	227.0	-4.0	334.4	185.4
Ultra Electronics	1643.0	-13.0	1743.0	1232.0

BANKS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Bank of Georgia G	1698.0	-6.0	3444.0	1310.0
Barclays	159.4	-4.3	214.5	146.1
Close Brothers Gr	1534.0	-25.0	1660.0	1406.0
CYBG	195.7	-9.7	364.2	173.9
HSBC Holdings	662.2	-18.4	745.7	600.8
Lloyds Banking Gr	61.8	-0.8	67.1	50.0
Metro Bank	633.0	-5.5	3436.0	617.5
Royal Bank of Sco	235.0	-2.7	296.0	203.0
Standard Chartere	692.6	-17.8	770.3	519.8
TBC Bank Group	1622.0	4.0	1788.0	1290.0

BEVERAGES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Barr (A.G.)	818.0	-6.0	852.0	665.0
Britvic	904.0	1.0	956.0	740.5
Coca-Cola HBC AG	2732.0	-31.0	2801.0	2244.0
Diageo	3212.0	4.5	3234.5	2523.5

CHEMICALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Croda Internation	5035.0	-45.0	5447.7	4576.0
Elementis	152.1	-5.4	279.1	150.9
Johnson Matthey	3222.0	-120.0	3823.0	2620.0
Sirius Minerals	15.2	-0.6	38.5	15.0
Synthomer	405.0	-9.4	575.5	347.4
Victrex plc	2300.0	-150.0	3408.0	2156.0

CONSTRUCTION & MATERIALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Balfour Beatty	248.0	-3.6	311.1	230.6
CRH	2520.0	-83.0	2857.0	1971.5
Galliford Try	550.0	-6.0	1104.0	512.0
Ibstock	256.0	-3.4	302.0	193.1
Kier Group	358.4	-4.6	1073.1	326.6
Marshalls	652.0	-1.0	658.5	399.8
Polypipe Group	434.6	-3.4	440.8	307.8

ELECTRICITY

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Contour Global	205.5	2.0	256.0	150.1
Drax Group	329.2	2.4	427.2	312.6
SSE	1156.0	11.0	1440.5	1032.5

ELECTRONIC & ELECTRICAL EQ.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Halma	1796.5	-6.5	1824.0	1237.0
Morgan Advanced M	259.2	-5.2	363.0	237.0
Renishaw	4314.0	-122.0	5685.0	3670.0
Spectris	2694.0	-75.0	2908.0	1966.5

EQUITY INVESTMENT INSTRUM.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aberforth Smaller	1270.0	-2.0	1442.0	1120.0
Alliance Trust	769.0	-7.0	789.0	672.0
Apax Global Alpha	147.0	-3.0	153.0	127.0
Baillie Gifford J	777.0	-8.0	869.0	663.0
Bankers Inv Trust	885.0	-17.0	914.0	766.0
BBGI SICAV S.A. (	159.5	0.0	168.0	130.5
BlackRock Smaller	1458.0	-4.0	1600.0	1160.0
BMO Global Smalle	1324.0	-10.0	1495.0	1220.0
British Empire Tr	726.0	-9.0	767.0	660.0
Caledonia Investm	3025.0	-25.0	3060.0	2650.0
City of London In	413.0	-5.0	442.5	376.0
Edinburgh Inv Tru	619.0	-13.0	712.0	588.0
F&C Investment Tr	683.0	-11.0	741.0	616.0
Fidelity China Sp	233.5	-9.0	268.0	182.4
Fidelity European	228.0	-3.0	239.0	202.0
Fidelity Special	260.0	-4.0	280.0	220.0
Finsbury Growth &	871.0	-3.0	881.0	740.0
GCP Infrastructur	129.0	0.6	130.8	118.6
Genesis Emerging	725.0	-13.0	739.0	615.0
Greencoat UK Wind	138.2	0.6	143.2	118.4
HarbourVest Globa	1516.0	8.0	1520.0	1220.0
Herald Investment	1334.0	-18.0	1370.0	1055.0
HGCapital Trust	2140.0	-5.0	2170.0	1750.0
HICL Infrastructu	165.0	-1.0	170.1	140.0
International Pub	160.8	-0.8	163.0	141.4
JPMorgan American	445.5	-4.0	472.0	386.5
JPMorgan Emerging	952.0	-20.0	972.0	759.0
JPMorgan Indian I	710.0	-16.0	734.0	566.0
JPMorgan Japanese	419.0	-5.0	472.0	367.0
Jupiter European	770.0	-6.0	895.0	666.0
Law Debenture Cor	598.0	-6.0	636.0	534.0
Mercantile Invest	206.7	-3.1	226.0	168.0
Monks Inv Trust	872.0	-6.0	891.0	710.0
Murray Internatio	1150.0	-12.0	1208.0	1056.0
NB Global Floatin	90.2	0.1	94.5	87.6
NextEnergy Solar	118.0	0.5	124.5	107.5
Pantheon Internat	2140.0	-20.0	2200.0	1955.0
Perpetual Income	327.0	-8.0	375.0	301.5
Pershing Square H	1322.0	-12.0	1398.0	958.0
Personal Assets T	40600.0	0.0	40800.0	38900.0
Polar Capital Tec	1328.0	-24.0	1386.0	1066.0
RIT Capital Partn	2060.0	-25.0	2130.0	1892.0
Riverstone Energy	973.0	-2.0	1298.0	934.0
Schroder Asia Pac	457.5	-6.0	481.0	379.0
Scottish Inv Trus	781.0	-14.0	902.0	748.0
Scottish Mortgage	518.0	-12.5	568.3	441.4
Sequoia Economic	111.6	0.0	114.2	106.0
Smithson Investme	1194.0	0.0	1222.0	1000.2
Syncona Limited N	241.0	-1.0	302.5	207.5
Temple Bar Inv Tr	1316.0	-14.0	1366.0	1116.0
Templeton Emergin	761.0	-20.0	792.0	649.0
The Renewables In	124.6	0.6	125.0	104.3
TR Property Inv T	397.5	-1.0	433.5	353.5
Vietnam Enterpris	438.0	-3.0	473.0	390.0
VinaCapital Vietn	329.0	-1.5	350.0	306.0
Witan Inv Trust	1058.0	-12.0	1138.0	948.0
Woodford Patient	80.0	-1.7	91.0	73.3
Worldwide Healthc	2555.0	-30.0	2915.0	2325.0

FINANCIAL SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
3i Group	1057.5	-8.5	1088.5	756.2
3i Infrastructure	274.0	-4.5	288.5	219.8
AJ Bell	448.0	0.0	469.0	220.0
Allied Minds	63.0	-3.8	125.0	37.3
Amigo Holdings	227.5	-9.5	310.0	154.5
Arrow Global Grou	193.8	-2.4	370.5	167.2
ASA International	410.0	-20.0	510.0	336.0
Ashmore Group	450.0	-7.0	488.0	337.0
Brewin Dolphin Ho	322.0	-2.6	388.0	295.4
Charter Court Fin	352.5	-7.0	375.0	228.8
City of London In	421.5	16.0	440.0	360.0
CMC Markets	78.0	-1.0	206.0	76.9
Coats Group	84.5	-0.8	91.3	69.8
Georgia Capital	1004.0	0.0	1260.0	975.0
Hargreaves Lansdo	2272.0	-20.0	2320.0	1633.0
IG Group Holdings	511.8	5.4	954.5	499.1
IntegraFin Holdin	391.4	-1.3	401.0	269.0
Intermediate Capi	1157.0	-7.0	1203.0	899.0
International Per	171.8	-3.0	248.8	170.0
Investec	481.0	-10.7	594.8	423.4
IP Group	93.0	-2.5	142.8	87.8
John Laing Group	375.8	-7.0	402.0	264.2
JTC	395.0	11.0	410.0	287.0
Jupiter Fund Mana	360.5	-4.7	488.0	287.6
Liontrust Asset M	668.0	8.0	688.0	532.0
LMS Capital	50.4	0.0	53.5	44.0
London Finance &	40.5	0.0	45.5	39.5
London Stock Exch	5112.0	-4.0	5190.0	3867.0
Man Group	154.0	-3.7	196.3	126.8
OneSavings Bank	426.0	-8.2	449.6	330.0
Paragon Banking G	460.2	-0.6	552.5	379.2
Plus500 Ltd (DI)	537.8	7.4	2040.0	495.0
Provident Financi	507.0	-10.8	695.6	488.4
Quilter	145.6	-2.4	156.6	110.6
Rathbone Brothers	2465.0	-75.0	2652.0	2198.0
Real Estate Credi	175.0	0.5	175.5	162.0
Record	31.0	0.5	47.0	27.3
River and Mercant	255.5	0.5	330.0	212.0
S&U	2180.0	10.0	2790.0	1767.5
Sanne Group	650.0	2.0	724.0	450.0
Schroders	3104.0	-58.0	3488.0	2334.0
Standard Life Abe	273.3	-5.5	423.9	224.9
TP ICAP	273.6	-3.8	480.9	259.7
VPC Specialty Len	71.9	-0.5	84.4	71.4
Walker Crips Grou	26.0	0.0	39.0	24.0
XPS Pensions Grou	161.0	1.0	192.0	132.0

FIXED LINE TELECOMS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BT Group	224.9	-1.6	264.7	203.0
TalkTalk Telecom	124.3	2.4	137.0	96.6
Telecom Plus	1476.0	50.0	1524.0	1010.0

FOOD & DRUG RETAILERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Greggs	1810.0	13.0	1861.0	942.0
Morrison (Wm) Sup	214.9	-0.7	269.4	211.8
Ocado Group	1368.0	-12.5	1435.0	545.2
Sainsbury (J)	213.9	-6.4	341.5	213.2
SSP Group	688.0	-11.0	744.4	615.1
Tesco	247.0	-0.4	266.2	189.6
UDG Healthcare Pu	671.0	-10.5	940.0	551.0

FOOD PRODUCERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Associated Britis	2533.0	-18.0	2836.0	2041.0
Bakkavor Group	122.8	-1.0	206.0	113.0
Cranswick	2772.0	-54.0	3460.0	2472.0
Greencore Group	228.9	5.2	230.0	155.3
Hilton Food Group	1006.0	0.0	1016.0	884.0
Tate & Lyle	762.4	-5.2	774.4	590.2
Unilever	4593.0	-10.0	4657.5	3931.0

FORESTRY & PAPER

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Mondi	1641.5	-66.5	2236.0	1584.0

GAS, WATER & MULTIUTILITIES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Centrica	106.1	0.7	163.7	103.8
National Grid	834.5	5.4	889.2	748.7
Pennon Group	738.0	-2.2	812.4	684.2
Severn Trent	1998.5	-5.5	2091.0	1770.0
United Utilities	810.0	-6.0	873.6	682.4

GENERAL INDUSTRIALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
RPC Group	790.4	0.4	834.8	632.2
Smith (DS)	348.0	-14.0	538.9	292.2
Smiths Group	1500.0	-38.5	1801.0	1279.5
Smurfit Kappa Gro	2290.0	-38.0	3292.0	1934.0
Vesuvius	573.5	-27.0	662.0	473.2

GENERAL RETAILERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Auto Trader Group	574.2	-1.8	584.6	351.2
B&M European Valu	386.5	-4.1	426.3	278.6
Card Factory	195.6	-3.6	228.8	162.6
Dixons Carphone	132.8	-1.9	234.7	116.2
Dunelm Group	843.5	-6.0	912.5	482.8
Inchcape	608.5	-4.5	799.0	486.6
JD Sports Fashion	635.6	4.0	648.9	318.5
Just Eat	685.0	-14.4	883.4	533.8
Kingfisher	252.4	-7.8	318.1	205.4
Marks & Spencer G	277.0	-2.0	314.5	242.4
Next	5710.0	10.0	6202.0	3991.0
Pets at Home Grou	157.0	1.5	163.2	110.0
Saga	59.0	0.8	138.7	55.9
Sports Direct Int	292.0	-4.8	436.1	233.2
Ted Baker	1519.0	-29.0	2764.0	1420.0
Vivo Energy	127.2	-0.6	187.0	96.0
WH Smith	2012.0	-24.0	2186.0	1697.0

MAIN CHANGES UK 350

Risers ↑		%
Telecom Plus	1476.0	3.5
Greencore Group	228.9	2.3
TalkTalk Telecom G	124.3	2.0
Plus500 Ltd (DI)	537.8	1.4
Saga	59.0	1.3
Polymetal Internat	805.0	1.2
Great Portland Est	763.8	1.1
IG Group Holdings	511.8	1.1
Hikma Pharmaceutic	1777.5	1.0
Greene King	614.8	1.0

Fallers ↓		%
Victrex plc	2300.0	-6.1
Melrose Industries	188.8	-5.8
Playtech	404.4	-5.7
Cairn Energy	154.8	-5.4
Indivior	38.9	-5.2
Premier Oil	88.7	-5.2
Wood Group (John)	438.0	-5.1
Essentra	397.4	-4.9
CYBG	195.7	-4.7
Entertainment One	459.0	-4.6

HEALTH CARE EQUIPMETN & S.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Assura	59.8	0.3	60.2	52.4
Convatec Group	140.0	-3.5	239.0	118.6
Mediclinic Intern	336.0	-8.8	706.4	301.3
NMC Health	2727.0	-72.0	4120.0	2192.0
Smith & Nephew	1582.0	13.0	1598.0	1258.0

HHOLD GDS & HOME CONSTR.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Barratt Developme	583.8	-10.0	625.8	434.0
Bellway	3035.0	-23.0	3433.0	2419.0
Berkeley Group Ho	3704.0	-26.0	4321.0	3226.0
Bovis Homes Group	1084.0	-3.0	1301.5	828.0
Countryside Prope	322.6	-6.4	384.0	270.0
Crest Nicholson H	378.2	-4.2	493.8	296.4
McCarthy & Stone	129.8	-1.6	142.4	97.5
Persimmon	2154.0	-34.0	2880.0	1859.5
Reckitt Benckiser	5999.0	-65.0	7155.0	5593.0
Redrow	587.0	-4.0	647.0	460.8
Taylor Wimpey	180.4	-0.9	205.0	129.3

INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Bodycote	813.0	-30.0	1055.0	676.0
Hill & Smith Hold	1282.0	-13.0	1523.0	902.5
IMI	1012.5	-31.5	1242.0	870.0
Melrose Industrie	188.8	-11.7	247.0	146.3
RHI Magnesita N.V	4820.0	-140.0	5350.0	3318.0
Rotork	301.9	-5.5	361.4	235.7
Spirax-Sarco Engi	8100.0	-95.0	8335.0	5830.0
Weir Group	1614.0	-35.5	2325.0	1240.0

INDUSTRIAL METALS & MINING

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Evraz	604.4	-3.0	669.0	442.1
Ferrexpo	214.3	-6.2	301.3	143.5

INDUSTRIAL TRANSPORTATION

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BBA Aviation	271.0	-1.8	350.0	207.0
Clarkson	2405.0	-60.0	2900.0	1878.0
Fisher (James) &	1966.0	-10.0	2260.0	1600.0
Royal Mail	242.1	-7.2	631.0	234.1
Stobart Group Ltd	148.6	-0.8	266.5	142.8

NON LIFE INSURANCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Admiral Group	2140.0	-39.0	2281.0	1870.0
Beazley	563.5	0.0	619.5	492.6
Direct Line Insur	317.4	-3.1	376.2	304.9
Hastings Group Ho	179.6	-8.3	274.2	174.0
Hiscox Limited (D	1620.0	-8.0	1711.0	1418.0
Lancashire Holdin	649.0	1.0	695.0	530.0
RSA Insurance Gro	530.6	-19.2	681.8	496.6
Sabre Insurance G	268.5	0.5	294.0	241.0

