theguardian

Corrections and clarifications

Patrick Reynolds letter | Savannah Phillips | Proscribed/prescribed | Jean Quan | Silvia Balotelli | Les Blank

Corrections and clarifications column editor
guardian.co.uk, Monday 31 October 2011 16.10 GMT

• A letter from Patrick Reynolds, former secretary-general of the Europe of Democracies and Diversities Group in the European parliament, was edited in a way that reversed his meaning. The printed version of his letter began: "Europe and the EU are identical and interchangeable terms." The preceding sentence, which was cut, made clear that the writer believed this was an erroneous proposition (Letters, 28 October, page 49).

• The Queen's 10-month-old great-granddaughter, Savannah Phillips, was overlooked in an article and graphic illustrating how the order of succession to the throne would change when male children no longer take precedence over their older sisters. Savannah would rise to sixth under the new rules. The Duke of York would drop to eighth, not seventh as we said (Succession act will end male right to reign over us, 28 October, page 1).

• Near homophone corner, from an article referring to the restrictions placed by some airlines on the appearance of female cabin crew: "Even footwear is proscribed." A reader comments, "My heart goes out to all those barefoot stewardesses." (Flight of fancy, 28 October, page 16, G2).

• Whirlpool to cut 5,000 jobs was corrected because the original said the company was to move dishwasher production from Poland to Germany. The move will be from Germany to Poland.

• Occupy protesters clash with police in Denver and Portland was corrected because it described the mayor of Oakland in California as male. Jean Quan is a woman.

• South African prosecuted for helping his mother to die was amended to correct the date of Sean Davison's arrest.

• Mario Balotelli: why always him? was corrected because the original referred to the footballer's foster parents as Francesco and Silvio Balotelli. They are Francesco and Silvia.

• Errol Morris: creating reality was corrected because the original incorrectly spelled the name of the director of Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe, Les Blank, as Les Back.

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Corrections and clarifications

Taliban car bomb | Sheffield Forgemasters | St Paul's and the Great Fire of London | No win-no fee agreements

Corrections and clarifications column editor
guardian.co.uk, Tuesday 1 November 2011 10.06 GMT

• An article reporting on a £36m loan to Sheffield Forgemasters incorrectly stated that the company was in "Nick Clegg's Sheffield Hallam constituency". The company is in fact in the Darnall ward of the Sheffield South East constituency (Clegg steel firm gets £36m loan, 1 November, page 2).

• St Paul's Cathedral did not "survive the Great Fire of London" as we had it – due to an editing error – in an analysis of the dispute over the Occupy London protest camp being sited by the cathedral walls. However, the building designed by Sir Christopher Wren that came after the one destroyed in the fire did survive the blitz (How confusion and indecision brought cathedral to its knees, 1 November, page 5).

• A story about the deaths of two British electricians in a Taliban car bomb attack in Kabul incorrectly stated that the bus they were travelling in "had just left the counter-insurgency school run by Nato at Camp Julien in the west of the city". The camp is in the south of the city (Two Britons die in Taliban blast, 31 October, page 4).

• Milly Dowler parents join Yeates's landlord to oppose end to no win-no fee agreements was corrected because the original headline referred to legal aid cuts.

• Academic linked to Gaddafi's fugitive son leaves LSE was amended to clarify that Fred Halliday was a distinguished Middle East expert at the LSE before his death.

• The picture caption of China hits back over US claims of satellite hacking was corrected because it originally said a satellite image of Washington, DC. It is actually of New York.

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Corrections and clarifications

Clive Milner | Richard Ottaway | Nick Clegg and Sheffield Forgemasters | Bede Rundle | Greg Barker and solar power subsidies

Corrections and clarifications column editor
guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 2 November 2011 14.18 GMT

• A blog about documents released by the parliamentary select committee investigating phone hacking was corrected to remove a reference to News International's former chief operating officer Clive Milner. The original said that a memo showed that Tom Crone, then the News of the World legal affairs manager, had a meeting in June 2008 with JM and CM to discuss a settlement with Gordon Taylor and that CM was "presumably Clive Milner". CM did not refer to Clive Milner, who was not at the meeting, and we apologise for the error.

• A story about the rendition of two men to Libya (MI6 knew I was tortured, says Libyan rebel leader, 6 September, page 1) named Richard Ottaway MP, as indicating that the intelligence and security committee was unaware of the cases. Some readers may have inferred that he was the source of the ISC position. He was not and his name was wrongly included in the story due to an editing error.

• For Cameron big bridges are sexier than real jobs was corrected because the original said a foundry that has been offered a government loan of £36m is in Nick Clegg's constituency. It is in Sheffield South East, not his constituency of Sheffield Hallam.

• Israel rushes settlement growth after Unesco accepts Palestinians was amended to correct the number of votes against Palestine being admitted as a Unesco member state from four to 14.

• Hugh Grant becomes a father was amended because it said the actor's daughter was born "earlier this month". The birth was in September.

• The Diary column was corrected because the original named the minister who explained the coalition's decision to cut subsidies for solar power as Greg Clark. It was Greg Barker.

• The obituary for the philosopher Bede Rundle was corrected because the original referred to one of his books as Why Is There Something Rather Than Nothing? The correct title is Why There Is Something Rather Than Nothing.

• Special agent film shows American sport red in tooth, claw and bull was corrected because the original said 50 Documentaries To See Before You Die was shown on Pick TV. The channel was Current TV.

• EMI sale in the balance as Warner Music withdraws bid was corrected because the original converted $1.5bn to £1 rather than £1bn.

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Corrections and clarifications

Greek bailout | George Kuchar | Giles Fraser | Families Unlimited | Payam Tamiz | Jimmy Savile and Radio Caroline

Corrections and clarifications column editor
guardian.co.uk, Thursday 3 November 2011 13.43 GMT

• A report on the Greek prime minister's decision to hold a referendum on the debt rescue deal said polls showed that 60% of Greeks were "vehemently opposed" to the bailout. In fact a poll showed that 60% had a negative or partly negative view of the rescue deal (Papandreou's bombshell a surprise to his own ministers as well as Europe's leaders, 2 November, page 5).

• An obituary of the film-maker George Kuchar was illustrated with a photograph that did not show him, as the caption said, but his twin brother, Mike (20 October, page 35).