LIFE INSURANCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aviva	417.4	-8.8	552.0	364.6
Just Group	67.3	-0.9	150.6	58.3
Legal & General G	272.0	-4.6	291.2	223.7
Phoenix Group Hol	687.2	-16.2	724.8	544.0
Prudential	1675.0	-63.5	1954.5	1340.0
St James's Place	1118.5	-7.5	1240.5	914.0

MEDIA

	Price	Chg	High	Low
4imprint Group	2620.0	40.0	2730.0	1715.0
Ascential	351.8	0.8	465.0	337.2
Bloomsbury Publis	238.0	1.0	254.0	177.5
Centaur Media	53.8	2.0	55.8	34.7
Entertainment One	459.0	-22.0	484.6	278.8
Euromoney Institu	1272.0	0.0	1450.0	1132.0
Gocompare.com Gro	85.2	-0.8	139.0	64.6
Haynes Publishing	199.0	0.0	246.0	160.0
Huntsworth	92.8	0.8	139.0	81.0
Informa	760.0	-17.8	859.0	605.8
ITE Group	77.0	1.4	94.8	56.3
ITV	131.6	-3.1	180.4	122.9
Moneysupermarket	354.6	0.6	372.1	264.0
Pearson	807.2	-3.4	1027.5	777.6
Reach	81.7	-0.3	88.0	54.6
Relx plc	1716.0	-10.0	1769.5	1491.5
Rightmove	546.7	0.7	555.9	420.9
STV Group	371.0	0.0	458.0	318.0
Tarsus Group	318.0	1.0	320.0	243.0
WPP	965.0	-13.0	1360.5	800.4

MINING

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Acacia Mining	142.1	-3.6	256.6	96.1
Anglo American	1943.6	-37.2	2226.0	1464.6
Antofagasta	853.2	-25.6	1149.0	727.2
BHP Group	1764.8	-13.6	1944.2	1490.6
Centamin (DI)	90.0	-1.9	164.6	79.8
Fresnillo	736.6	-11.6	1340.0	732.6
Glencore	289.5	-8.9	400.4	269.1
Hochschild Mining	173.1	-3.5	222.7	149.1
Kaz Minerals	598.4	-25.0	1076.0	436.7
Polymetal Interna	805.0	9.6	894.0	597.2
Rio Tinto	4410.0	2.5	4771.5	3486.0

MOBILE TELECOMS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Inmarsat	531.8	-3.2	632.2	356.6
Vodafone Group	140.0	-0.1	210.5	131.4

OIL & GAS PRODUCERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BP	533.2	-14.9	598.3	485.9
Cairn Energy	154.8	-8.9	267.6	140.0
Energean Oil & Ga	802.0	-8.0	846.0	480.0
Premier Oil	88.7	-4.8	143.6	55.6
Royal Dutch Shell	2375.0	-79.5	2811.4	2213.0
Royal Dutch Shell	2376.5	-96.0	2841.0	2227.0
Tullow Oil	209.8	-6.3	276.0	165.2

OIL EQUIPMENT & SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Hunting	536.5	-20.5	914.0	453.6
Petrofac Ltd.	420.5	-13.1	663.4	381.5
Wood Group (John)	438.0	-23.7	796.4	437.5

PERSONAL GOODS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Burberry Group	1925.0	-75.0	2325.0	1623.5
PZ Cussons	200.0	-1.0	252.8	178.6

PHARMACEUTICALS & BIOTECH

	Price	Chg	High	Low
AstraZeneca	5763.0	22.0	6525.0	5182.0
BTG	834.0	-2.0	853.0	475.0
Dechra Pharmaceut	2724.0	-6.0	3168.0	2014.0
Genus	2474.0	-6.0	2992.0	2098.0
GlaxoSmithKline	1517.8	-34.4	1621.6	1418.0
Hikma Pharmaceuti	1777.5	18.0	2025.0	1298.0
Indivior	38.9	-2.1	496.2	30.1

REAL ESTATE INVEST. & SERV.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Capital & Countie	238.6	-2.3	308.9	226.3
CLS Holdings	234.0	-8.0	255.0	195.4
Daejan Holdings	5720.0	20.0	6400.0	5600.0
F&C Commercial Pr	123.4	-0.8	155.0	117.0
Grainger	252.8	0.0	291.6	205.8
NewRiver REIT	236.5	-2.5	297.5	195.0
Safestore Holding	642.0	6.0	657.0	499.4
Savills	873.5	-6.5	975.5	678.5
St. Modwen Proper	409.0	-1.0	425.2	365.0
UK Commercial Pro	89.2	0.2	90.6	81.0

REAL ESTATE INVEST. TRUSTS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Big Yellow Group	1041.0	3.0	1055.0	852.5
British Land Comp	598.2	3.0	697.0	523.0
Civitas Social Ho	88.8	-0.8	114.0	84.2
Derwent London	3206.0	30.0	3291.0	2761.0
Great Portland Es	763.8	8.4	773.6	652.3
Hammerson	301.9	-8.4	561.2	300.7
Intu Properties	96.8	0.7	207.3	91.3
Land Securities G	921.0	-5.2	984.4	791.8
LondonMetric Prop	202.6	0.2	204.5	172.7
Primary Health Pr	132.8	1.0	132.9	106.4
SEGRO	679.4	-1.6	688.2	585.2
Shaftesbury	866.5	1.5	1015.0	817.0
Tritax Big Box Re	147.2	-1.3	155.7	129.0
Unite Group	944.0	-3.5	962.0	797.5
Workspace Group	971.0	0.0	1165.0	789.5

SOFTWARE & COMPUTER SERV.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Avast	309.8	1.0	312.7	208.2
Aveva Group	3258.0	-40.0	3410.0	2270.0
Computacenter	1193.0	-4.0	1620.0	952.0
FDM Group (Holdin	943.0	-6.0	1128.0	734.0
Micro Focus Inter	1744.6	-39.6	2491.6	1427.2
Playtech	404.4	-24.2	826.6	361.8
Sage Group	707.4	-5.0	731.0	525.6
Softcat	932.5	1.0	940.5	565.0
Sophos Group	342.0	-8.6	639.0	298.2

SUPPORT SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aggreko	827.2	-12.2	882.0	641.8
Ashtead Group	2037.0	-74.0	2438.0	1586.5
BCA Marketplace	196.4	-3.2	242.0	181.0
Bunzl	2232.0	-14.0	2551.0	2167.0
Capita	122.7	-1.3	169.1	102.3
DCC	6612.0	-222.0	7565.0	5555.0
Diploma	1530.0	-30.0	1634.0	1150.0
Electrocomponents	627.0	-14.6	761.6	480.0
Equiniti Group	223.2	-2.4	287.0	186.2
Essentra	397.4	-20.4	507.0	325.4
Experian	2181.0	-35.0	2247.0	1705.0
Ferguson	5396.0	-56.0	6556.0	4749.0
G4S	210.0	-6.0	282.0	175.9
Grafton Group Uni	870.0	-20.0	905.5	630.0
Hays	150.0	-1.3	212.0	135.7
Homeserve	1082.0	-4.0	1166.0	749.0
Howden Joinery Gr	520.4	-8.0	539.0	416.4
Intertek Group	5126.0	-152.0	6014.0	4387.0
Pagegroup	523.0	-10.5	623.5	432.2
Rentokil Initial	385.8	-1.8	391.6	284.8
Robert Walters	596.0	-4.0	475.0	814.0
Serco Group	124.6	-3.8	136.5	84.1
SIG	143.6	-4.9	153.0	102.2
Travis Perkins	1404.0	1.5	1475.5	970.0
Spirent Communica	161.4	-3.6	167.0	110.6

TOBACCO

	Price	Chg	High	Low
British American	2873.5	-24.0	4222.5	2375.0
Imperial Brands	2327.5	-23.0	2987.5	2308.4

TRAVEL & LEISURE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
888 Holdings	137.8	-3.6	324.8	136.4
Carnival	3988.0	-25.0	5000.0	3659.0
Cineworld Group	312.6	-6.7	323.6	245.0
Compass Group	1717.0	-19.5	1825.0	1483.0
Domino's Pizza Gr	257.0	-3.8	386.9	224.4
easyJet	1083.0	-34.0	1796.0	1009.0
El Group	214.6	0.2	223.8	125.6
FirstGroup	115.2	0.3	117.5	79.3
Go-Ahead Group	1917.0	2.0	2078.0	1388.0
Greene King	614.8	6.0	704.4	472.8
GVC Holdings	617.8	-15.4	1170.0	507.5
InterContinental	4982.5	38.5	5055.0	3958.4
International Con	515.4	-9.6	726.6	504.0
Merlin Entertainm	364.9	-3.7	410.5	307.1
Millennium & Copt	440.0	4.0	570.0	430.0
Mitchells & Butle	247.5	-6.5	291.4	241.4
National Express	408.6	-1.4	433.2	361.4
Paddy Power Betfa	6244.0	-166.0	9110.0	5525.0
Rank Group	159.6	-0.8	194.0	135.0
Restaurant Group	141.7	-3.3	237.1	111.9
Stagecoach Group	133.9	-0.6	177.0	115.5
TUI AG Reg Shs (D	851.6	-11.6	1810.5	713.2
Wetherspoon (J.D.	1345.0	4.0	1375.0	1066.0
Whitbread	4525.0	-29.0	5114.0	3883.0
William Hill	151.4	-4.1	332.9	148.2
Wizz Air Holdings	3429.0	19.0	3797.0	2329.0

AIM 50

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Abcam	1301.0	4.0	1539.0	1017.0
Advanced Medical	333.0	0.0	370.0	260.0
Alliance Pharma	79.5	-0.3	102.0	60.0
ASOS	3890.0	-87.0	6834.0	2128.0
Blue Prism Group	1788.0	-71.0	2575.0	1040.0
Camellia	10850.0	300.0	12900.0	9100.0
CareTech Holding	357.0	-2.0	418.0	325.0
Central Asia Meta	220.5	-3.5	296.0	203.0
Clinigen Group	1000.0	-8.0	1043.0	721.0
CVS Group	658.5	-8.0	1163.0	395.0
Dart Group	951.5	-5.5	1017.0	740.0
Diversified Gas &	121.5	-0.5	130.0	92.0
Draper Esprit	478.0	-11.5	645.0	437.0
Eland Oil & Gas	121.6	-1.4	137.5	95.0
EMIS Group	1154.0	12.0	1160.0	860.0
Fevertree Drinks	3158.0	-31.0	3956.0	2131.0
First Derivatives	3005.0	-115.0	4680.0	2050.0
Frontier Developm	1030.0	28.0	1825.0	740.0
Gamma Communicati	1075.0	10.0	1130.0	688.0
GB Group	598.0	1.0	630.0	410.5
Gooch & Housego	1390.0	-32.5	1880.0	1095.0
Hurricane Energy	46.6	0.4	60.1	39.0
Iomart Group	357.0	-5.0	475.0	308.0
IQE	88.0	-6.2	129.8	56.3
James Halstead	510.0	4.0	526.0	367.0
Johnson Service G	149.0	-1.6	154.4	113.6
Keywords Studios	1591.0	-18.0	2065.0	900.0
Learning Technolo	85.8	-0.1	166.5	62.2
M&C Saatchi	379.0	2.0	410.0	270.0
M. P. Evans Group	693.0	17.0	800.0	637.0
Majestic Wine	265.0	0.0	485.0	219.0
Midwich Group	620.0	-4.0	685.0	491.5
Mortgage Advice B	584.0	4.0	720.0	490.0
Next Fifteen Comm	584.0	-11.0	604.0	455.0
Nichols	1800.0	25.0	1825.0	1240.0
Numis Corporation	261.0	-4.0	440.0	221.5
Polar Capital Hol	586.0	0.0	732.0	448.0
Purplebricks Grou	119.0	-16.0	410.0	118.0
Redde	119.4	2.2	196.0	90.0
Renew Holdings	396.5	2.5	430.0	333.0
RWS Holdings	596.0	-2.0	615.0	343.5
Scapa Group	375.0	10.0	482.6	275.8
Secure Income Rei	411.0	1.0	414.0	371.0
Serica Energy	121.8	-1.6	142.0	57.4
Smart Metering Sy	510.0	-1.0	831.0	480.0
Staffline Group	860.0	-11.0	1340.0	670.0
Telford Homes	280.0	1.5	471.5	270.0
Thorpe (F.W.)	314.0	-1.0	340.0	248.0
Watkin Jones	227.5	1.5	232.5	192.2
Young & Co's Brew	1830.0	-2.5	1850.0	1322.5
Young & Co's Brew	1195.0	20.0	1325.0	1030.0

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EU SHARES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
AB INBEV	75.75	-2.80	91.14	56.32
ADIDAS N	249.80	-3.50	254.15	178.30
AIR LIQUIDE	115.70	-2.10	119.10	101.85
AIRBUS BR	117.54	-2.16	124.00	77.50
ALLIANZ	210.05	-2.60	216.20	170.38
AMADEUS IT GRP BR-A	65.34	-1.16	82.20	58.06
ASML HLDG	179.48	-2.72	189.50	130.12
AXA	22.51	-0.31	23.90	18.40
BANCO SANTANDER	4.25	-0.10	5.49	3.80
BASF N	66.58	-2.71	90.00	57.26
BAYER N	59.26	-2.32	104.04	54.81
BBVA	5.14	-0.14	6.89	4.48
BMW	72.33	-1.78	93.44	67.83
BNP PARIBAS BR-A	46.88	-1.01	63.37	38.14
CRH PLC	29.44	-0.94	34.87	26.53
DAIMLER N	56.24	-1.21	68.57	44.54
DANONE	69.86	-2.58	72.54	59.72
DEUTSCHE POST N	29.43	-0.96	37.19	23.43
DEUTSCHE TELEKOM N	14.83	-0.05	15.88	13.09
ENEL N	5.60	0.04	5.74	4.22
ENGIE	13.16	-0.01	14.79	11.31
ENI N	14.49	-0.38	16.89	13.42
ESSILORLUXOTT	105.80	-1.50	129.55	95.50
FRESENIUS	49.22	-1.38	71.10	38.50
IBERDROLA	8.02	0.02	8.20	5.77
INDITEX	25.48	-0.57	30.30	21.85
ING GROUP	10.81	-0.23	14.08	9.09
INTESA SANPAOLO N	2.24	-0.05	3.18	1.86
KERING	507.20	-5.80	539.80	351.70
KON AH DEL BR	21.22	-0.13	24.01	18.60
L'OREAL	236.10	-4.30	245.80	182.00
LINDE	155.25	-4.65	0.00	0.00
LVMH	335.05	-9.35	355.05	242.30
MUENCHENER RUECKV N	210.10	-0.90	224.00	175.00
NOKIA	4.48	-0.08	5.76	4.39
ORANGE	13.91	0.03	15.25	13.15
ROY.PHILIPS	36.99	-0.21	40.01	29.05
SAFRAN	124.55	-2.50	130.00	97.08
SANOFI	76.23	-0.48	80.44	63.25
SAP I	110.20	-2.38	117.02	84.02
SCHNEIDER EL	72.54	-1.00	78.66	57.54
SIEMENS N	103.32	-1.38	121.40	90.90
SOCIETE GENERALE	27.09	-1.10	43.01	23.56
TELEFONICA	7.22	-0.07	8.39	6.59
TOTAL	46.71	-1.29	55.39	44.23
UNILEVER CERT	53.31	-0.20	54.05	45.12
VINCI	86.62	-0.92	90.14	69.98
VIVENDI	25.12	-0.30	26.69	20.40
VOLKSWAGEN VZ I	153.50	-4.04	176.58	131.02

COMMODITIES

Gold	1278.55	1.80
Silver	14.65	-0.40
Brent Crude	70.85	0.40
Krugerrand	1297.70	1.10
Palladium	1357.00	0.80
Platinum	853.00	-2.40
Tin Cash Official	19770.00	6.00
Lead Cash Official	1858.50	11.00
Zinc Cash Official	2832.00	-24.00
Copper Cash Official	6214.00	7.00
Aluminium Cash Official	1783.00	8.00
Nickel Cash Official	12170.00	40.00
Aluminium Alloy Cash Official	1330.00	0.00
Cocoa Futures	2324.00	31.00
Coffee 'C' Futures	88.13	-2.02
Feed Wheat Futures	176.00	-4.00
Soybeans Futures Continuation Contract	818.00	0.40