• Giles Fraser, until recently canon chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, was described as having, in a fortuitous piece of timing, signed up to present a radio series on the church and money. Our timing was out: the series has already been made and aired last June (What do religious folk do after they resign?, 2 November, page 2, G2).

• An article about the new Photographs Gallery at the V&A museum in London was accompanied by an uncredited photograph of teddy girls. The photographer was Roger Mayne (Photography's alchemists get full exposure at V&A, 25 October, page 11).

• Emma Harrison set up firm to pitch for government cash on project she devised was amended to add the following footnote: Families Unlimited (the unincorporated joint venture set up by A4e and Gill Strachan Limited) has asked us to make clear that it was not set up solely for the purpose of bidding for European Social Fund (ESF) monies but rather to jointly develop and market their expertise in connection with the whole family/total person approach to worklessness, including preparing for and submitting tenders for work with local authorities and central government and, if successful, to undertake the provision of contracts. Further, we are happy to clarify that while Families Unlimited explored the possibility of acting as a subcontractor with a number of primes in bidding for ESF Funding they took a commercial decision not to do so.

• Two articles dated 27 April, the politics live blog and an article headed Cameron's 'Calm down, dear' is a classic sexist put-down, and one dated 30 April, Bidisha's This Week column, have been amended to remove an incorrect suggestion that Payam Tamiz was a member of the "Girls in Thanet" Facebook group. Mr Tamiz has apologised for remarks about women posted on his own Facebook page in 2009 and 2010.

• Sir Jimmy Savile's obituary was amended to remove an incorrect reference to his having worked for Radio Caroline.

• Greek government teeters on brink of collapse in wake of referendum plan was corrected because the original said the Greek finance minister, Evangelos Venizelos, was taken to hospital before the referendum announcement. In fact Venizelos went to hospital after the referendum was announced.

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Corrections and clarifications

Occupy London and thermal imaging | Aneurysm screening | Bexley grammar school | Sheffield peace conference | Street artists | Keegan Bradley

Corrections and clarifications column editor
guardian.co.uk, Friday 4 November 2011 12.17 GMT

• A photograph accompanying an article about the bailout deal for Greece was wrongly captioned in early editions as showing "the Danish prime minister, Mark Rutte". He is the Dutch prime minister (Leaders battle to solve crisis as deal on euro reaches deadlock, 27 October, page 1).

• Occupy London lodges PCC complaint over claims tents are empty at night and Jesus may be with Occupy London, but St Paul would have sided with health and safety were amended to remove incorrect references to the protesters having hired the same thermal imaging camera as was used by the Daily Telegraph.

• Common gene mutation raises risk of life-threatening aneurysms was amended to make clear that an NHS programme to screen 65-year-old men for aortic aneurysms has already begun.

• Prince Charles is the voice of Mel Phillips, not the people was corrected because the original said Bromley grammar school was listed as "school of the week" on the Prince's Teaching Institute's website. It was Bexley grammar school that had that honour.

• Pablo Picasso exhibition at Tate Britain pays belated homage to Spanish genius was corrected because the original said the 1950 Sheffield peace conference was cancelled. It went ahead but was depleted because of the Home Office's refusal to issue visas to many of the overseas visitors who wished to attend.

• The artists' artist: street artists was amended to remove an incorrect reference to a piece by the street artist Bäst, Molotov Dwarf, predating a work by Banksy.

• Cameron says more women in the boardroom would help curb greed was corrected because the original described Lord Davies as the industry minister. He was a minister in the last Labour government.

• Graeme McDowell hopes Chinese medicine eases his pain in Spain was corrected because the original named the winner of this year's PGA Championship as Bradley Keegan. He is Keegan Bradley.

theguardian

Corrections and clarifications

Heads of state and heads of government | Lord Davies | Keegan Bradley | Occupy Oakland

Corrections and clarifications column editor
guardian.co.uk, Sunday 6 November 2011 19.13 GMT

• Heads of state and heads of government were confused in a photo caption that described the Queen as posing with the prime ministers of Bangladesh, Australia and Trinidad and Tobago for an official female heads of state photograph at a meeting of Commonwealth leaders. She is a head of state, but the other three are not. The caption should have said they were posing for an official heads of state and government photograph (Leaders back royal succession change, 29 October, page 21).

• Lord Davies was described as the industry minister in an article referring to a report he published earlier this year calling for more women in boardrooms. He is no longer a minister, having served in the last Labour government (PM's plan for cutting executive pay: more women on boards, 3 November, page 7).

• The golfer Keegan Bradley, winner of this year's PGA Championship, was inadvertently named as Bradley Keegan in a report touching on his performance in the Andalucia Masters (McDowell banking on Chinese medicine to ease the pain in Spain, 4 November, page 7, Sport).

• Occupy Oakland: police to be investigated over Scott Olsen injury was amended to add the word "allegedly" in the following sentence: "Olsen, 24, was seriously injured after allegedly being hit on the head by a police projectile."

the guardian

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The rich and the rest

Intensely relaxed no more

Should your eyes have strayed from the Guardian in recent days, you will not have found the immediate difference in coverage of the City protests that you might have expected. In the Times this weekend one Tory columnist suggested the St Paul's campers were on to something. In the pink pages of the Financial Times, the City's own organ, a former investment banker called for moralised markets, while the FT's brainbox-in-chief asked why the arrival of Occupy London Stock Exchange had taken so long. Leaf through even the doggedly pro-globalisation Economist, and you will often spot charts recording the rocketing share of prosperity that is being snatched by the top 1%.

Social scientists and social democrats alike have long warned about a widening wealth gap, ever since the big bang of City regulation a quarter of a century ago. Sometimes the warnings came in the form of an official report, and yet the establishment regarded growing inequality as a mere statistical curiosity, worthy of the same sort of passing attention as the annual hit parade of baby's names. Until now. The elite is suddenly running to keep clear of a rising tide of public resentment. When some fraction of the wealth waterfall was trickling down to the masses below, those masses would perhaps acquiesce in Peter Mandelson's intense relaxation about the filthy rich. All of that changes now typical real wages are not rising but falling, and economic anxiety is gripping the nation, as a survey for the Resolution Foundation confirms today. Slowly but surely, since the great bailouts of 2008, the realisation has dawned that the telephone-number salaries that pop up in the news are salaries paid by the rest of us. Last week's Guardian/ICM poll suggested that far more voters are inclined to endorse the protesters' slogans than to dismiss their naivety, and news since about directors' pay going up by half during the past 12 months has furthered the impression of a plutocracy that lives beyond the reach of hard times.