CREDIT & RATES

BoE IR Overnight	0.750	0.00
BoE IR 7 days	0.750	0.00
BoE IR 1 month	0.750	0.00
BoE IR 3 months	0.750	0.00
BoE IR 6 months	0.750	0.00
LIBOR Euro - overnight	-0.477	0.00
LIBOR Euro - 12 months	-0.209	0.00
LIBOR USD - overnight	2.378	0.00
LIBOR USD - 12 months	2.746	0.00
Halifax mortgage rate	3.990	0.00
Euro Base Rate	0.000	0.00
Finance house base rate	1.000	0.00
US Fed funds	1.91	0.00
US long bond yield	2.86	-0.05
Euro Euribor	-0.381	0.00
The vix index	19.32	3.88
The baltic dry index	985.00	-47.00
Markit iBoxx EUR	236.78	0.29
Markit iBoxx GBP	333.55	1.74
Markit iBoxx USD	247.13	0.37

WORLD INDICES

	Price	Chg	%chg
FTSE 100	7260.47	-120.17	-1.63
FTSE 250	19465.69	-239.48	-1.22
FTSE All-Share	3985.21	-61.65	-1.52
FTSE AIM All-Share	965.80	-4.68	-0.48
S&P 500	2884.05	-48.42	-1.65
Dow Jones I.A.	25965.09	-473.39	-1.79
Nasdaq Composite	7963.76	-159.53	-1.96
Xetra DAX	12092.74	-194.14	-1.58
CAC 40	5395.75	-87.77	-1.60
Swiss Market Index	9577.38	-164.61	-1.69
ISEQ Overall Index	6390.47	-71.65	-1.11
FTSEurofirst 300	1499.33	-35.76	-2.33
Hang Seng	29363.02	-718.53	-2.39
Shanghai Composite	2926.39	19.93	0.69
STI Index	3312.52	21.90	0.67
ASX All Ordinaries	6383.50	-43.70	-0.68

US SHARES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
3M	179.12	-3.92	219.75	176.87
ABBOTT LABORATOR	76.91	-2.16	80.74	58.24
ADOBE	277.07	-6.59	291.71	204.95
ALPHAB NON VTG-C	1174.10	-15.29	1289.27	970.11
ALPHABET-A	1178.86	-14.60	1296.98	977.66
AMAZON.COM	1921.00	-29.55	2050.50	1307.00
AMERICAN EXPRESS	118.22	-1.12	119.66	89.05
APPLE	202.86	-5.62	233.47	142.00
AT&T	30.53	-0.06	34.53	26.80
BANK OF AMERICA	29.92	-0.55	31.91	22.66
BERKSHIRE HATH RG-B	209.43	-3.73	224.07	184.75
BOEING CO	357.23	-14.37	446.01	292.47
CATERPILLAR	133.67	-3.09	161.60	112.06
CHEVRON	118.27	-0.13	131.08	100.22
CISCO SYSTEMS	53.45	-1.14	57.53	40.25
CITIGROUP	68.16	-2.25	75.24	48.42
COCA-COLA CO	48.00	-0.47	50.84	41.45
COMCAST-A	42.76	-0.54	43.96	30.43
DOW	52.95	-0.51	0.00	0.00
EXXON MOBIL	76.72	-0.41	87.36	64.65
FACEBOOK-A	189.77	-4.11	218.62	123.02
GOLDMAN SACHS GR	202.63	-3.80	245.88	151.70
HOME DEPOT	194.77	-4.86	215.43	158.09
HONEYWELL INTL	169.85	-2.76	174.34	123.48
IBM	137.64	-2.74	154.36	105.94
INTEL	50.48	-0.74	59.59	42.36
JOHNSON & JOHNSO	139.97	-2.12	148.99	118.62
JPMORGAN CHASE	113.21	-1.88	119.24	91.11
MASTERCARD RG-A	245.06	-3.58	257.43	171.89
MCDONALD'S	198.04	-0.86	200.00	153.13
MERCK	77.90	-1.58	83.85	56.26
MICROSOFT	125.52	-2.63	131.37	92.92
NETFLIX	370.46	-8.21	423.21	231.23
NIKE -B-	82.54	-1.03	90.00	66.53
ORACLE	54.00	-0.85	55.53	42.40
PAYPAL HOLDINGS	108.95	-1.90	113.69	72.23
PEPSICO	118.61	0.56	119.74	101.06
PFIZER	40.83	-0.82	46.47	34.71
PHILIP MRRS INT	84.43	-0.69	92.74	64.67
PROCTER&GAMBLE	104.70	-0.98	107.20	71.11
TRAVELERS COS	141.71	-1.72	144.22	111.08
TWITTER	38.62	-1.61	47.79	26.19
UNION PACIFIC	174.75	-2.41	180.02	128.08
UNITEDHEALTH GRO	238.05	-2.45	287.94	208.07
UTD TECHS	135.44	-4.76	144.40	100.48
VERIZON COMM	56.63	-0.28	61.58	46.09
VISA RG-A	160.21	-2.07	165.74	121.60
WALGREENS BOOTS	52.94	-0.98	86.31	52.25
WALMART	101.30	-1.16	106.21	81.78
WALT DISNEY	133.44	-1.56	142.37	98.81
WELLS FARGO	47.17	-1.26	59.53	43.02

FORUM

EDITED BY RACHEL CUNLIFFE

Labour's renationalisation plan isn't just illiterate, it's immoral

Robert Colvile

WANT to buy something, but can't quite afford it? Just use a simple trick from John McDonnell.

Here's how it works. You say: "We'll pay a fraction of the actual price." They say: "Sorry, you can't do that." You say: "Yes, we can. We're the government."

That, in essence, is Labour's plan to renationalise the water industry.

Our think tank calculated that buying the firms at market price would add roughly £86bn to the national debt. The shadow chancellor thinks that this is too much. Parliament, he says, will pay the book value – which reports suggest would be in the region of £15bn-£20bn.

That, or Labour would work out the level of "shareholder investment", deduct whatever it felt like to punish "asset stripping", and then declare that to be the final bill.

For McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn, that's a great deal. But not for the country.

Last year, we estimated the extra borrowing involved in Labour's renationalisation plans – which include water, rail, the energy networks, and Royal Mail – at £176bn. That's the equivalent of adding 10 per cent to the national debt, or £6,471 for every household.

Yet the cost of doing it on the cheap would actually be even higher – because it would shatter investors' confidence that Britain plays fair.

It would also rip off the 5.8m UK pension pots that the Global Infrastructure Investment Alliance has calculated are invested in the water industry – as well as millions more in the energy grid, Royal Mail, the trains, and so on.

What's galling about this plan isn't just the financial illiteracy, but the dishonesty. Labour has dismissed our estimates, and similar work by the Social Market Foundation, as "fantasy figures plucked from the air by politically motivated think tanks". In fact, every figure in our report came from independent experts – and the £176bn price tag was a bare minimum.

But that's only the start. Labour says that renationalisation won't actually have a cost, because the profits from the companies can be used to cover the extra debt.

Yet the party is also promising to use the same profits to cut bills for consumers by £220 a year (with no explanation for where that figure came from); to massively increase infrastructure spending; and to run the companies with less regard for profit – including putting union bosses and "community leaders" on their boards.

It's the economics of the loaves and fishes. Even Diane Abbott couldn't make the numbers add up.

Perhaps the most pernicious lie of all is Labour's claim that its renationalisation plans are normal.

Take McDonnell's comments on the Andrew Marr Show last Sunday. He was talking about how those whose pensions are invested in these firms "will get the appropriate payment that parliament will decide" – not, you'll note, the actual value of their assets. But he was quick to reassure viewers that this was normal: "It's the same with every nationalisation in the past."

It's the economics of the loaves and fishes – even Diane Abbott couldn't make the numbers add up

Corbyn, similarly, has tried to give the impression that Labour is just surfing a wider wave.

Last year, he grandly proclaimed: "From India to Canada, countries across the world are waking up to the fact that privatisation has failed and are taking back control of their public services. Research by the Transnational Institute identifies 835 international examples of privatisation being reversed. It really is happening: from water under citizen ownership and control in Grenoble, France, to mail under national ownership and control in Argentina."

Yet check his sources, and you'll find that the 835 renationalisations he described were, in fact, remunicipalisations: cities, towns, and in many cases villages taking back control of individual services.

The 835 included eight swimming pools, seven Norwegian care homes, two cinemas in Vienna, one case of fountain maintenance in Rivas Vaciamadrid in Spain (population 460), a kindergarten in Bromskirchen in Germany (population 1,830), and groundskeeping for Rotherham Council.

Even when a significant service was taken back into public ownership, it was generally a case of a particular contract expiring and local politicians deciding that they could do a better job.

There are precious few examples of the kind of sweeping renationalisation that Labour proposes – perhaps because it's such a stupid idea, given that such firms (in Britain at least) have consistently been more productive and efficient within private ownership.

The Transnational Institute does give 49 examples of actual nationalisations. But most are from troubled countries like Bolivia, Ecuador, Argentina, and Venezuela – or Viktor Orban's Hungary.

Just because something has never been done before isn't a reason not to try it. But it does mean you need to make a solid case. That's what the advocates of privatisation did back in the 1970s and 1980s.

Labour, however, seems to be led by blind ideology. Corbyn and McDonnell want to nationalise because they want to nationalise – never mind the damage it would do to companies, consumers, or the national balance sheet.

Robert Colvile is director of the Centre for Policy Studies.

It's not cutting-edge AI we should feel anxious about, but mediocre automation

Paul Ormerod

IF THERE were a betting market in future winners of the Nobel prize in economics, MIT's Daniel Acemoglu would be at pretty short odds. His highly innovative work has already won him a string of prizes.

So his research is always worth following – especially when he challenges the conventional wisdom, as in his paper in the latest issue of the Journal of Economic Perspectives.

Economists are usually optimistic about the impact of new technology.

The innovation itself destroys jobs – the Luddite riots in the early nineteenth century, for example, were in direct response to the displacement of skilled handloom weavers by the new machinery in textile factories.

But this, along with all subsequent waves of innovation, enabled goods and services to be produced more cheaply. As a result, the spending power of everybody else in the economy increased, and new jobs were created.

Mass production in factories during the industrial revolution was of course a phenomenon without precedent in the history of the world. Other completely revolutionary technologies followed, such as the railways and electricity.

The rapid advance of robots and artificial intelligence seems to be the latest example of a transformative new technology.

Acemoglu argues that it is not these "brilliant" (as he puts it) technologies which threaten jobs and wages. These enable things to be produced much more cheaply than before, substantially boosting real incomes elsewhere in the economy. Then new kinds of goods and services can be created as a result of the increase in spending power.

Rather, the risk to overall employment and living standards comes from the introduction of "so-so technologies", which generate only small productivity improvements.

Examples of so-so technologies include automated customer service, which has displaced human service representatives. It is, however, generally deemed to be low-quality, and thus unlikely to have led to large productivity gains.

The cost of your bank charges or your supermarket shop have not exactly been reduced much by the introduction of automated answering systems or self-service check-outs. But jobs have been lost as a result.

Acemoglu suggests a key reason why modern economies have, as he puts it in the jargon, "moved along this [particular] innovation possibilities frontier". In the US and also here in the UK, the tax system has evolved in ways which subsidise the use of equipment and penalise the use of labour through payroll taxes such as our employers' national insurance contributions.

Interestingly, he also points the finger at the big tech companies. Their business model is based on automation and small workforces.

The impact of innovative technology which destroys particular jobs needs to be counterbalanced by innovation elsewhere, which creates new tasks, new jobs which no one had previously thought of. We have had some, such as software and app development and database design, but nowhere near enough.

Governments need to rethink the tax system as it applies to investment and employment. And they need to rebuild support for long-term innovation, which gives more scope to invent completely new jobs.

Paul Ormerod is an economist at Volterra Partners LLP, a visiting professor in the Department of Computer Science at UCL, and author of Against the Grain: Insights of an Economic Contrarian.

LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

The Prince and the Parental Leave Dilemma

First, a huge congratulations to the Duke and Duchess of Sussex for the arrival of their little boy – such an exciting time.

They must be feeling the same as all new parents – excited and overjoyed, but maybe a little anxious too. All of that is, of course, completely normal.

They may also be considering their parental leave options and how long they will be able to take a break from their royal duties – whether they are royal or not, all new parents need some time away from work to spend with their new arrival.

With the world watching, this is the perfect time to talk about parental leave and how employers can help smooth the process. The Duke and Duchess don't need to worry too much about how time away from work will affect their careers, but this is a real concern for many new parents.

This shouldn't be the case at all; by openly talking about parental leave, and helping staff understand all the options available to them, employers have the power to completely overturn many of the anxieties that new parents face.

Normalising both maternity and paternity leave and making sure that it's absolutely encouraged is the way forward for all, whether it's the royal family or not.

Emma Yearwood, director of HR, Sodexo Engage

BEST OF TWITTER

I see the UK government has confirmed the European elections will take place on the last day you can register to vote in them...
@HolyroodLiam

March 4 - Theresa May says we will leave the EU on March 29.
March 20 - Theresa May says European elections are "unacceptable".
March 29 - UK does not leave EU.
May 7 - UK will take part in European elections.
@hijakejohnstone

I'm tired of the comments that @the3million should vote "in their home country". The UK is my home. All my adult life is here. The only time I "go back home" is when on the train to Cambridge. So I'm voting in the UK for #EuropeanElections2019 & it's within my rights to do so.
@alexandrabulat

Theresa May's spokesman says the local election results "have given added impotence... I mean impetus," to Brexit talks with Labour.
@AdamBienkov

The preferred term is "electile dysfunction".
@SnoozeInBrief

BREAKING NEWS: SOMEONE HAS GONE INTO LABOUR.
Makes a change from people leaving them tbf.
@langcatlocke

WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS E: theforum@cityam.com **COMMENT AT:** cityam.com/forum : @cityam

Out for justice: Britain must fight for its status as a global law hub

Jasmine Whitbread

THE UK legal sector is in rude health. There are almost 10,000 private practice firms across the country, and over 200 foreign law firms with offices in London. Together, they support a total of 342,000 jobs and make a sizeable contribution to the UK's trade surplus of around £4.4bn.

But as we kick off London International Disputes Week, it's clear that the context in which the legal sector operates is changing fast, with challenger centres emerging to try to steal our crown.

Take Singapore. In 2015, it launched its International Commercial Court and overnight positioned itself as a credible centre for international commercial disputes, supported by generous government incentives for international law firms to set up and expand there.

At the same time, Paris, Dublin, Amsterdam, Brussels and Frankfurt have all either announced new English-speaking courts with common law features, or have increased funding for the courts they already have.

While these challenger cities are staking their claims, another issue is looming over the UK's own legal sector: Brexit.

London First was the first business group to call on the government to stop the clock on Article 50 and give parliament time to come up with a way forward back in January.

With cross-party talks currently ongoing, we want to see the Prime Minster and leader of the opposition move quickly to agree a compromise which preserves the economic benefits of a customs union and the Single Market. And if they can't, the decision must go back to the people.

For Britain's world-renowned legal sector, Brexit probably won't sound like an immediate death knell. But what it will do is risk diminishing some of the influence that London has worked so hard to build – and at the very point where competitors old and new are raising their game.

To overcome the challenges, we have to be more ambitious and flexible. We need to show these upstart legal centres what we've got.

First, that means recognising and celebrating the strength of our much-cited "structural advantages". English is still the business world's lingua franca, our time zone is advantageous to most parts of the world, and the UK's rule of law a significant draw.

> **We have to be more ambitious and flexible, to show these upstart legal centres what we've got**

A potent symbol of this is the Rolls Building in Fetter Lane – the world's biggest business, property, and commercial court centre, housing all the parts of the High Court dealing with commercial disputes.

Second, we urgently need to address access to talent. National and international law firms – like all businesses – must be able to hire the best people, wherever they come from around the globe. The more restrictions on migration, the harder this is.

The government's current plans for a £30,000 salary threshold for overseas workers are frankly absurd, and will lock out the many essential workers who help power all sectors of the economy – from chefs and construction workers to carers and coders.

This may not at first appear an issue for the legal sector, but law firms do not run on lawyers alone – they also need the best event organisers, the best administrators, the best maintenance staff.

That's why London First is calling for the salary threshold to be brought in line with the London Living Wage, as part of a fair and managed immigration system. At the same time, more needs to be done to ensure that all young people are able to get a route into the law, through investment in skills and training.

Singapore and the rest aren't standing still – and neither can we. If we can get these things right, it will help London remain a global legal centre and cement our position as the best city in the world to do business.

Jasmine Whitbread is chief executive of London First.

DEBATE

Was Gordon Brown right to sell off the government's gold reserves 20 years ago?

YES

TIM FOCAS

While Gordon Brown could have sold at a better price, for the vast majority of governments across established economies, there is no real point to holding gold.

The purpose of foreign exchange reserves is not for the state to manage wealth on behalf of the country. People should do this for themselves.

UK reserves should only really be used to underpin monetary policy, and to halt any possible crisis such as a significant run on the pound, not as any kind of sovereign wealth fund. The trouble is that gold is not well suited as a state asset, as its value is very likely to drop as soon as it is deployed as a government intervention mechanism.

The market is of course very different to that of two decades years ago, and any government selling today will not have anywhere near the same impact. But this doesn't change the cold hard truth that gold is a market best fit for sophisticated speculators, not the state.

Tim Focas is director of financial services for Westminster think tank Parliament Street.

NO

ADRIAN ASH

New Labour's gold sales were so aggressive and arrogant that it's hard to imagine Gordon Brown's team seeing any error even now, 20 years and a five-fold rise later.

Instead of timing the market between 1999 and 2002, they wanted to spread risk, cutting gold from 70 per cent to nearer 30 per cent of total UK reserves. But even if we accept that western central banks held too much gold, rebalancing should happen when the overweight asset looks fairly or highly priced, not stuck at two-decade lows amid a bubble in equities.

Even at the time people warned Brown, Ed Balls and Ed Milliband, who pushed the sale through against both advice from bullion banks and resistance from the Bank of England.

Yes, many other central banks were also selling, no doubt giving urgency to the Treasury's move. But France stood aside until prices recovered, waiting until gold rallied from the Brown Bottom of $250 to break above $400 in 2004. Paris then sold the bulk of its 20 per cent reduction between $650 and $1,000 over the following five years – a genuinely calm and "prudent" strategy.

Adrian Ash is director of research at BullionVault.

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OFFICE POLITICS

Wanted: Jobs for disabled workers across the UK

It's time for businesses to step up and put an end to the disability employment crisis

IT MAY be 2019, but for a million disabled people across the UK, it feels like 2009. A generation of educated, motivated and ambitious individuals have been sidelined because of mistaken, outdated attitudes about what disabled people can achieve.

The harsh reality for disabled people is that time has stood still – it's as difficult for them to find employment today as it was a decade ago, as businesses continue to struggle with knowing how to support them.

There are a million disabled people right now who want to work, but are being denied the opportunity because too many businesses can't see past their impairment or condition.

New research reveals that the pro-

Jeff Dodds

fessionals tasked with tackling this – senior HR decision-makers – are sleepwalking into another decade of failed progress.

Nearly half of businesses aren't focused on creating inclusive workplaces for disabled people, and 50 per cent of businesses say that it's easier not to recruit a disabled person. Shockingly, a quarter of businesses claim that they have never had a disabled candidate for a job interview, despite there being 7.6m disabled people of working age in the UK.

It's as difficult for disabled people to find work today as it was a decade ago

More than four in 10 businesses report that their board of directors never or rarely discuss disability, and almost a third believe that there is nothing they could do to better meet the needs of disabled employees, so the situation isn't set to change anytime soon.

Enough is enough. Companies large and small need to come together to end the disability employment crisis. Things need to change fast.

That's why Virgin Media and Scope are launching the #WorkWithMe pledge, calling on businesses to become better employers of disabled people and commit to creating more inclusive workplaces.

Businesses that sign the pledge will accelerate social change by unlocking the social and economic value of disabled people.

The pledge is about following five simple, concrete steps. These include appointing a senior leader to take accountability for disability, looking under the bonnet to understand how the business measures up, and putting a plan in place to create a positive culture around disability, as well as collaborating with others to share good practice. This is a free programme, created for business, by business.

This isn't about finger pointing. Nor is it about patting ourselves on the back: Virgin Media has spent the past two years working to become a better employer of disabled people, but we still have lots more work to do. We want other businesses to benefit from what we've learned as they work to create more inclusive workplaces.

I've seen first-hand the benefits of working with disabled people, and it's time for other businesses to experience that too. Simply, we need to change the way that these individuals are valued.

The initiative is gaining momentum, with Philips and JCB among the raft of forward-thinking companies that have already signed the pledge, committing to making disability their business.

It's time for other business leaders to take conscious action to change business for good. Sign the #WorkWithMe pledge, and help end the disability employment crisis today.

Jeff Dodds is managing director at Virgin Media.

K

ESCAPE THE COUNTRY

Kayak
Free

Did you enjoy the long bank holiday weekend? Good news, there's another one later this month. Why not plan a three-day trip abroad and escape from the city? Go relax on a sandy beach or hike through a leafy forest. Use Kayak to search for flights and hotels around the world, and design the perfect trip. Kayak searches and compares hundreds of travel sites to help you find the best deal.

COFFEE BREAK

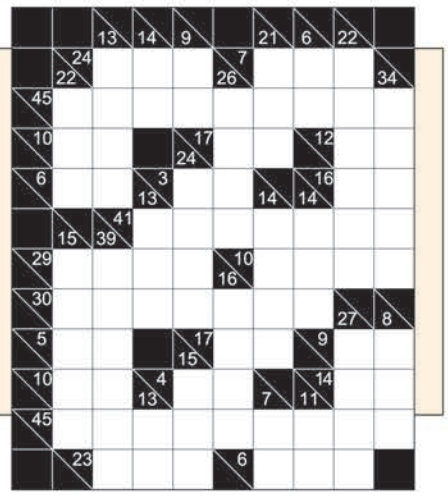
SUDOKU

Place the numbers from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each row, each column and each 3x3 block contains all the numbers from 1 to 9 to solve this tricky Sudoku puzzle.

			6				5	
	3		9			7	1	
		5		3		8		
	7				8			
5	6			1			7	4
			3				8	
		7		9		6		
	4	1			7		9	
	5				3			

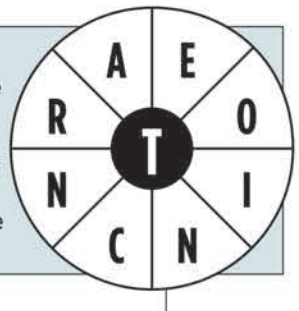
KAKURO

Fill the grid so that each block adds up to the total in the box above or to the left of it.
You can only use the digits 1-9 and you must not use the same digit twice in a block. The same digit may occur more than once in a row or column, but it must be in a separate block.

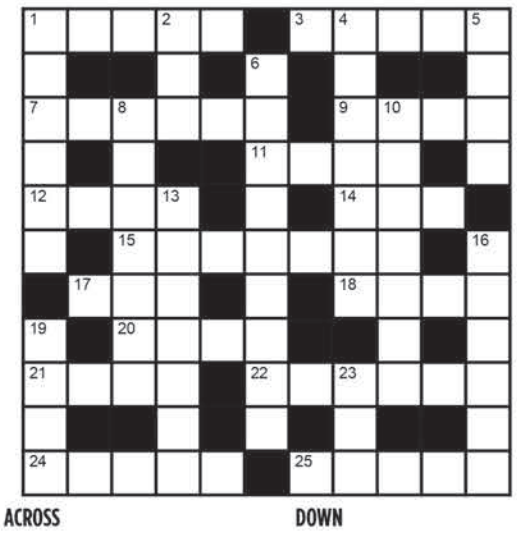


WORDWHEEL

Using only the letters in the Wordwheel, you have ten minutes to find as many words as possible, none of which may be plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. Each word must be of three letters or more, all must contain the central letter and letters can only be used once in every word. There is at least one nine-letter word in the wheel.



QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Material made by weaving (5)
3 Final Greek letter (5)
7 Make violently angry (6)
9 Pry (4)
11 Point formed by two intersecting arcs (4)
12 Red eruption of the skin (4)
14 Golfing device (3)
15 Black leopard (7)
17 Chest bone (3)
18 Garden tool (4)
20 Money drawer (4)
21 Bard (4)
22 Item (6)
24 Strong coffee with a frothed milk topping (5)
25 Traffic light colour (5)

DOWN

1 Shouts of approval (6)
2 Drink made with dried leaves (3)
4 Inhuman person (7)
5 Child of Adam and Eve (4)
6 Athletic contest consisting of ten different events (9)
8 Abatement (7)
10 Perform a surgical procedure (7)
13 Normal abode or locality of an animal or plant (7)
16 Experienced and trusted adviser (6)
19 Opaque gem (4)
23 Preserve made of fruit and sugar (3)

LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTIONS

QUICK CROSSWORD

KAKURO

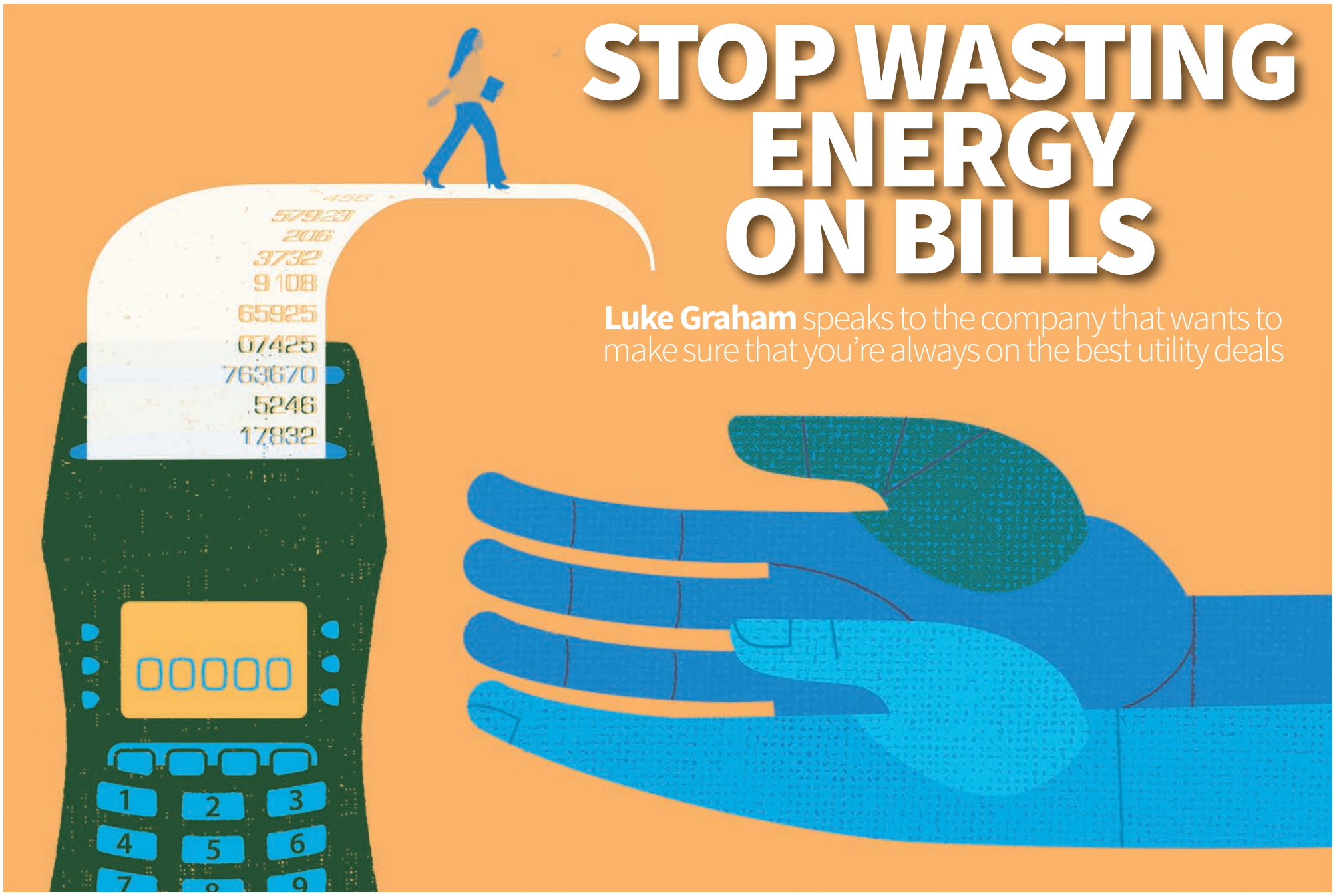
SUDOKU

4	2	8	5	7	9	3	6	1
7	6	1	2	8	3	4	5	9
3	5	9	4	6	1	7	2	8
2	3	6	1	9	7	8	4	5
9	8	5	6	3	4	1	7	2
1	4	7	8	5	2	9	3	6
5	7	3	9	1	6	2	8	4
6	1	4	7	2	8	5	9	3
8	9	2	3	4	5	6	1	7

WORDWHEEL

The nine-letter word was **DOMINANCE**

PERSONAL FINANCE



STOP WASTING ENERGY ON BILLS

Luke Graham speaks to the company that wants to make sure that you're always on the best utility deals

WHEN did you last switch your energy provider? For renters and homeowners alike, managing the cost of our electricity and gas supply is a major headache.

Consumers are encouraged to switch regularly, not only in order to find cheaper deals and save money, but also to ensure that the energy market remains competitive and offers the public a better service.

Government statistics show that the number of energy switchers has been steadily growing since 2014. According to the trade body Energy UK, last year was a record for switching, with over 5.8m people changing their provider.

However, this still only equates to about one in five customers – many more are stuck on bad deals. Even if a customer is told by their supplier that they're on its "best tariff", that doesn't mean that they have a competitive deal – there may be a cheaper offer available with a different company.

And even the most diligent energy switcher may occasionally forget to change their supplier and will subsequently get stung when their cheap fixed-price deal ends and reverts to the company's standard variable rate (SVR).

The SVR can be incredibly expensive. Even with the energy price cap set by the regulator Ofgem, these default tariffs can cost the average household as much as £1,137 a year. For comparison, the cheapest tariff found by Ofgem comes in at £892 – a difference of £245.

The scope for saving may be huge, but who has the time to constantly check for new deals? The answer is to let a business do it for you instead.

UK startup Look After My Bills helps consumers slash their bills by automatically switching their energy deal whenever a cheaper one is available.

Last month, it reached a milestone of signing up 100,000 customers to its switching service since August 2018. The company claims to have helped users save £15.3m on energy bills, and estimates that the British public is missing out on a potential £2bn of savings by not switching providers.

"Last year, we had a lightbulb moment and realised that automatic switching solved a massive pain point for time-poor Brits," says Will Hodson, co-founder of Look After My Bills.

"The current energy system is a bit like Freddie Krueger: it waits for you to fall asleep and stop switching, and then it kills you with hugely punitive tariffs. We really believe that energy is a broken consumer market. The incentives are the wrong way around – and are set up to punish loyal people."