The first political challenge is to grasp the depth of the shift in sentiment. In the US, after characteristically prolonged deliberation, there are signs of Barack Obama doing just that. As he plans his re-election, he is said to be dusting down Roosevelt speeches, and preparing to run energetically against tax cuts for the wealthy. America might thus hear the principled as opposed to the pragmatic case for progressive taxation for the first time since FDR's day. At home, the ruling Tories simply cannot compute. Boris Johnson's ravings about protests "erupting like boils" is a colourful variant of a shared reactionary impulse, evident in David Cameron's own interventions as well as in reports yesterday about new laws to clear political encampments. Rushing to legislate would put tidy pavements ahead of the many more pressing issues being raised. Labour often showed the same pro-City instincts in power, but is now better placed after Ed Miliband took on the financial powers in the land in his conference speech. However faltering his delivery and imprecise his prescription, his attempt to distinguish predatory from productive forms of capitalism looks more prescient by the day.

The next and far tougher challenge is to translate ubiquitous indignation at the old financial order into a practical programme for its overhaul. Some of this might be about technical tweaks, such as the reformed capital allowances Labour is pushing. The more fundamental task is to develop a new conception of corporate responsibility and figure out how to apply it in company law. The campers' admirable decision to banal cohol at least ensures they can grapple with all of this sober, but much of the brain work will have to be done far away from St Paul's. The protesters have nonetheless already achieved more than they could have hoped, by forcing politicians, journalists and churchmen alike to turn their minds to the neglected question of the undeserving rich.

Disaster diplomacy

The gift horse

Anyone with an interest in state resilience should see Contagion. The disaster movie's subtext is institutional failure in the face of adversity. Don't imagine it hasn't all been considered by a government near you. Preparing for pandemics is one of the reasons for the World Health Organisation's existence, so it is reassuring to know that they have thought of this one too. World governance in catastrophe is an element of global statecraft. But some disasters are more local, and then how an individual state responds shows its citizens, and the wider world, just how good it is at its core business of meeting basic needs. That is one reason why deciding whether to accept disaster relief is partly a matter of state self-confidence. But it is not just about bravado. Even humanitarian aid can carry a discreet price tag.

The earthquake in Turkey, where the death toll is approaching 600, prompted offers of help from around the world. But the one that sparked interest came from Israel. Israel's relations with Turkey have yet to recover from the death of nine Turkish nationals in the attack on an aid flotilla heading for Gaza over a year ago. Last December there seemed to be a rapprochement when Turkey helped Israel tackle a serious forest fire in the Carmel mountains. Last week, Israel's offer to send relief to the earthquake was, after initial doubts, accepted.

No one expects it to lead instantly to fully restored diplomatic relations. But disaster diplomacy does sometimes work: neighbourly help in 1999 after another Turkish earthquake unlocked the settlement to an ancient enmity with Greece. The Boxing Day tsunami in Indonesia led to the ending of the long-running separatist conflict with Aceh. The causal link, though, is not predictable. After all, Burma reluctantly accepted international aid after the catastrophic cyclone in 2008, but there is no firm evidence yet of a diplomatic dividend.

What international aid can do is change the climate. When the Chinese media showed Japanese aid workers weeping in the tragic aftermath of the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, there was a hint of a warming between two countries whose mutual antipathy is felt at every level. China was swift to offer reciprocal help to Japan after the tsunami and earthquake this year.

Closer inspection, however, shows the offer was more nuanced than first appeared. It was a token-sized gesture, involving just 15 people, further complicated by the inclusion of representatives of the People's Liberation Army, whom the Japanese were reluctant to allow on to the military airbase serving as a centre for relief operations. Even offers of humanitarian aid have to be interrogated. It is always a good idea to check out the gift horse's molars.

In praise of... **Nell Gwyn**

There's no Lewinsky Avenue in Washington, nor an Anne Pingeot Boulevard in Paris. In a misogynist world, mistresses struggle in the publicity stakes. Yet of the 13 official entries in Charles II's logbook of lovers, one woman remains roundly celebrated three centuries on. Pubs, street names and luxury Chelsea apartments all bear the Nell Gwyn name, and three cities - Hereford, Oxford and London - claim her as their own. She made the transition from the euphemistic trade of selling oranges to theatregoers to appearing on stage herself, and it's in this connection that she is currently starring in the National Portrait Gallery's exhibition on the first actresses. The Gwyn eyes, as much cheeky as seductive, glint out from two portraits and an engraving - Nell the first, second and third, one might say. Pepys's "pretty, witty Nell" labelled her trio of lovers called Charles in that way, even though the third and final one was Charles II himself. Her wit was of the cunning as well as the comic variety, as was seen when she called her own son a bastard in front of the king, shaming him into making this child born of an illiterate commoner into an earl on the spot. Likewise, she had self-deprecation down to a T, winning affection from a crowd who'd mistaken her for Charles's Catholic bit on the side by announcing: "I am the *Protestant* whore." Were she around now she could conquer the court with Diana-like guile or - even better - she might enter politics, with the ready-made slogan: Britain will win with Nell Gwyn.

31 October 1945

Control of banks

The Opposition has made a poor case against the Bank of England Bill. To the Chancellor's first argument, that the Bill merely gave legal form to existing practice, the critics replied that if this were true the measure was unnecessary. To his second argument, that the Bill was needed to reform the banking system, they replied that it was an enormity. Yet no speaker put up any serious objection to the main part of the Bill, the transfer of the Bank of England to public ownership.

The classical objection to nationalised central banks is that they might make it too easy for Governments to borrow money, and that an independent institution might save the nation from mismanagement. This point was not raised, and in view of the hostility which the Bank of England drew upon itself in the past for the very reason that it was supposed to have restrained the Governments of the day, the argument would get short shrift to-day.

The debate took the nationalisation of the central bank more or less for granted and turned on the powers claimed under clause 4 to control the joint-stock banks. Here an honest doubt will be felt by many. The powers to be taken are vague and wide. An assurance by the present Chancellor that he would never use them unreasonably cannot commit his successors. Happily Mr Dalton at once met the chief point of interest. Though he refuses to have the Treasury's powers defined, he will accept an amendment stating that information or directions shall not refer to the private accounts of individuals.