There are now several automatic switching companies out there, with different business models. Look After My Bills and its competitors Migrate and Weflip offer a free service to consumers, making money from commission paid by the energy firms they switch customers to. Others, such as Flipper, charge an annual membership fee for users.

But the reason that Look After My Bills has shot to prominence is its appearance on the BBC investment programme Dragon's Den in 2018.

The Look After My Bills founders with "Dragons" Tej Lalvani and Jenny Campbell

Hodson and co-founder Henry de Zoete managed to secure the best deal in the show's 13-year history, receiving £120,000 from two "Dragons" in exchange for a three per cent stake in the company – valuing the business at £6m.

One of these investors, Jenny Campbell, says that she invested in the company not only because she liked its founders, but also because she found the ethos of the business compelling.

"I just got the product straight away," she says. "We all like to think that we can switch our energy and save some money, but we never get round to it, and so auto-switching just makes sense. This is also very ethical as well – it provides something to the market that helps consumers save money."

Campbell agrees with Hodson that there are problems in the energy industry which make it come across as anti-consumer.

"Whether it's perception or reality, I always feel that when energy prices go up, the increases are applied pretty quickly to the consumer, but when they come down, there always seems to be some reason that they can't come down as fast. It doesn't feel very fair or transparent to the consumer."

She adds that the company can help hold the big energy companies to account – if they don't provide the best deal they can to consumers, they'll lose business, as Look After My Bills and its rivals automatically switch customers to better deals elsewhere.

Looking beyond energy, there is a broader scope for this emerging switching industry to help consumers keep down household costs by automatically considering other contracts, such as mortgages and phones.

Utilities companies across the spectrum should be paying attention to this burgeoning trend of automatic switchers, and making sure that they stay competitive. In fact, Look After My Bills is already planning to expand to cover the broadband market.

"Broadband costs are not very transparent," says Campbell. "It's something that takes people a long time to work out if they're getting the best deal. For me personally, if I can get someone else to do it for me and save me money, hallelujah, they can have my business."

Consumer advocates and political groups are constantly calling for alternative methods to make the energy market cheaper and fairer to customers. Some make the case for renationalising energy companies, while others want to deregulate the market entirely.

This argument over which is right will rage on, but in the meantime, the automatic switchers offer a free market solution that helps to put at least some power back in the hands of consumers.

LIFE&STYLE

IS IT ABOUT TIME YOU DROPPED THE BOOZE?

How a chilling wake-up call helped trainer **Harry Thomas** to give up booze

It's been over a year since I gave up alcohol. When I tell people, the automatic response is, "Oh Mr fitness guy", but that's not the reason I stopped drinking.

I decided to quit when I woke up in a Spanish prison cell, where I remained for the next two days. I had no recollection of the previous night and no idea what I'd done. My mind went to some dark places – what if I'd killed someone? I'd never felt so utterly powerless.

Eventually someone spoke to me in English and told me that I'd fallen asleep in the back of a car that turned out to be stolen. They didn't charge me with anything, but it was one hell of a wake up call.

This wasn't the first time I questioned my drinking – I'd got in a few minor scrapes with the law in the past, and since my teenage years there had been plenty of nights when I'd completely forgotten what I'd done. At first I thought this was normal, but now I cringe at all the embarrassing states I must have been in.

I wanted to share my experiences over the last 13 months. It's been a long road of self development – people say it changes you and they're right. Everyone I've spoken to who's given up booze (and there are more than you realise) have said that amazing things have happened since quitting.

My intention with this article isn't to demonise anyone who drinks, or tell anyone to give it up, but I think my experiences will resonate with a lot of people in the City who are trying to cut down on the sauce.

THE HARD PART

Giving up drink completely is daunting. I worried that people would judge me or act differently around me. I started to drink water or lemonade out of a wine glass to disguise the drink, and I'd stress out about having to explain myself every time someone noticed I wasn't drinking. In social situations, non-drinkers can feel like outsiders, like the kid at school who nobody wanted on their team.

I've been out with friends – or perhaps "friends" – who tried to get me to take a drink for 12 rounds straight, as if I would realise that I was being silly and just lighten up. People often tell me they would be fine not drinking, but it's a very different story when everyone is half cut and you're the only person nursing a Diet Coke.

There's a mistrust of people who decline drinks, like you're spying on their night out, reporting back to the fun police about all the naughty things they've been getting up to. Some people get anxious about their own drinking and tell you that, actually, I don't drink that much myself. Others avoid you altogether.

THE REGRET

None of these things come close to how bad alcohol made me feel. That dread of wondering what I did last night. Being reminded of what I said. The embarrassing moments that come back in horrifying flashbacks. The radio silence from people I upset or offended. It also affects you in a more solid, immediate way; sleeping through your alarm, missing events, cancelling on your friends.

The older you get the more painful hangovers become, and yet I persisted for years. The old me has no idea how good it feels to wake up without a hangover, to spend a Saturday morning without a pumping headache and an upset stomach. I now look forward to my weekends, and they feel much longer now I wake up before noon.

THE (LITERAL) COST

I dread to think how much I spent each month on alcohol. Now I actually have money sitting in my bank account at the end of the month. I hardly ever spend much money when I'm out with friends; my drinks cost a fraction of what they used to and most people are happy to add a soft drink to their order.

On a night out, I've become so much more aware. I love watching people now, seeing how they interact with one another. I see how people change as the night goes on, and it usually reminds me why I don't drink.

Last year I went to Coachella and I didn't touch booze. It was a challenge but afterwards I remembered all the acts and events. I'd say it was up there with my favourite trips, and a lot of that was down to remembering everything. I remember best man speeches, dates, lectures, conversations. It's a powerful thing to be fully present.

It's also helped in the gym – working out is much easier and I feel fitter than ever. I'm doing things I couldn't do 10 years ago. I have more time to push myself and set new challenges. It's also far easier to keep your weight down when you remove the thousands of calories you consume through alcohol.

OWNERSHIP

The best part of being sober is taking ownership of my decisions. When you lose the safety net of blaming your behaviour on being drunk, you find that you make better decisions. They say your true colours come out when you're drunk, but I disagree. Problem drinkers have a tendency to hide their true colours behind a bottle.

Not drinking definitely changes your life, but not necessarily in a negative way. And those friends who tried to get me to drink have mostly come around now.

If you're thinking about giving up drink, I'll leave you with a recommendation of a book that really helped me – The Unexpected Joys of Being Sober. It brings home that giving up alcohol doesn't have to be a negative, or a loss – it's a positive decision, and it's not as hard as you might think.

Harry Thomas is a life coach and personal trainer at City gym No.1 Fitness. To book a session go to no1fitness.co.uk

WEEKLY GRILL

Oblix executive chef **Marcus Eaves** tells us how a roadside barbecue changed his life forever

WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU DO?
I'm Marcus Eaves, executive chef at Oblix restaurant in The Shard.

WHAT'S NEW AT OBLIX?
The menu! We're now heading into my favourite time of year with so many beautiful ingredients available. My favourite new dish is the seasonal salad, lemon verbena, mustard fruits and goats curd – it's super fresh but packed full of flavour.

WHAT'S YOUR EARLIEST FOOD MEMORY?
It hard to think of a food memory that isn't centred around family. My mother has 11 sisters and one brother, so my childhood food memories stemmed from visits to my grandparents, with lots of communal dining and hearty dishes mostly involving "one pot cooking." The one dish I will never forget is boiled bacon with cabbage and parsley sauce. It's such a bold dish, effortless and tasty.

WHAT'S THE BEST MEAL YOU EVER HAD?
The best meal wasn't at a restaurant at all. I'd spent the weekend at Le Mans 24-hour race and worked up an appetite throughout the day. My friend was eager to impress and bought along a rib of Charolais beef. It was cooked on a makeshift barbecue, and I thought it was going to be a total disaster. But the results were outstanding. That's where my love of charcoal cooking began.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE DISH?
Mille-feuille – thin layers of puff pastry – seasonal fresh fruit and pastry cream. It was one of the first dishes I tried to cook at home when I decided to become a chef. My first attempt was a disaster but it's become my go-to dessert.

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT THE LONDON FOOD SCENE?
You can get great food in so many places across London. The city has become a melting pot of exciting places to eat, whether it's a pop-up stall in a farmer's market or the latest restaurant opening, there's something for everyone.

TELL ME SOMETHING INTERESTING
Since opening Oblix in 2013, we've sold 130 tonnes of beef. That is 10 times the weight of an anchor on a cruise ship.

To book a table at Oblix in the Shard call 020 7268 6700 or go to oblixrestaurant.com

FORTNUM & MASON
THE ROYAL EXCHANGE

WHAT AND WHERE? The Queen's grocer and purveyor of your mum's fanciest Christmas biscuits, Fortnum & Mason, has opened up a bar and restaurant in the middle of the City's very own Royal Exchange. The 90-cover bar and dining room takes over the retail Mecca's central courtyard following the closure of D&D's Grand Cafe and Sauterelle last year.

WHAT'S ON OFFER? Sitting around the latticed bar, this is the closest you'll get to dining al fresco in the middle of Bank junction. The classical, almost cathedral-esque surroundings certainly add to the restaurant's grandeur. The starters are like an inventory of the most famous items in Fortnum's pantry: the Piccadilly 181 smoked salmon, Welsh rarebit, the scotch egg they supposedly invented as the perfect picnic foodstuff in 1738. The latter simply has to be done; peppery sausage meat, an oozy centre and a chunky homemade piccalilli, it's the best scotch egg on God's earth.

ORDER THIS... At first glance, we thought we wanted all the starters instead of the mains. Oysters, dressed crab, steak tartare, artichoke soup and potted shrimps with malty bread? All of the above please, with a scotch egg on the side for good luck. The mains are home comforts dressed up in their Sunday best; shepherd's pie is made with slow-cooked shredded beef instead of mince, for instance, and the veggie curry is accompanied by blitzed almond 'rice' to add a luxurious flourish. Another underrated classic is calf's liver, cooked medium with crispy streaky bacon on top. For a bit of theatre, order a whole Dover sole, which is filleted at the table, with a seasonal side of purple-sprouting broccoli.

WORKING LUNCH

Melissa York on the best places to eat during office hours in the City and Canary Wharf

ROOM FOR DESSERT? There's always room for ice cream, especially when it's the coconut and chocolate ice cream coupe, served with hot chocolate sauce poured at the table. Crunchy coconut shavings add texture; close your eyes and you could be eating a melted Bounty bar. Don't have a sweet tooth? Fortnum's has brought its cheese, including its creamy stilton, the kind that usually only features in its Christmas hampers.

TIPPLE TIPS Keep your boss and your taste buds happy by opting for a rare tea over lunch. Aside from the favourites, there's a liquorice, mint and lemon verbena tea that's a particularly effective digestif, and a Royal Exchange blend. Smokey Yunnan Golden Buds are added to an Assam base in a nod to the Great Fire of London that destroyed the original Royal Exchange building in the 17th century. You can also buy it in a snazzy dark blue tin as a gift.

AND ANOTHER THING... If you don't have time to sit down and indulge, pick up a pre-packaged takeaway lunch in Fortnum & Mason's new store opposite the restaurant. Ranging between £8-£12, there's a chiller cabinet with boxes of smoked salmon, capers and bread or a full cheese ploughmans with all the trimmings.

Call 020 7734 8040 or email reservations@fortnumandmason.co.uk

Liver it up large with this treat

Last week I took a few slices of young cow's liver to the riverbank for a fishing barbeque. Young cows liver can be as much of a treat as calf's liver but costs a fraction of the price – and you can still cook it just as pink.

While the barbecue was heating up I suddenly thought "Why not put it on some sourdough, which Trevor Gulliver, Fergus Henderson's business partner at of St. John's had brought along. It made the budget liver even more of a treat, especially with the special green sauce I'd brought along. Here's how you can make it at home.

MY FOOD DIARY

Mark Hix

GRILLED LIVER ON SOUR DOUGH WITH GREEN SAUCE (SERVES 4)

INGREDIENTS
- 4 x 40-50g 1cm thick slices of cow's, calf's or lamb's liver
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- A little oil for grilling

METHOD
- Preheat a ribbed griddle plate or barbecue. Lightly oil the bread and grill on both sides until crisp. Season and lightly oil the liver and cook for 1-2 minutes on each side depending on the thickness, keeping it nice and pink.
- To serve place the liver on the bread with a spoonful of the green sauce on top.

FOR THE GREEN SAUCE
- This is a great sauce to have to hand for grilled meats, fish or vegetables – this recipe makes about half a litre of it. If you grow mint, parsley and basil in the garden, then it really is cheap to make. It will become your summer barbecue dish of choice. It will keep in the fridge in a sterilised airtight jar for a couple months. Here's what you'll need:
- 4 large cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed or 60-70g wild garlic leaves, washed and dried
- 60-70g flat or curly parsley, stalks and all, washed and dried 60-70g mint leaves, washed and dried
- 60-70g basil, stalks and all, carefully washed and dried if dirty 2tbsp Tewkesbury or grain mustard
- 80g large capers, rinsed
- 250ml rapeseed oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Put all of the ingredients in a liquidiser or food processor, coarsely blend, then season to taste. Transfer to sterilised jars and seal.

THE PUNTER

HONG KONG RACING TRADER

Hong Kong racing expert **Wally Pyrah** previews today's action from Sha Tin

Lor can continue to Bloom in the dirt at Sha Tin

The lightly-raced Blooming Spirit should go well in the 12.45pm contest

SHA TIN hosts a competitive eight-race card on the all-weather surface this afternoon. Locals are always wary of a track bias when racing takes place on the dirt, and it's easy to understand why.

For instance, early last month, there was an eight-race meeting on dirt, where all the races were won by horses that broke fast from the stalls and were in the first four positions after just two furlongs.

The draw is always an important factor to take into consideration. The extended mile races start around 100m before the first bend, giving those drawn high a big disadvantage.

They either push too hard to get a prominent position from the off, or risk getting caught wide, thereby having more distance to cover during the journey.

However, sprint races over six furlongs don't show any advantage from the draw, with a long run down the back stretch giving runners the chance to find a position before they reach the first bend.

Instead, when there's no telling stall advantage, keep an eye on a couple of trainers who excel on the surface when racing takes place on the all-weather track.

Frankie Lor, who is chasing current champion John Size in the trainers' championship race, and Me Tsui, who seems to have a stable full of all-weather specialists, are the only trainers to have reached double-figure winners on dirt this season.

Lor, who has seven contenders at the meeting, has a startling record when entering horses over six furlongs. He has saddled nine winners and seven places from just 24 runners.

He is capable of improving that tally when represented by the lightly-raced **BLOOMING SPIRIT** in the 12.45pm.

This Australian-bred three-year-old has shown definite signs of ability in his last couple of races on turf, but it's his trial form on dirt that has been both eye-catching and encouraging.

He is capable of improving dramatically racing on this surface and, with Alfred Chan back from a two-meeting suspension, claiming his 10lb allowance, could well be ahead of the handicapper.

The obvious threat will come from the Tsui stable, which saddles the well-drawn and consistent Sky Treasure, a dual winner over the track and trip and presently in peak condition.

Former champion trainer Dennis Yip has had a quiet spell of late, but his horses look to be returning to form, judging by recent results.

He has a well-handicapped contender in **CROWN AVENUE** who takes part in the 2.15pm over 1m1f.

This dirt specialist has been well beaten in all appearances on turf this season, but is now back on his favourite surface.

A record of three track wins, two over the distance, and one place, tells you how good he is at his best, and a recent impressive dirt trial with this afternoon's jockey Umberto Rispoli aboard says he is about to bounce back to his peak.

Last season's victories included an easy course-and-distance win against better opposition than he meets here from an 8lb higher mark.

In what looks an average contest on paper, he has a gilt-edged chance if performing to his best.

POINTERS

Blooming Spirit 12.45pm	Sha Tin
Crown Avenue 2.15pm	Sha Tin

Impressive Vincent Ho on track to bag Fame And Fortune

YOUNG jockey Vincent Ho is riding on the crest of a wave at present.

Another big win on Ho Ho Feel in a Group Three contest at Sha Tin last Sunday cemented his position as the leading local rider in Hong Kong.

Currently lying fourth in the jockeys' table with a personal best 43 winners to his credit, Ho continues to receive the plaudits from both his colleagues in the weighing room and the fickle racing locals.

Ho has a full book of rides on the eight-race card at Sha Tin this afternoon and will be hoping to add another winner to his already successful association with David Hall, the trainer of Ho Ho Feel, when they combine with **FAME AND FORTUNE** in the 1.15pm over six furlongs.

This lightly-raced New Zealand-bred gelding has taken some time to acclimatise to the steamy conditions in Hong Kong, but has shown enough in recent races to warrant support in a lowly Class 5 contest.

Having run well after a tough journey behind Coby Oppa, currently competing against Class 3 company, on the all-weather surface in February, Fame and Fortune once again suffered bad luck over course and distance last month.

On that occasion he got shuffled back by a weakening rival on the home bend, before dashing strongly in the closing stages to finish fifth.

The handicapper has given him a chance by dropping him another 2lbs for that performance and he now races in the lowest grade in Hong Kong.

With an inside draw allowing him to find a prominent position from the off, he is going to be very hard to beat with a trouble-free run.

POINTERS

Fame And Fortune 1.15pm	Sha Tin

SHA TIN

Going: Dirt - STANDARD

12.15 KIU TSUI HANDICAP (CLASS 4) (3YO+) (ALL WEATHER TRACK) (DIRT) 1m 3yo plus 12 dec.

1 30-007 **RAZOR QUEST** (28) (T) (D) (G)
(5) C Chang 8-9-7 ..... **A Domeyer★ 80**
Runs: 33 Wins: 4 Places: 4

2 360507 **STARLIT KNIGHT** (21) (D) (GF,G)
(7) Y Tsui 7-9-7 ..... **J Moreira 71**
Runs: 33 Wins: 3 Places: 4

3 -63368 **PLAY WISE** (14)
(6) C Yip 6-9-4 ..... **Victor Wong(5) 78**
Runs: 20 Wins: 0 Places: 5

4 -80786 **SLEEP EDUCATION** (16) (B)
(9) D Ferraris 7-9-4 ..... **U Rispoli 80**
Runs: 22 Wins: 0 Places: 4

5 892846 **FLASH FAMOUS** (16) (ET) (G)
(3) F Lor 5-9-1 ..... **A Chan(10) 75**
Runs: 19 Wins: 1 Places: 1

6 955 **BUDDIES** (16) (HT)
(12) John Moore 4-8-13 ..... **Z Purton 78**
Runs: 3 Wins: 0 Places: 0

7 -70998 **MULTIGOGO** (56) (HT) (D) (G)
(10) A Cruz 6-8-9 ..... **K Teetan 78**
Runs: 30 Wins: 4 Places: 4

8 009 **REEVE'S MUNTJAC** (16) (T)
(4) C Yip 4-8-7 ..... **T So(2) 69**
Runs: 3 Wins: 0 Places: 0

9 29935- **SPEEDY WALLY** (189) (T) (D) (G,GF)
(8) C Fownes 9-8-6 ..... **C Schofield 78**
Runs: 32 Wins: 4 Places: 8

10 -82849 **HURRICANE HUNTER** (10) (G)
(11) C Yip 6-8-4 ..... **G Van Niekerk 77**
Runs: 17 Wins: 1 Places: 4

11 07-400 **ART OF RAW** (42) (HT) (G)
(2) K Lui 6-8-4 ..... **C Y Ho 77**
Runs: 23 Wins: 2 Places: 0

12 -68885 **ASSOCIATION FANS** (21) (H) (D) (GY,GF)
(1) L Ho 7-8-1 ..... **M Chadwick 65**
Runs: 33 Wins: 2 Places: 3

★**BETTING:** 7/4 Buddies, 4 Starlit Knight, 6 Play Wise, 8 Flash Famous, 12 Speedy Wally, 14 Association Fans, 16 Hurricane Hunter, Sleep Education, 20 Others

12.45 HAP MUN BAY HANDICAP (DIV I) (CLASS 4) (3YO+) (ALL WEATHER TRACK) (DIRT) 6f 3yo plus 12 dec.

1 00-008 **ELITE BOY** (16) (TB) (CD) (A)
(12) J Ting 5-9-6 ..... **M Poon(3) 79**
Runs: 12 Wins: 1 Places: 4

2 0-0070 **VERY LUCKY** (16) (B)
(5) K Lui 6-9-3 ..... **C Y Ho 63**
Runs: 9 Wins: 0 Places: 0

3 **BIG POWER** (HET)
(3) C Chang 4-9-0 ..... **A Domeyer 66**
Runs: 0 Wins: 0 Places: 0

4 **MEHBOOB**
(2) P O'Sullivan 4-9-0 ..... **M Chadwick -**
Runs: 0 Wins: 0 Places: 0

5 -40814 **SKY TREASURE** (35) (H) (CD) (A,G)
(4) Y Tsui 6-8-11 ..... **K Leung 72**
Runs: 25 Wins: 3 Places: 6

6 407394 **BOND ELEGANCE** (16) (E/S) (CD) (GY,G)
(10) J Size 6-8-10 ..... **J Moreira★ 79**
Runs: 36 Wins: 3 Places: 7

7 8976**7**- **SWEETIE BARLEY** (157) (B)
(7) C Fownes 5-8-9 ..... **Z Purton 75**
Runs: 14 Wins: 1 Places: 0

8 9-808 **BLOOMING SPIRIT** (16) (TB)
(9) F Lor 4-8-8 ..... **A Chan(10) 66**
Runs: 4 Wins: 0 Places: 0

9 -20900 **LUNAR ZEPHYR** (16) (T) (GF,G)
(6) W So 6-8-8 ..... **K Ng(3) 71**
Runs: 31 Wins: 2 Places: 5

10 71-787 **MANFUL STAR** (28) (D) (G)
(11) P Yiu 8-8-7 ..... **R Bayliss 78**
Runs: 19 Wins: 2 Places: 3

11 00**80** **DATING** (35) (HTB)
(1) C Yip 5-8-5 ..... **T So(2) 59**
Runs: 4 Wins: 0 Places: 0

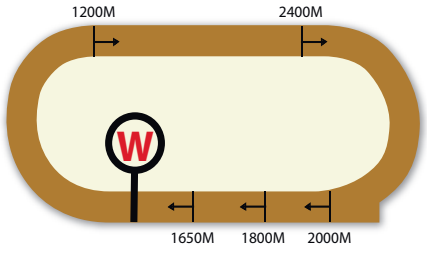
12 52-011 **CORRE RAPIDO** (35) (B) (CD) (A)
(8) Richard Gibson 7-8-3 ..... **K Teetan 77**
Runs: 22 Wins: 2 Places: 4

13 087807 **EPTIMUM** (14) (HT) (D) (G)
(13) L Ho 5-9-3 ..... **RESERVE 79**
Runs: 19 Wins: 2 Places: 0

14 6-4373 **SAM'S LOVE** (16) (T) (D)
(14) C Yip 6-9-7 ..... **RESERVE 73**
Runs: 20 Wins: 1 Places: 8

★**BETTING:** 3 Corre Rapido, 4 Sky Treasure, 5 Bond Elegance, Sweetie Barley, 11/2 Mehboob, 10 Elite Boy, 20 Others

Sha Tin Racecourse AW Track Starts



Crown Avenue will appreciate the return to the dirt having struggled on turf this season

1.15 SILVERMINE BAY HANDICAP (CLASS 5) (3YO+) (ALL WEATHER TRACK) (DIRT) 6f 3yo plus 12 dec.

1 085532 **MAJESTIC ENDEAVOUR** (16) (BF) (G)
(1) C Fownes 6-9-7 ..... **Z Purton 60**
Runs: 23 Wins: 1 Places: 2

2 -86468 **STAR SUPERIOR** (21) (CD) (SW,A)
(12) C Chang 7-9-7 ..... **R Bayliss 61**
Runs: 34 Wins: 2 Places: 3

3 **85-465 FAME AND FORTUNE** (35) (E/S)
(4) D Hall 5-9-6 ..... **C Y Ho 58**
Runs: 8 Wins: 0 Places: 0

4 04-970 **STRIKING MR C** (35) (TB)
(11) T Yung 5-9-3 ..... **M Yeung(2)★ 63**
Runs: 13 Wins: 0 Places: 2

5 010628 **OTOUTO** (24) (B) (D) (Y,G)
(9) A Millard 7-9-0 ..... **A Domeyer 60**
Runs: 37 Wins: 4 Places: 6

6 -60345 **ADONIS** (24) (HE) (BF)
(8) L Ho 6-8-13 ..... **J Moreira 66**
Runs: 15 Wins: 0 Places: 2

7 12033- **EXPONENTS** (189) (V) (G)
(5) Y Tsui 6-8-9 ..... **G Van Niekerk 66**
Runs: 20 Wins: 1 Places: 3

8 **3-1587 JIMSON THE FAMOUS** (16) (TB) (CD) (A)
(10) C Yip 7-8-9 ..... **A Chan(10) 58**
Runs: 40 Wins: 2 Places: 9

9 8-0525 **HIDDEN SPIRIT** (35) (TB)
(3) P O'Sullivan 5-8-3 ..... **K Teetan 63**
Runs: 12 Wins: 0 Places: 1

10 005482 **THE HAPPY BUNCH** (35) (B)
(2) C Shum 5-8-2 ..... **M Poon(3) 65**
Runs: 19 Wins: 0 Places: 1

11 000008 **INVESTOR BOOM** (21) (TB)
(6) John Moore 5-8-2 ..... **Victor Wong(5) 58**
Runs: 15 Wins: 0 Places: 1

12 -69940 **SURE SUPREME** (16) (B)
(7) W So 5-8-1 ..... **T So(2) 60**
Runs: 15 Wins: 0 Places: 0

13 9-5738 **COUR VALANT** (7) (P) (D)
(13) K Man 9-8-1 ..... **RESERVE 56**
Runs: 29 Wins: 2 Places: 6

14 0/5-97 **DOUBLE DOUBLE** (28) (TB)
(14) D Ferraris 7-8-1 ..... **RESERVE 55**
Runs: 9 Wins: 0 Places: 0

★**BETTING:** 4 Adonis, Majestic Endeavour, 5 The Happy Bunch, 11/2 Hidden Spirit, 7 Fame And Fortune, Star Superior, 8 Exponents, 20 Others

1.45 HAP MUN BAY HANDICAP (DIV II) (CLASS 4) (3YO+) (ALL WEATHER TRACK) (DIRT) 6f 3yo plus 12 dec.

1 058922 **VIVA COUNCIL** (16) (HV) (CD) (G,Y,A)
(8) L Ho 6-9-7 ..... **Victor Wong(5)★ 76**
Runs: 32 Wins: 4 Places: 5

2 **COLORADO HIGH**
(12) Richard Gibson 4-9-0 ..... **M Chadwick -**
Runs: 0 Wins: 0 Places: 0

3 **80-000 MCMUNIGAL** (16) (T) (S)
(5) D Hall 4-9-0 ..... **M Poon(3) 77**
Runs: 10 Wins: 1 Places: 1 €22,180

4 050013 **COOLCELEB** (16) (B) (CD) (A)
(2) T Yung 4-8-13 ..... **M Yeung(2) 75**
Runs: 7 Wins: 1 Places: 1

5 -60535 **HEARTS KEEPER** (16) (TB) (CD) (A)
(10) D Ferraris 10-8-13 ..... **A Domeyer 77**
Runs: 29 Wins: 3 Places: 8

6 **0-000 CHARITYDREAM** (24) (TP)
(9) W So 4-8-9 ..... **T So(2) 49**
Runs: 4 Wins: 0 Places: 0

7 **1-1493 EVER STRONG** (35) (E/S) (CD) (A)
(1) K Man 6-8-9 ..... **C Y Ho 72**
Runs: 21 Wins: 3 Places: 2

8 000 **BLADE RACER** (42)
(3) C Shum 4-8-8 ..... **G Van Niekerk 57**
Runs: 3 Wins: 0 Places: 0

9 7-0670 **LET'S COME BACK** (31) (T)
(6) C Fownes 4-8-7 ..... **R Bayliss 75**
Runs: 8 Wins: 0 Places: 0

10 -97520 **GRAND HARBOUR** (16) (TB) (CD) (A)
(7) C Chang 9-8-5 ..... **J Moreira 77**
Runs: 46 Wins: 2 Places: 12

11 -72365 **MULTIMAX** (31) (TB) (D) (G)
(11) A Cruz 8-8-5 ..... **K Teetan 73**
Runs: 41 Wins: 3 Places: 7

12 484296 **VERY SWEET ORANGE** (21) (B)
(4) Y Tsui 5-8-3 ..... **K Ng(3) 75**
Runs: 13 Wins: 0 Places: 2

13 **0-000 SUN FOXHUNTER** (31) (T)
(13) K Lui 5-8-5 ..... **RESERVE 58**
Runs: 4 Wins: 0 Places: 0

14 00-0 **OUR GREEN** (31) (B)
(14) C Yip 4-9-0 ..... **RESERVE 63**
Runs: 3 Wins: 0 Places: 0

★**BETTING:** 3 Coolceleb, 7/2 Viva Council, 5 Ever Strong, Hearts Keeper, 6 Grand Harbour, 10 Very Sweet Orange, 16 Colorado High, Multimax, 20 Others

2.15 PUI O HANDICAP (CLASS 4) (3YO+) (ALL WEATHER TRACK) (DIRT) 1m1f 3yo plus 13 dec.

1 -54282 **KING'S MAN** (16) (V) (D) (G)
(2) P Yiu 7-9-7 ..... **G Van Niekerk 75**
Runs: 34 Wins: 3 Places: 8

2 -09011 **GENERAL DINO** (16) (B) (C) (A)
(3) D Ferraris 5-9-5 ..... **K Teetan 77**
Runs: 31 Wins: 3 Places: 7

3 070846 **GREAT TREASURE** (16) (B) (G,GY,GF)
(10) Y Tsui 8-9-5 ..... **J Moreira★ 79**
Runs: 38 Wins: 5 Places: 5

4 9-6609 **FAITHFUL TRINITY** (16) (HET) (G)
(12) Richard Gibson 5-9-4 ..... **M Chadwick 79**
Runs: 22 Wins: 2 Places: 1

5 636594 **BRING IT ON** (16) (T) (D) (G)
(4) C Yip 6-9-0 ..... **K Ng(3) 77**
Runs: 40 Wins: 2 Places: 10 €4,655

6 -39506 **ENFOLDING** (35) (D)
(9) C Fownes 5-9-0 ..... **Z Purton 79**
Runs: 16 Wins: 2 Places: 5

7 068874 **CROWN AVENUE** (49) (V) (CD) (A,G)
(7) C Yip 7-8-11 ..... **U Rispoli 78**
Runs: 31 Wins: 4 Places: 1

8 131-19 **HOLY UNICORN** (59) (T) (CD,BF) (G,A)
(6) J Ting 6-8-8 ..... **Victor Wong(5) 69**
Runs: 28 Wins: 4 Places: 4

9 8-7363 **BUNDLE OF ENERGY** (14) (B)
(1) D Hall 5-8-7 ..... **K Leung 79**
Runs: 12 Wins: 0 Places: 3

10 0005 **WHISKY KNIGHT** (16) (ET)
(8) John Moore 4-8-5 ..... **C Y Ho 72**
Runs: 4 Wins: 0 Places: 0

11 232401 **ENJOYABLE SUCCESS** (14) (B) (D) (G)
(13) C Chang 5-8-3 ..... **M Yeung(2) 75**
Runs: 32 Wins: 3 Places: 4