There was force in the statement by Mr Clement Davies, a legal authority, that any closer definition of these powers might mean that legal sanction would have to be provided, and if that is the choice it is certainly better to have no formal threat attached to the Bank's "recommendations." More light on the matter would be welcome.

There can be no doubt that the Labour movement is deeply suspicious of the power of the banks and wants to make quite sure that the last word rests with the Government. The demand must be satisfied; the suspicion must be laid. While the Government must not ask for more power than it needs to control the financial and monetary policy of the country, it has the mandate to take these powers. The banks themselves have offered little criticism except on the vagueness of clause 4. Carefully handled, the measure should yield considerable improvements, not the least of which will be the clear responsibility of the Chancellor for the conduct of the Bank.

[The Bank of England was nationalised by Labour in 1946, having been owned by private individuals since 1694.]

Corrections and clarifications

An article noted that Britain's population was projected to grow from 62.3 million in 2010 to 67.2 million in 2020 and that natural increase, brought about by births exceeding deaths, was expected to account for 56% of that increase, or 4.9 million. The whole projected increase is 4.9 million; 56% of that, as the Office for National Statistics noted in their report, is about 2.8 million (UK population nearly as big as Germany's by 2027, says ONS, 27 October, page 14).

Guest-writing last week's Open door (24 October, page 31), the editor of this column was wrong in stating baldly that "the Guardian's website was born in 1999". That was when the fully amalgamated site was launched under the name Guardian Unlimited. But the Guardian had produced several sites before that: the paper's technology section Online went online in late 1995, for instance, and sites for jobs, certain sports and news events followed through 1996-98. The main theme of the offending Open door column was the importance of correcting online articles to prevent a mistake being repeated. The guardian.co.uk timeline pages featuring the 1999 date have now been corrected and footnoted.

A recipe for honey nut banana muffins included a comment that "you may want to add a little fried fruit to the mix ... to make the flavour more interesting". Dried fruit, that should be (How to bake, 29 October, page 93, Weekend).

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Country diary

Claxton, Norfolk

We think of winter as a season largely without harvest, but it's not strictly the case. This morning I picked its first fruits with a flock of fieldfare, those northern thrushes that come to this country from Scandinavia and the Baltic area. They flew in a wide arc across a peerless blue sky, then landed in the hawthorn bushes by the beck. They sat proud of the canopy, upright and alert, while their clattering contact calls piled up all around them. On this morning, in that sunlight, for the first time this season they looked more wonderful than ever, as if they had just been freshly minted.

Fieldfares were actually a real harvest at one time because people used to trap and eat them - they are said to be delicious. There is a beautiful Roman mosaic discovered near Ingolstadt in Germany that dates to about 150AD, which depicts hunters trapping the birds. Thrush catching was an important tradition in that region and only ceased during the early 20th century. Some historians suggest that at its peak more than a million fieldfares were killed annually in eastern Prussia.

Today our fieldfare crop is different. One part is their glorious colour. The under-wings are a sparkling grey. Above and below they are brown, but these are subtle browns that mix tones of deep earth with wild fruit. Fieldfares are always surrounded by a palisade of high-strung chakking notes that have a quality of defiance. In truth each one of these wonderful creatures is a small flag of life in a dead season. A friend once told me how his terminally ill mother was given final comfort by an image of fieldfares sailing in that indefatigable true-winged way they have, straight into the jaws of a biting northerly. It seems to me that there are few personal gifts from nature richer than that.

Mark Cocker

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Syria

Delaying the inevitable

Eight months on, the uprising in Syria has changed. There is now a Free Syrian Army in Turkey claiming it has battalions across Syria. One such is the Khalid bin Walid battalion in Homs, a unit of several hundred army officers and soldiers who defected and now shoot back when demonstrations are fired on, ambush troop convoys, and kill regime informers. Protesters gathering in Homs and Hama, the frontline of the anti-regime protests – the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that 40% of the people killed in the uprising came from Homs – are now calling on Nato to establish a no-fly zone over Syria. Week by week, the land is descending into civil war.

There are few signs, however, that Syria's president Bashar al-Assad has changed. Like his fellow dictators in their final days, he is a man in denial. As 40 died at the hands of his security forces in the last few days, and Homs came under sustained assault, Assad talked in his interview with the Sunday Telegraph of a turning tide of support for the government, where the army were only targeting terrorists. In the past, an Assad speech promising reform or an interview saying he was ready to talk to the opposition was a sure prelude to yet another violent crackdown. This interview could turn out to be no different. He is the master of delay, delusion, and self deception, as the isolation of his regime increases. Former allies peel away – first Turkey, then Saudi Arabia, and now the Arab League. But Assad was right on one point – if his regime fell the whole region would change. Unlike Egypt or Tunisia, Assad's Baathist regime stands at the crossroads of a complex network of alliances.

If the regime fell, it would affect more than the resistance network of Hamas and Hezbollah. Hamas's external leadership is already preparing its move from Damascus, after it incurred the wrath of its hosts by failing to condemn the uprising, and will probably move to Turkey, Jordan and Qatar. Hezbollah, which unequivocally supported the Syrian leadership, would lose a vital lifeline of military support from Iran. But beyond them, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran would all be shaken to the core if the majority Sunnis in Syria returned to the ascendancy. In Iraq there are already signs of the Sunnis demanding Kurdish-style autonomy from the Shia-dominated government in Baghdad. If it lost Syria, Iran would lose the central plank of its regional power, and its regime, which has posed as the great defender of the Shia, would once again become vulnerable to internal revolt. The 10 Afghanistans that Assad promised would greet the arrival of a western intervention in Syria is an exaggeration, but the change happening in the Arab world, which has never in his history had nation states, is profound enough.

Nato is not, happily, contemplating another intervention. As we are all now witnessing in Libya, a no-fly zone does not protect civilian lives – estimates of the dead over the past eight months range from 10,000 to 50,000. Nor is its aim to force dictators to negotiate. As UN mandates have been interpreted by the leading military powers of Nato, no-fly zones are a cover for regime change. Assad knows he is next and he will play every card, especially the sectarian one, to delay what must surely now be the inevitable. The uprising is at a critical stage. Syria's two biggest cities, Damascus and Aleppo, have stayed loyal to the regime, and Assad is for the moment confident he has weathered the worst. But the damage done by the savage repression elsewhere is irreversible. The economic sanctions have yet to bite. Not enough army officers and soldiers have defected to make a difference.

There may be no alternative to civil war, but if there is, it will not be through intervention. It can only be achieved when Assad sees that he is finished, and that his only hope of survival is to agree to a transitional government and free elections.

Prince Charles's veto

Bad heir day

In many ways, Prince Charles has an unenviable public role. No one would actively seek out a 60-year career as understudy to a globally famous act, although the remuneration might be some compensation. It is to his credit that while his predecessors left a variety of examples of how to conduct himself, he has mostly avoided them. That makes it all the more extraordinary that letters like the one the Guardian publishes this morning from the communities minister Baroness Andrews to Prince Charles's private secretary Sir Michael Peat, seeking the prince's consent to a change in the planning law, did not set off every warning bell in Clarence House. To almost every citizen in Britain, the idea that the Prince of Wales has the right to veto government legislation – even if it relates only to a handful of bills over a decade or more – is an astonishing discovery. But to those in the parallel universe occupied by communications between government and Prince Charles, it seems not to have been worth a second thought.

That speaks volumes about the magical realism of the relationship between crown and parliament. There is even a constitutional defence, weird it is true, but internally consistent with the vestiges of royal prerogative that thread through the law of the land. This is it: when there is no heir apparent, the Duchy of Cornwall – a large business that is the source of most of the prince's income – reverts to the throne. Consequently, it retains the protection of royal prerogative and thus the right to be consulted, in areas that might affect its interests, on changes to the law. Those who came across this anomaly perhaps dismissed it as one of those quaint footnotes to our island story. Certainly the royal advisers failed to register that – after the public disquiet at mounting evidence of Prince Charles's political activism, of the ministerial lobbying and the infamous letters in black spidery writing – disclosure of this meddling prince's powers of veto would cause genuine alarm.

Or perhaps they thought no one would ever find out. Earlier this year, the information commissioner accepted that, in order to defend the constitutional fiction of his political neutrality when he becomes king, the prince's correspondence with government should be exempt from Freedom of Information requests. There was talk of the "chilling effect" if correspondence could be published. Yet how much more chilling to the political processes, surely, that the prince can lobby ministers who know – even if he has never exercised it – he has the power of veto. Both Clarence House and Downing Street insist it is the merest constitutional accident. That is a relief. It should be easy to end it.

In praise of... PJ Harvey

She's been around for long enough to have inspired the long-lamented Kurt Cobain, but PJ Harvey has survived and thrived to beat the youthful likes of Katy B to this year's Mercury prize. Keeping favour in the fickle music world requires restless reinvention, and Harvey is blessed with an almost Dylan-like capacity for that: on a first listen Dry, White Chalk and this year's Let England Shake have such different textures that you'd imagine each album was the work of an entirely different singer. But listen again and you find the common thread. From the not-quite-punkish early tracks through to warped Nick Drake-style strings and the almost Motownish rattle of The Devil, there is a certain off-centre quality. You think you know the sort of thing you're in for, and then realise it is all a little stranger, more bewildering than it seemed. PJ's preferred instruments come and go – the autoharp is only the latest – but always conjure up a taut, ascetic soundscape from which her strikingly true tones rise. Lyrically, her earlier themes were often personal, but Let England Shake revives the protest album, using a clutch of tracks about Gallipoli as her route into the post-9/11 world. As our own Alexis Petridis has written, that should theoretically be hard work – and yet she pulls it off. Despite (or perhaps because of) an abject lack of standard pop guile, this tiny woman with a powerful voice last night packed the Albert Hall. She's on the cusp of anointment as a most unlikely national treasure.

1 November 1919

What the sex disqualification bill omits

Professional women, in spite of the Sex Disqualification Bill's removal of certain serious disabilities, express keen disappointment that the provisions of the bill do not raise the bar between them and the higher administrative posts in the Civil Service. They feel that it is not enough to admit them to unpaid service as magistrates and jurors if at the same time they are prevented from qualifying for the highly paid permanent positions in Government departments. Their only hope for a reversal of the Commons decision on this point is that the Lords, in one of their periodical acts of Liberalism, may attach an amending clause to the bill.

Women are to be admitted, it is objected, only to limited routine work and to selected posts in the higher grades, an arrangement which cannot give the variety of experience which is declared to be essential for an administrative position. It is felt that permanent officials would not of their own accord introduce to their departments a new and possibly disturbing element, yet it is left to these officials to exclude women from whatever branches they please. The Gladstone report on the subject, compiled by a committee of civil servants, reported unfavourably on the general admission of women to administrative positions. This report would seem to have been on the minds of the framers of the present bill more than the report of the Government Commission which was issued last year. The Commission came to the conclusion that "the absence of any substantial recourse to the services of women in the administrative staffs of departments, and still more in their intelligence branches, has in the past deprived the public service of a vast store of knowledge, experience, and fresh ideas, some of which would, for particular purposes, have been far more valuable and relevant, than those of even the ablest of the men in the Civil Service."

Dr. Phoebe Sheavyn, senior tutor to women students at Manchester University, said in the course of an interview with a representative of the "Manchester Guardian" that many women were being fitted intellectually at the universities for taking up the responsibilities of higher administrative work. She did not propose that public examinations for the Civil Service should be opened to women immediately, or even that when a woman proved by examination to possess superior qualifications for any post she should be appointed in consequence. She thought it might be better to recruit, not by means of examinations, but by careful and more personal methods.

Corrections and clarifications

A letter from Patrick Reynolds, former secretary-general of the Europe of Democracies and Diversities Group in the European parliament, was edited in a way that reversed his meaning. The printed version of his letter began: "Europe and the EU are identical and interchangeable terms." The preceding sentence, which was cut, made clear that the writer believed this was an erroneous proposition (Letters, 28 October, page 49).

The Queen's 10-month-old great-granddaughter, Savannah Phillips, was overlooked in an article and graphic illustrating how the order of succession to the throne would change when male children no longer take precedence over their older sisters. Savannah would rise to sixth under the new rules. The Duke of York would drop to eighth, not seventh as we said (Succession act will end male right to reign over us, 28 October, page 1).

Near homophone corner, from an article referring to the restrictions placed by some airlines on the appearance of female cabin crew: "Even footwear is proscribed." A reader comments, "My heart goes out to all those barefoot stewardesses." (Flight of fancy, 28 October, page 16, G2).