12 -77880 **GOLDEN KID** (14) (V) (D) (G,GF)
(5) K Lui 7-8-2 ..... **M Poon(3) 70**
Runs: 30 Wins: 4 Places: 6

13 -82270 **LUCKY SHINY DAY** (28)
(11) L Ho 5-8-1 ..... **T So(2) 75**
Runs: 16 Wins: 0 Places: 5

★**BETTING:** 7/2 General Dino, 9/2 King's Man, 11/2 Holy Unicorn, 9 Enjoyable Success, 10 Enfolding, Great Treasure, 12 Bring It On, Bundle Of Energy, Faithful Trinity, 16 Crown Avenue, 20 Others

2.45 CAFETERIA HANDICAP (CLASS 2) (3YO+) (ALL WEATHER TRACK) (DIRT) 1m 3yo plus 10 dec.

1 **415-11 KING GENKI** (59) (T) (CD) (SW,A)
(10) A Cruz 7-9-7 ..... **Victor Wong(5)★ 110**
Runs: 34 Wins: 7 Places: 3

2 4-4551 **TURIN REDSTAR** (21) (TP) (CD) (G,A)
(7) F Lor 5-9-3 ..... **A Chan(10) 109**
Runs: 24 Wins: 6 Places: 6

3 **2-2252 RAGING BLITZKRIEG** (59) (H) (C,D) (G,A)
(9) J Size 5-9-1 ..... **J Moreira 112**
Runs: 27 Wins: 3 Places: 9

4 5-4410 **GOOD OMEN** (31) (V) (D) (S,G)
(1) C Yip 5-8-10 ..... **U Rispoli 108**
Runs: 26 Wins: 7 Places: 3

5 -53234 **GLORIOUS ARTIST** (31) (CD) (A)
(5) F Lor 5-8-9 ..... **Z Purton 119**
Runs: 23 Wins: 4 Places: 7

6 /112-0 **PARTY TOGETHER** (21) (H[1]) (G)
(3) L Ho 4-8-9 ..... **T So(2) 130**
Runs: 6 Wins: 3 Places: 1

7 **257-01 ROYAL PERFORMER** (16) (HE) (CD) (G,A)
(8) C Fownes 6-8-8 ..... **C Y Ho 109**
Runs: 20 Wins: 5 Places: 6

8 660-98 **STIMULATION** (52) (TP) (D) (VS)
(6) A Cruz 5-8-4 ..... **K Teetan 118**
Runs: 15 Wins: 3 Places: 2

9 -96598 **PEOPLE'S KNIGHT** (16) (TB) (CD) (G,A)
(2) John Moore 7-8-4 ..... **K Leung 111**
Runs: 35 Wins: 5 Places: 3

10 6-0800 **PACKING WARRIOR** (14) (TP) (GS)
(4) A Cruz 4-8-2 ..... **M Chadwick 126**
Runs: 10 Wins: 1 Places: 1

★**BETTING:** 2 Raging Blitzkrieg, 3 Turin Redstar, 7/2 Glorious Artist, 8 Royal Performer, 12 Good Omen, 14 Packing Warrior, 16 People's Knight, 20 Others

3.15 CHEUNG SHA HANDICAP (CLASS 3) (3YO+) (ALL WEATHER TRACK) (DIRT) 6f 3yo plus 12 dec.

1 **394-63 ENCORE BOY** (16) (CD) (G,SW)
(6) P Yiu 6-9-7 ..... **A Chan(10)★ 97**
Runs: 21 Wins: 3 Places: 9

2 /769-7 **MEGA RED** (28) (B) (CD) (A)
(4) C Chang 8-9-5 ..... **R Bayliss 99**
Runs: 10 Wins: 2 Places: 1

3 **420-19 JUST NOT LISTENING** (16) (P) (CD) (A)
(1) John Moore 5-9-1 ..... **C Schofield 91**
Runs: 14 Wins: 3 Places: 3

4 **5-7232 TEAM FORTUNE** (16) (TB) (CD)
(9) W So 8-9-0 ..... **J Moreira 96**
Runs: 25 Wins: 3 Places: 6

5 **76-355 JOYFUL MOMENTS** (35) (B) (CD) (A)
(10) Richard Gibson 8-8-13 ..... **Victor Wong(5) 98**
Runs: 26 Wins: 2 Places: 3

6 0-7546 **HANDSOME REBEL** (42) (HB)
(3) Y Tsui 4-8-12 ..... **Z Purton 95**
Runs: 7 Wins: 0 Places: 0

7 1-0 **E GENERATION** (10) (D) (G)
(8) K Man 4-8-11 ..... **A Domeyer 66**
Runs: 2 Wins: 1 Places: 0

8 04072- **MASSIVE POCKET** (304)
(7) K Lui 6-8-9 ..... **C Y Ho 93**
Runs: 6 Wins: 0 Places: 1

9 **21**-065 **CASA DE FORCA** (14) (T) (GF,A)
(12) A Cruz 4-8-7 ..... **M Chadwick 110**
Runs: 13 Wins: 3 Places: 2

10 00- **HAPPY FUN** (297) (TB)
(5) C Shum 6-8-7 ..... **M Poon(3) 80**
Runs: 2 Wins: 0 Places: 0

11 4142 **COBY OPPA** (35) (T) (CD,BF) (A)
(11) F Lor 4-8-6 ..... **K Teetan 92**
Runs: 4 Wins: 1 Places: 1

12 99-900 **CAO CAO** (16) (B) (G)
(2) A Millard 5-8-4 ..... **G Van Niekerk 95**
Runs: 17 Wins: 2 Places: 2

13 -07684 **FANTASTIC FABIO** (7) (CD) (SW,GY,GF,G)
(13) C Yip 6-8-2 ..... **RESERVE 97**
Runs: 32 Wins: 5 Places: 4

★**BETTING:** 11/4 Encore Boy, 7/2 Coby Oppa, 5 Just Not Listening, 12 Handsome Rebel, Massive Pocket, Mega Red, 14 Joyful Moments, 20 Others

3.50 CLEAR WATER BAY HANDICAP (CLASS 3) (3YO+) (ALL WEATHER TRACK) (DIRT) 1m 3yo plus 14 dec.

1 -90940 **JADE FORTUNE** (24) (HB) (CD) (GF,A,SW,G)
(6) K Man 7-9-7 ..... **A Chan(10) 92**
Runs: 36 Wins: 5 Places: 4

2 **63-511 CHUNG WAH SPIRIT** (45) (ET) (CD) (G,A)
(4) C Yip 6-9-5 ..... **Z Purton 92**
Runs: 26 Wins: 3 Places: 6

3 **805000 HANG'S DECISION** (16) (HB) (CD) (GF,G,A)
(13) W So 8-9-3 ..... **K Ng(3)★ 90**
Runs: 40 Wins: 5 Places: 8

4 /**12-07 OWNERS' STAR** (45) (HT) (A)
(14) C Shum 4-9-3 ..... **C Schofield 98**
Runs: 10 Wins: 2 Places: 3

5 -92947 **VOLPINO** (35) (HT)
(1) T Yung 6-9-3 ..... **U Rispoli 94**
Runs: 13 Wins: 0 Places: 2

6 7-0060 **DRAGON COMMANDER** (35) (D) (G)
(12) D Ferraris 4-9-1 ..... **A Domeyer 96**
Runs: 10 Wins: 1 Places: 0

7 064312 **PING HAI TREASURE** (16) (E/S) (C,BF) (A)
(10) J Size 4-9-0 ..... **J Moreira 95**
Runs: 8 Wins: 1 Places: 2

8 **3-1920 GAMEPLAYER EMPEROR** (16) (B) (C) (GF,G,GS,A)
(2) F Lor 4-8-13 ..... **K Leung 96**
Runs: 18 Wins: 4 Places: 4

9 -32380 **FAMOUS WARRIOR** (49) (TB)
(9) A Cruz 6-8-11 ..... **C Y Ho 97**
Runs: 15 Wins: 0 Places: 7

10 0-1900 **MONGOLIAN LEGEND** (52) (E/S) (CD) (A)
(3) Y Tsui 6-8-11 ..... **M Yeung(2) 93**
Runs: 13 Wins: 1 Places: 0

11 **20-764 NUCLEAR POWER** (16) (C) (A)
(11) D Hall 5-8-9 ..... **M Poon(3) 96**
Runs: 30 Wins: 2 Places: 8

12 700005 **WILLIE WAY** (16) (B) (CD) (SW,G)
(8) P O'Sullivan 8-8-9 ..... **G Van Niekerk 95**
Runs: 29 Wins: 4 Places: 7

13 **34-915 IMPERIAL CONCORDE** (45) (TP) (CD) (FT,A)
(5) F Lor 9-8-8 ..... **K Teetan 89**
Runs: 26 Wins: 5 Places: 5 €15,405

14 -60080 **TANG FLEMING** (38) (TB) (CD) (A)
(7) C Chang 6-8-6 ..... **Victor Wong(5) 98**
Runs: 33 Wins: 3 Places: 9

15 0-9809 **SPLENDID TIMING** (16) (B) (D) (G)
(15) C Chang 5-8-5 ..... **RESERVE 92**
Runs: 6 Wins: 1 Places: 0

★**BETTING:** 11/4 Chung Wah Spirit, 9/2 Ping Hai Treasure, 11/2 Jade Fortune, 12 Imperial Concorde, Mongolian Legend, 14 Gameplayer Emperor, Nuclear Power, Willie Way, 16 Hang's Decision, Volpino, 20 Others

THE PUNTER

RACING TRADER

BILL ESDAILE'S CHESTER VASE 1-2-3

1 KING OTTOKAR
2 NORWAY
3 TECHNICIAN

Bill Esdaile previews the MBNA Chester Vase

King Ottokar (near) relished the soft ground when winning at Newbury last month

FORECAST RAIN CAN SEE OTTOKAR CROWNED KING IN CHESTER VASE

TRAINER Aidan O'Brien had a weekend to remember when taking both the 1000 and 2000 Guineas at Newmarket and will fancy his chances of landing this afternoon's MBNA Chester Vase (3.35pm) for an eighth time in 11 years.

However, the question is which of his three entries holds the best chance as they all seem suited by very different conditions.

The master of Ballydoyle has teamed up with Ryan Moore to win six of the last eight renewals and the pair unite again with favourite **NORWAY**.

The son of Galileo had plenty of experience as a juvenile, with the pick of his form being a win in the Listed Zetland Stakes at Newmarket last October.

He went on to finish a fair fourth in the Group One Criterium de Saint-Cloud on his final start of the campaign which may have come just a little too close to those Newmarket exertions.

Norway looks to be his stable's leading contender for this and has obviously done well over the winter to be the choice of Moore.

However, the one uncertainty with him is how he will handle the rain-softened ground should the poor forecast materialise.

Predicted rainfall totals seem to change on an almost hourly basis, but one thing for certain is that if the thick end of the currently projected 10mm arrives this morning, the ground will ride soft.

Hopefully the rain will not inconvenience him but we do know that it will suit his stablemate Sir Dragonet, who only made his racecourse debut at Tipperary a couple of weeks ago.

The well-bred colt handled soft ground that day and ran out a convincing winner over this sort of trip.

Jockey Wayne Lordan's confidence will be sky-high after winning Sunday's 1000 Guineas and he could upset a few here aboard this son of Camelot.

The pair have plenty to find on the form book but looks potentially overpriced at around 8/1 should conditions drastically deteriorate.

Gentil Bellini, the other O'Brien runner, won his Cork maiden in convincing fashion last month and looks another leading contender if the rain stays away.

He has done all his racing on a sounder surface, so his ability to handle soft ground is a big unknown.

The one horse who will be totally at home in the conditions, though, is the Charlie Fellowes-trained **KING OTTOKAR** who looked well above average at Newbury on his reappearance last month.

The son of Investec Derby winner Motivator looked a chip off the old block when galloping his rivals into the ground that day, relishing the rain-softened surface.

He burst some big reputations there, including the likes of Space Blues, Turgenev and Headman, and even though the form may not have been franked so far, it was a visually taking performance.

There is likely to be more to come and every drop of rain that falls will only aid his chances, meaning the 10/3 currently available should be snapped up.

My selection had Andrew Balding's Dashing Willoughby behind him that day and this son of Nathaniel looks another likely to be suited by the step up in trip.

The same can also be said for Kaloor, who ran on late behind King Ottokar and Dashing Willoughby at Newbury.

That was only the second start of his life and it would be dangerous to totally dismiss him from the equation with the extra two furlongs likely to be right up his street.

Martyn Meade's **TECHNICIAN** enjoyed the step up to this distance when winning at Leicester on his seasonal reappearance and then stepped up from that to finish second to Bangkok in the Sandown Classic Trial.

He may well have won that day if he hadn't been hemmed in and the step back up in trip is another big plus.

Whether he would want conditions to get really testing is unlikely, but he looks a colt improving with every start and is hard to leave out of the equation.

Arthur Kitt can be forgiven for his failure at Epsom last month as his head hit the ground on exiting the stalls.

Whether he will be seen at his best over this trip on rain-softened ground is open to question, but he has plenty of class.

TODAY'S BIG RACE AT CHESTER — RACING POST

3.35 MBNA CHESTER VASE STAKES (GROUP 3) (COLTS & GELDINGS) (1) £56,710 1m4½f — ITV4

1 (7) 1254-5 **ARTHUR KITT** (14) (BF) (G,GF)
T Dascombe 3-9-0 ..... **R Kingscote★ 122**
Runs: 6 Wins: 2 Places: 1 £110,237

2 (4) 128-2 **DASHING WILLOUGHBY** (26)(A)
A Balding 3-9-0 ..... **O Murphy 118**
Runs: 4 Wins: 1 Places: 2 £12,790

3 (2) 42-1 **GENTILE BELLINI** (18) (G)
A P O'Brien (IRE) 3-9-0 .... **W M Lordan 108**
Runs: 3 Wins: 1 Places: 1 £11,261

4 (1) 1-3 **KALOOR** (26) (G)
B Meehan 3-9-0 ..... **J Crowley 112**
Runs: 2 Wins: 1 Places: 1 £6,649

5 (5) 19-1 **KING OTTOKAR** (26) (S)
C Fellowes 3-9-0 ..... **B A Curtis 121**
Runs: 3 Wins: 2 Places: 0 £15,881

6 (6) 53114- **NORWAY** (193) (P[1]) (BF) (G,GF)
A P O'Brien (IRE) 3-9-0 ..... **R L Moore 119**
Runs: 5 Wins: 2 Places: 1 £9,304