Further corrections and clarifications on guardian.co.uk include: South African prosecuted for helping his mother to die, 29 September; Mario Balotelli: why always him?, 28 October; Errol Morris: creating reality, 28 October.

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Country diary

Maiden Bradley, Wiltshire

At Maiden Bradley the road from Frome and Bath in the north, to Mere and Blandford in the south, crosses an ancient route that went from Salisbury to what was once the thriving western port of Bridgwater, gateway to the Bristol Channel. The intersection at Bradley Cross was the scene of bustling activity, with wheelwrights and fodder merchants on hand and coaching inns nearby. The picture of how things were in 1773 has recently been brought to life by the discovery of a meticulous survey of the Maiden Bradley estates of the ninth Duke of Somerset carried out by one Richard Baker and now revived by Chris Oliver, the former chief forester of the present duke. Oliver has painstakingly retraced every step of Baker's way, and showed us the town well, once in the public space, but now hidden in a private garden. It is 120 feet deep, and said to go down to a cavern with room enough to turn a coach and four.

We walked westwards, with a terrace of cottages – "the Rank" – on our right; the front doors of their 18th-century originals would have opened directly on to the public thoroughfare. A few yards on was the site of the stocks, at a busy point where people were on their way to dispose of rubbish at the tip. Then we passed the former White Hart Inn, its building altered in the 19th century to become workshops for silk spinners.

The roadway climbed to Bigg's Knapp, and then we saw the point where the original track curved leftwards and away from the modern, metalled road to become a tree-lined lane through the fields. Thousands of years of human traffic on foot or horseback, and of freight in wheeled vehicles drawn by horse or oxen, as well as the passage of herds and flocks of livestock marshalled by drovers, have hollowed out the narrower places on the tracks, carving deep tunnels through this greensand terrain.
John Vallins

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George Papandreou

An all too final stand

In what must now seem like the halcyon days of opposition, when he watched a rightwing government disintegrate in grace-and-favour scandals, George Papandreou uttered the immortal words: "The money exists, it is only that Mr [Kostas] Karamanlis prefers to give it to the few and powerful." It became his election slogan. But the money never existed, as he himself was the first to realise, and the well-meaning scion of the Papandreou political dynasty quickly became for many of his former supporters part of the self-serving class he himself had pledged to dismantle. Meanwhile farmers, pensioners, and families with newborns, each of whom Mr Papandreou pledged to protect, are joining the ever-swelling ranks of a losing generation. Some 30,000 civil servants put on 12 months' notice and given a 60% pay cut, pensions of more than €1,200 a month cut by 20%, VAT up to 23% – all this pain, and for whom? Just how much austerity can any nation take?

Like his election slogan, the idea to put Greece's bailout plan to a referendum must have seemed like a good idea at the time. Everyone had been sounded out about the deal hatched in Brussels last week, from the German Greens to the French banks - everyone except the people who would have to carry it out. If economic decisions are political ones, what more relevant question could be asked of Greece than whether it supported the package? Further, one question would usefully mask two others: whether the Greeks still wanted to be part of the eurozone, and whether it still believed in Papandreou's leadership. You could see the calculation of a gambler who knows that 60% of the population are against the terms of the terms of the bailout, but 70% are against leaving the monetary union. But having returned from Brussels last week touting the deal as a personal victory, Papandreou looked last night more than ever like the kamikaze politician his colleagues suspect him of being. Six senior members of Pasok called on him to resign, and a leading Pasok MP, Milena Apostolaki, quit the parliamentary group cutting the government's majority to just two votes. If the referendum call, and a confidence vote on Friday, was him getting tough with his unruly party, too many might be tempted to call his bluff. The finance minister Evangelos Venizelos did nothing to calm nerves by hinting that he had not been consulted about the referendum and rushing to hospital with an inflamed appendix.

For the rest of Europe, the Papandreou gamble was not part of the script. Bank shares were crushed, the yield-spread of most European bonds over Germany widened to record levels, and Italy's borrowing costs went back up to the levels they reached in July. As Italy has the third-biggest debt market in the world after America and Japan, a bailout package that protects the vulnerable southern flank of Europe looks more and more like a Maginot line. Mario Draghi's first day at work as the head of the ECB was spent buying up unseemly quantities of his own country's debt. From the point of view of those who were wielding the scissors of the 50% haircut on public debt held by the banks, the prospect of a no vote in the referendum would delay negotiations of the more radical private sector haircut that is needed, and could risk the next €8bn tranche of EU and IMF funds needed to prevent a short-term default. And what incentive did the latest crisis give China and others in the G20 to buy European debt?

Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy's reaction was predictable. It was to summon the off-message Greek premier to what will now be another set of crisis talks, and for Mr Sarkozy to hold urgent talks about the state of his own dangerously exposed banks. By the end of a turbulent day, people were less concerned about the distant threat of an unruly Greek default or exit from the eurozone than they were about firefighting. Mr Papandreou might well have lost out both ways, at home and abroad.

St Paul's protests

Faith in the City

Whether or not the old song is actually sung, "which side are you on?" is the question that every protest poses. The Church of England was initially incapable of answering it, after Occupy London campers pitched up in the backyard of its City pied-à-terre. Its great difficulty was with a prior question: which sort of thing are you - a building or a movement?

Most churches are a bit of both, and the temptation to identify with the bricks and mortar is particularly strong when they are as glorious as at St Paul's. The cathedral's move to threaten eviction on health and safety grounds certainly suggested it was leaning that way. But after three resignations - the last from the dean himself – the contrary view has prevailed. The church has rightly decided to grapple with the question of the demonstration from the perspective of a moral community as opposed to that of a property management company.

The process of reaching this verdict has been every bit as shambolic as the sight of the protesting tents. Whichever canny demonstrator hit on the "What would Jesus do?" banner inspired ecclesiastical soul-searching. Giles Fraser's resignation showed where he thought the Messiah would stand, and as a wave of sympathy crashed through the church, the dean recognised that his hard line was being overwhelmed. Next power passed to the bishop of London, Richard Chartres, and it fell to this instinctive conservative to announce that the church would not after all push for eviction.

Messy as the saga has been, it is only fair to acknowledge that this has been a rather principled mess. The Fraser resignation is one example of that, but so too was the dean's decision to go: he recognised that the policy needed to change, and that he had forfeited the credibility to accomplish this. The contrast with temporal politics is shaming - especially after Liam Fox floated a comeback for himself this week. Easy commentary bemoaning a lack of leadership from Lambeth Palace overlooks the reality that there has been principle, too, in Rowan Williams' silence - a principled respect for devolved power in his church. For him to have weighed in and dictated tactics to the dean would have been to play a Protestant pope - like David Cameron seeking to instruct Alex Salmond on Scottish education policy.

Having pursued ethical economics ever since the crash, an interest refreshed in a Financial Times article today, Rowan Williams is now well placed to get involved with the Occupy London debates. The protesters, meanwhile, now face a Conservative home secretary and the sub-democratic Corporation of London ranged against them. And all parties are a little clearer about which side they are on.

In praise of... **wellbeing surveys**

How anxious are you? How much of what you do do you feel is worthwhile? Are you satisfied with life? Since April, official statisticians have been asking these questions of 200,000 households as part of a monthly survey. No, not an example of the encroaching nanny state – unless, that is, you can't help spotting nannies – but an intriguing experiment in public policymaking. As well as measuring inflation and milk output and (yesterday's indicator du jour) gross domestic product, the Office for National Statistics now wants to gauge Britons' wellbeing. Credit David Cameron and his talk of increasing general wellbeing; credit the greens for arguing that there must be more to running an economy than simply producing ever more stuff - or blame the financial crisis for proving yet again that not all economic activity is worthwhile. Whoever kicked it, the ball is certainly moving. This week the ONS's efforts moved up a gear with a consultation into what exactly to measure. Should statisticians look at people's fear of crime? The quality of their local environment? Even (gulp) their trust in MPs? Writers on happiness can sometimes produce bland soup - but surveys of wellbeing are potentially fascinating. Not so long ago, researchers surveyed ordinary Palestinians. What they really wanted, it turned out, was not revenge, or statehood - but security, to go about their daily lives. Imagine how different Middle Eastern diplomacy would be if it took security, rather than politics, as its primary goal.

2 November 1956

First premium bond sale gets mixed response

Some conscientious objections to buying or selling premium bonds were apparent yesterday, when they went on sale for the first time. There seems to have been a steady demand for them, however, though nothing in the way of a "bond rush," but that may have been because people had been told that there is no need for hurry.

Three employees, one man and two women at the main Manchester Post Office, refused to handle the bonds on religious grounds. Their objection was respected by the post office officials and none of the three had to sell them. A local representative of the Union of Post Office Workers said that no official decision had been made by the union's headquarters, but the union would almost certainly uphold the decision of the three workers. As the Spring Gardens Post Office had originally prepared eleven counters for the sale of the bonds and only had to use three, the objections did not cause any inconvenience.

Throughout the country, lord mayors and mayors opened the campaign by buying bonds. An exception was at Glasgow, where Lord Provost Andrew Hood declined to attend the launching ceremony, stating that he did not approve of gambling.

The Mayor of Chesterfield, Alderman William Weston, also declined to buy the first bond to be sold in the town. A Methodist, he said that he did not approve of the principle of the bonds as he considered them a game of chance. Moreover, he suggested that the people of Chesterfield should boycott them. On the other hand, the Lord Mayor of Manchester, Councillor Harry Sharp, after obtaining his bond, declared: "Anything which encourages people to save money is in the right interest. I am all for it."

Only a small crowd gathered in Trafalgar Square to hear the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Lord Mackintosh, who is Chairman of the National Savings Committee, open the campaign in London. Mr Macmillan did not buy a bond. "We thought it might look bad if the chancellor happened to win a prize," a Post Office official explained. Bond No. 1 was sold later to the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Cuthbert Ackroyd.

Lytham St Annes, "home" of the bonds, was allocated Bond No. 2. It went to Councillor W. Crook, the Mayor of the town to which the scheme has brought a thousand jobs. In the government building more than a thousand civil servants worked a normal day knowing that within 24 or 48 hours they might be deluged with mails sent in by Post Offices all over the country. "Honest Ernie", the electronic robot which will select the prize winning numbers, has not yet arrived.

Corrections and clarifications

An article reporting on a £36m loan to Sheffield Forgemasters incorrectly stated that the company was in "Nick Clegg's Sheffield Hallam constituency". The company is in fact in the Darnall ward of the Sheffield South East constituency (Clegg steel firm gets £36m loan, 1 November, page 2).

St Paul's Cathedral did not "survive the Great Fire of London" as we had it - due to an editing error - in an analysis of the dispute over the Occupy London protest camp being sited by the cathedral walls. However, the building designed by Sir Christopher Wren that came after the one destroyed in the fire did survive the blitz (How confusion and indecision brought cathedral to its knees, 1 November, page 5).

A story about the deaths of two British electricians in a Taliban car bomb attack in Kabul incorrectly stated that the bus they were travelling in "had just left the counter-insurgency school run by Nato at Camp Julien in the west of the city". The camp is in the south of the city (Two Britons die in Taliban blast, 31 October, page 4).

Further corrections and clarifications on guardian.co.uk include: Milly Dowler parents join Yeates's landlord to oppose end to no win-no fee agreements, 31 October; China hits back over US claims of satellite hacking, 31 October.

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Country diary

North York Moors

For nine days we wend our way on foot from Scarborough to Helmsley. Skeins of geese fly south above the blue North Sea and the path to Whitby. In Eskdale, "monks' trods" of foot-worn sandstone meander across the pastures and gleam beneath the dripping trees by the overgrown quarries. Sections of the Cleveland Way, paved with slabs brought by helicopter, make a high switchback overlooking the haze above Teesside.

Cattle, sheep and geese used to be herded from Scotland along the Hambleton drove road, and the army of William the Conqueror marched northwards on this old way. On the high moors, grouse chortle and cackle as they glide low across bushes of faded heather and patches of younger growth. Shooting stands of black planks stand out, while old butts on Battersby Bank are barely visible – constructed of stones with steps leading down between walls topped with bilberry. Knots of hardy Swaledale sheep coexist with the grouse, and their wanderings help to keep some heather snow-free for the grouse in winter. Lower down, bracken and woodland harbour pheasants. These are in season for shooting now – £40 per bird, according to one of our hosts.