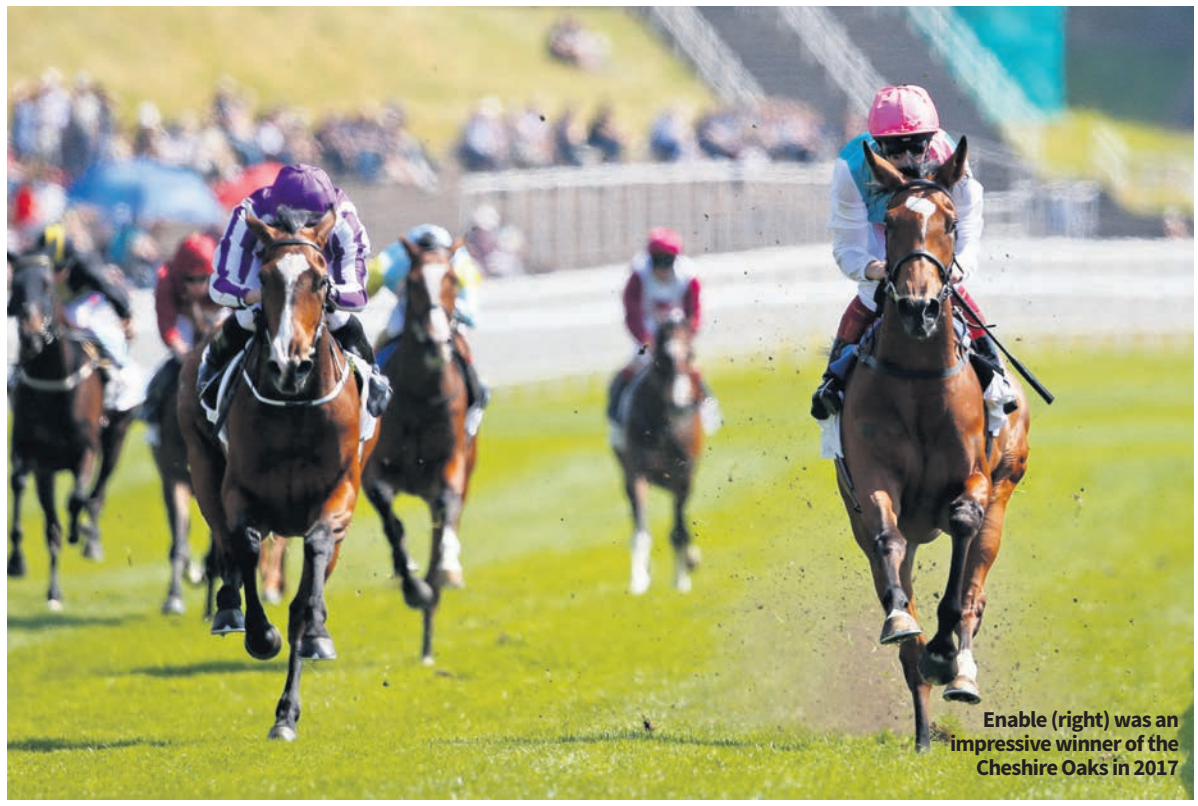
7 (8) 1 **SIR DRAGONET** (13) (D) (YS)
A P O'Brien (IRE) 3-9-0 ..... **D O'Brien 99**
Runs: 1 Wins: 1 Places: 0 £7,392

8 (3) 3-12 **TECHNICIAN** (12) (D) (G)
M Meade 3-9-0 ..... **L Dettori 118**
Runs: 3 Wins: 1 Places: 2 £25,330

2018: Young Rascal 3 9 0, James Doyle 100/30 (W Haggas), 10 ran.
★BETTING: 7/2 King Ottokar, Technician, 4 Norway, 6 Gentile Bellini, 7 Dashing Willoughby, Sir Dragonet, 10 Arthur Kitt, 12 Kaloor

Bill Esdaile previews the rest of today's Chester card

Go with Gosden and Dettori to strike again in Cheshire Oaks



Enable (right) was an impressive winner of the Cheshire Oaks in 2017

IT IS not just the Chester Vase that Aidan O'Brien has a great record in, he has had his fair share of success in this afternoon's Arkle Finance Cheshire Oaks (2.25pm) as well.

A total of six wins, including three of the last four, means he is now just one away from Barry Hills who took this prize seven times between 1974 and 2005.

Last year, he saddled a one-two with Ryan Moore's mount Magic Wand getting the better of stablemate Forever Together, who went on to reverse the form in the Investec Oaks at Epsom the following month.

O'Brien and Moore combine this time with Second Thoughts, but there has to be a worry about the daughter of War Front getting home, especially if the rain arrives.

She is yet to race over further than seven furlongs, so is faced with an extra four and a half furlongs this afternoon and I think she will be better over shorter trips in the future.

John Gosden and Frankie Dettori won this race two years ago with the brilliant Enable and although it's highly unlikely there is anything of her calibre in this year's renewal, I can see **FANNY LOGAN** running a big race.

The daughter of Sea The Stars lost out narrowly to stablemate Mehdaayih, who reopposes today, in a Yarmouth maiden last October.

She was very well backed to win a 1m2f novice contest at Wetherby last month on her reappearance where she got the job done well.

Her future lies over middle distances and it's interesting that Dettori rides her rather than Mehdaayih.

Admittedly, he may not have had the choice, but there doesn't seem to be much between them and Fanny Logan is perhaps a little more unexposed.

At 13/2 in a few places, she looks worth backing each-way to give Gosden his third win in the race.

Ralph Beckett has done well with fillies over the years and his horses are in great form so you have to respect his Manuela De Vega, who was unbeaten in two starts as a two-year-old.

The only real negative with her is that her Listed win at Pontefract in October means she has to carry a 3lb penalty this afternoon.

Stamina shouldn't be a problem for the daughter of Lope De Vega, who is a sister to Isabel De Urbina, although some of her relatives have done better over a mile so it isn't guaranteed.

Grace And Danger is worth a mention coming here on the back of a decent win in a fillies' maiden at Nottingham in October on soft ground.

Andrew Balding does well at Chester and this filly should cope if conditions deteriorate, although she will obviously need to step up to be winning it.

The opening Stellar Group Lily Agnes Stakes (1.50pm) looks a trappy affair.

In the past decade, only twice has the winner come from a stall higher than five so we can normally put a line through those drawn out wide.

Show Me Show Me, the Brocklesby winner, and Electric Ladyland are both unbeaten, but will break from stalls eight and 10 respectively, while the former also has to carry a penalty.

David O'Meara's **GREAT DAME** (stall three) won well at Ripon last month and her stablemate who she beat that day came out and landed a Beverley novice on Monday so the form has been franked.

From a good draw she looks a fair bet around the 5/1 mark.

POINTERS

Great Dame
1.50pm Chester
Fanny Logan e/w
2.25pm Chester

Chapelli can give Norton yet another Roodee winner

WHEN you think about jockeys at Chester, there is only one man's name that springs to mind.

Franny Norton has become synonymous with riding winners around the Roodee, with a record 45 wins.

Unsurprisingly, the veteran has plenty of rides on today's card, but he may have to wait until his final one to be celebrating.

That's because I like the chances of **CHAPELLI** in the six furlong Homeserve Handicap (4.35pm).

Mark Johnston's three-year-old has been running well this season, with two runners-up finishes either side of a third at Newmarket.

It's her most-recent performance that was particularly eye-catching, though, where she was just touched off by Isaan Queen in a Listed contest on the all-weather at Chelmsford.

I expect the form of that race to work out well and given she has race fitness on her side, she should play a big part here.

A draw in stall two looks ideal and there is no-one better equipped than Norton to use that to his advantage in a competitive handicap such as this one.

The forecasted rain is a mild concern given Chapelli hasn't run on ground worse than good, but I'm hoping that won't cause her too much trouble and Johnston's inmate looks worth supporting at around 9/4.

Pass The Gin showed clear improvement from her two-year-old days when finishing third in a Sandown handicap and would definitely come into the reckoning on the back of that, though a draw in nine is far from ideal.

Last year's Woodcote Stakes winner Cosmic Law is another threat and has the plumb draw in stall one, but I'll stick with Chapelli who can give Norton his 46th Chester winner.

@BillEsdaile

POINTERS

Chapelli
4.35pm Chester

SPORT

ANFIELD EPIC

Liverpool stun Barcelona to reach Champions League final in unforgettable circumstances, writes **Felix Keith**

ANFIELD has seen some famous nights, especially in European football, but this was special. Trailing 3-0 from the first leg, against one of Europe's most prestigious, decorated and star-studded sides, Liverpool pulled off the biggest turnaround in Champions League semi-final history.

Shorn of two of their three top scorers, they created new heroes, with the four goals they needed coming from a striker perennially in the shadows and a man who only found himself on the pitch through necessity, due to injury. Divock Origi and Georginio Wijnaldum were the unlikely stars of the unlikely comeback, but fitted the narrative of an unforgettable night in Liverpool perfectly.

ELECTRIC ATMOSPHERE

Before the game Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp spent all his time in front of cameras, journalists and in his programme notes instilling the belief that mission impossible was, in fact, possible. In case that message had not sunk in for some, sitting in the stands the injured Mohamed Salah sported a T-shirt bearing the slogan Never Give Up.

Whether the thousands of fans funnelling into Anfield believed it or not, they played their part, producing the kind of intense, all-encompassing and finally joyous atmosphere the stadium has become famed for and which added that extra percentage point. Talk of the Kop End sucking the ball into the net may be overdoing it, but right from the word go, with the home side visibly pumped up, the backdrop provided fertile conditions for an upset.

MAN FOR THE MOMENT

If Origi never scores another goal for Liverpool it won't matter: his cult hero status is assured.

Not content with a Merseyside derby winner against Everton in December and a last-gasp decider at Newcastle on Saturday night to keep Liverpool in the Premier League title race until this weekend's final round, the Belgian striker upped the ante.

When Marc-Andre ter Stegen pushed out Jordan Henderson's attempt seven minutes in, there he was to tap in the opener. And when the outstanding Trent Alexander-Arnold's instinctive quick thinking spotted him unmarked in a static Barcelona penalty area from a corner, there he was to sweep into the top corner the crowning glory 79 minutes in. "It's just special," Origi told BT Sport on the pitch. "It's hard to describe with words."

LIVERPOOL BARCA

4 – 0

(4-3 ON AGGREGATE)

Origi (7', 79'),
Wijnaldum (54', 56')

WAVE OF BELIEF

Wijnaldum was more forthcoming with his emotions. "I was really angry with the manager putting me on the bench," he admitted.

Origi's strikes bookended the night, but Wijnaldum's changed the complexion, coming two minutes and two seconds apart after he came onto the pitch at half-time in place of the injured Andy Robertson.

Alexander-Arnold was once again the architect, winning the ball off Jordi Alba and crossing low for the late-arriving Wijnaldum to tuck underneath Ter Stegen. From the resulting kick-off Xherdan Shaqiri's ball from the opposite flank found the Holland midfielder unmarked to head in for 3-0 and create a wave of belief. Barcelona were rattled.

BATTERED BARCA

Barcelona had no excuses. Every single player was fresh, having been rested at the weekend in a 2-0 defeat by Celta Vigo. And with Ousmane Dembele having missed a gilt-edged chance with the last kick of the first leg, they conspired to miss more at Anfield. Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson was in inspired form, but there were more than enough openings to score the crucial away goal which would have killed the tie.

Instead of reaching their first Champions League final for four years Ernesto Valverde's side conspired to produce a painful repeat of last season's 3-0 away defeat at Roma which sent them out at the quarter-finals on away goals, after a 4-1 home leg win.

For Barca it's a case of what-ifs again. For Liverpool, after the pain of last season's final, a first Champions League trophy since that fabled night in Istanbul is within reach again.

Diamond coaches unite England's title rivals

FOOTBALL COMMENT

Trevor Steven

HOWEVER the Premier League concludes on Sunday, I don't think the competition has ever seen two better teams than Manchester City and Liverpool. Both are a credit to the competition and could easily be champions in any other season.

And thank goodness for Liverpool hanging in there and keeping pace with City until the final weekend. If they had been happy to finish a comfortable second then this title race would have been done and dusted weeks ago.

The top two have been head and shoulders above the rest. For squads full of international players, the other four members of the Big Six have fallen so far short – there are 23 points between second and third – that it's a bit embarrassing.

City and Liverpool have set a new standard and it is hard to imagine they won't be in a two-horse race again next year. There is more to come from both teams and that is an intimidating prospect for Chelsea, Tottenham, Arsenal and Manchester United.

As an Evertonian, I don't want to see Liverpool winning things but you have to give credit where it's due. They play with pace, directness and dynamism and they get you on the edge of your seat. I enjoy watching them and Reds fans must be thrilled.

They have matured this season, and have quality and depth in every position. If they do finish second having only lost once in the league, you'd have to feel for them.

Either way, the inconsistency that has plagued the club in recent years is now firmly in the past. And given how well they progressed through the Champions League, they have re-established themselves as one of Europe's leading teams.

City have different qualities but are also exceptional. Their play is more possession-based than pace-driven, although they can go that way with Raheem Sterling and Leroy Sane.

FINE MARGIN

It would be huge achievement if they became the first team to defend the Premier League since 2009. Liverpool have kept them under the cosh; to have not wavered when their best player, Kevin De Bruyne, has been injured for much of the season, shows how strong City are. Sergio Aguero deserves a special mention for shouldering the striking burden for most of the campaign.

Two factors unite City and Liverpool: outstanding coaches and their refusal to give up. Pep Guardiola and Jurgen Klopp have deployed players in their specific strategies but without suffocating their talents – in fact, taking them to another level. They have polished diamonds.

And it's no coincidence that Guardiola and Klopp are forever praising their sides' determination. They have been relentless every game, and you can't say that about the chasing pack. Talent doesn't win anything on its own; the best teams work as hard as, if not harder than, the competition.

Unless they fall at the final hurdle, Sunday's trip to Brighton, City will be champions again. With an FA Cup final in prospect a few days later, they are just 180 minutes from a probable domestic treble and have only fallen slightly short of a quadruple.

I can't see Brighton scoring against City or keeping a clean sheet. The current champions' ability to manoeuvre the ball – their cuteness – is just too strong. When it comes down to it, maybe that extra creativity in midfield has been the very fine margin between them and Liverpool.

Trevor Steven is a former England footballer who has played at two World Cups and two European Championships. @TrevorSteven63

Aguero has shouldered City's striking burden

SPORT DIGEST

BRITAIN'S EDMUND AND KONTA EXIT MADRID OPEN

British No1s Kyle Edmund and Johanna Konta were both knocked out of the Madrid Open yesterday. Edmund was beaten 6-4, 6-3 by Italy's Fabio Fognini in the first round to suffer a fourth successive defeat. Konta slipped to a 7-5, 6-1 loss against French Open champion Simona Halep to exit the clay-court tournament in the second round. Meanwhile, Andy Murray has been offered a wildcard to play at Queen's Club next month. The 31-year-old has not played since undergoing hip surgery in January.

DENLY AND VINCE COULD FILL IN FOR MOEEN AND ROY

Joe Denly will be handed the opportunity to strengthen his World Cup case today after Moeen Ali was ruled out of England's One-Day International against Pakistan. Denly's part-time leg spin is likely to fill in for Moeen, who has a minor rib injury, at the Oval, while Jonny Bairstow, Jos Buttler, Ben Stokes and Chris Woakes are also in contention after being rested last week. Hampshire batsman James Vince could be given another chance to impress, with Surrey's Jason Roy nursing a back problem. England play five ODIs against Pakistan before finalising their squad on 23 May.

FERRARI HOPE NEW ENGINE WILL CLOSE MERCEDES GAP

Ferrari will introduce a new engine at the Spanish Grand Prix this weekend in a bid to try and close the gap to Formula One rivals Mercedes. Team boss Mattia Binotto said Ferrari were "pushing hard to make up the ground" after Mercedes claimed one-two finishes in all four of this season's races. The upgrades also include new fuel and aerodynamic tweaks.

AUSTRALIA'S FOLAU GUILTY OF BREACHING CONTRACT

Israel Folau is awaiting sanctions after a hearing found him guilty of a "high level" breach of Rugby Australia's contract for saying "hell awaits" gay people. Folau had his contract ended last month and a three-personal panel will now consider what punishment the 30-year-old devout Christian should face.

MIDDLESEX INTO KNOCK-OUTS BUT SURREY FLOP

Middlesex will play Lancashire on Friday in the One-Day Cup knock-out stages after sealing second place by beating Kent. Max Holden scored 166 to help post 380-5 before James Harris took 4-65 to bowl the hosts out for 347. Surrey's miserable 50-over season came to an end with a five-wicket defeat by Somerset which left them with seven losses from eight games.

MASKED MAN Spurs' Vertonghen passed fit for Ajax second leg

Tottenham defender Jan Vertonghen is available to face Ajax in tonight's Champions League semi-final second leg after being cleared of having concussion. Vertonghen staggered off the pitch in last week's 1-0 home leg defeat following a clash of heads with Toby Alderweireld and missed Saturday's 1-0 loss at Bournemouth, but can play this evening in a face mask. Son Heung-min is back after being suspended for the first leg, Erik Lamela and Serge Aurier have both recovered from hamstring injuries, but Davinson Sanchez is out with a hamstring injury.