Between overnight stays we see few local people. A gamekeeper gives us a lift and prevents us becoming overtaken by darkness en route to Castleton. A man rides his Cleveland Bay mare beneath Roseberry Topping, and a farmer, carting churns of water to Limousins above the red roofs of Osmotherley, says that he sells store cattle at Northallerton market. Beaters waving orange flags drive pheasants towards guns near Rievaulx, and racehorses are cantered around gallops by Cold Kirby. The distant Pennines are shrouded in rain, and shafts of sun stud the vale below with glints of emerald.

Virginia Spiers

theguardian

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G20 summit

Yes they Cannes

The archbishop of Canterbury got it right yesterday in his Financial Times article, and again in his later interview with the BBC. The St Paul's protests, he said, had raised awareness of the unfinished business of financial sector reform. They had been "a real focus for people's feelings and their imagination". But the demands of the protesters were vague, he added. It was time to try to get more specific. The world needed something more than simplistic calls for the end of capitalism - but also needs something that goes beyond general expressions of discontent. There was, Dr Williams suggested as an example, widespread support for a tax on financial trading. That idea was likely to be discussed at the G20 summit. But it had to be adopted globally if it was to work. A few hours later, the archbishop's view was echoed and endorsed by David Cameron, who said exactly the same thing in an answer to the Green MP Caroline Lucas during yesterday's prime minister's questions.

So why is there not the slightest chance that the G20 summit that convenes in Cannes today will agree on such a thing? Part of the answer we all know. Mr Cameron does not really believe the words he uttered yesterday about the so-called Tobin tax. As the chancellor made clear this week, the UK government is intensely relaxed about the lack of consensus on the issue. But the much larger reason why the Cannes summit is unlikely to rise to the occasion is that it is simply overshadowed by the eurozone crisis. So serious and so pressing is the vulnerability of the eurozone, especially since the Greek government's decision to submit the latest Brussels bailout plan to a referendum, that it eclipses all other issues at Cannes.

To be fair, this would have been true even if the Greek premier George Papandreou had not lobbed a plebiscitary bombshell on to the Croisette on Monday. Last week's eurozone deal would probably have unravelled anyway, given that Greece cannot pay its way, that the eurozone bank recapitalisation programme is too leisurely, that the bailout fund does not yet exist and that fiscal consolidation, however desirable, still remains a long way off. But Mr Papandreou has given the process a destabilising push. The most important meeting in Cannes this week is no longer the planned G20 kowtow to China to underwrite the Brussels package. It is last night's summoning of Mr Papandreou to come to the Riviera in order to explain himself to Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy.

In spite of all these frustrations, it is essential not to lose sight of the potential importance of the G20. There was a period, in 2009, when the G20 economic summits seemed to rise to the occasion. Even China was fully engaged back then. Yet over the past 18 months, much of that momentum, overhyped though it sometimes was, has been lost. If it had not been for the endless eurozone agonisings, however, the talk at Cannes would properly have been about how the nations of the world could once again try to get ahead of the markets, as they briefly did in 2009. Tobin taxes are part of that. But the great underlying issue facing the world economy today, notwithstanding some recent better numbers in the US, is lack of growth.

Cannes ought to be a big opportunity for the economic powers to agree to drive growth forward through a global reflation strategy. There will not be a single leader sitting at the table in Cannes who does not have a vested interest in such a strategy. There will be one, President Obama, who could provide the leadership which could dragoon recalcitrants, including the UK. Thirty months ago, fear drove the nations to take co-ordinated action to save the banks. Today fear prevents them from doing the same to promote global growth. But it could be done if they want to do it, or if they can summon up a bit of the feeling and imagination of which the archbishop spoke yesterday.

Iran

War games

No one should be naive about the possibility that Iran is building a nuclear bomb. In February, the world's nuclear inspector agency, the IAEA, listed seven outstanding questions about work which Iran had allegedly conducted on warhead design. In May, it claimed to have evidence about work dating back to 2003 on nuclear triggers. Next week we are promised another IAEA report that one western official calls a game-changer. But to date, it is equally true to say that the evidence for these claims has yet to be produced.

As Richard Dalton and five other former ambassadors to Iran wrote in June, while the concerns of the international community are legitimate and Iran has a moral duty to answer them, nothing in international law or in the non-proliferation treaty forbids uranium enrichment. Nor does it necessarily provide a motive. Iran could be striving to become a threshold country, technically able to produce a nuclear weapon, without having made a decision to do so.

Nevertheless the drumbeats are getting louder. Today we reveal British armed forces are making contingency plans for possible participation in an aerial attack on Iran's nuclear enrichment plants. This includes where to deploy ships and submarines equipped with cruise missiles. Last week the New York Times reported that the US will send more naval ships to the area and expand military ties with the six nations in the Gulf Co-operation Council. Israel sees the Iran nuclear programme as an existential threat and the defence minister Ehud Barak reportedly told Washington that if the US does not bomb Iran, Israel will. The two "windows of opportunity" for such an attack are provided firstly by conflicting estimates of how far the enrichment programme has got (enough to make between three and four bombs, but only a fraction of it enriched to levels which make weapon-grade material a reality) and second, by the supposition that they will soon be able to bury the stuff under a mountain in Qom, where no missile will get at it.

The regional consequences of an aerial strike are daunting. It would be not one strike but many, with unforeseeable consequences. Heavy civilian casualties and an Iran reunited around its leadership are just two. Ground troops might well be needed to keep the Straits of Hormuz open. This would be war. Nor would it be one but potentially several, as missiles rained down on Israel from Lebanon and Gaza and Iran retaliated on targets in Iraq. Further, if the Iranian intention to construct a nuclear bomb was covert before such an attack, it would surely be overt after it. It is hugely important that negotiations are restarted before this nightmare becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In praise of... **Mac Maharaj**

Recognition for Nelson Mandela is richly deserved - and there's been no shortage of it. The man jailed for leading others to liberty ended up with the presidency, the peace prize and an alphabet of honours after his name. Soon there's to be a biopic, too, based on his Long Walk to Freedom. But that book was, in a sense, a work of many hands. Mandela would pen passages on Robben Island, but it fell to fellow inmate, Mac Maharaj, to pull the subversive manuscript together - no easy feat under the 24-hour glare of prison guards. Maharaj helped incorporate thoughts from ANC comrades such as Walter Sisulu, and also saw to the secret storage. As he recalls in a World Service interview, using tiny text, he crammed what would later be 600 typed pages on to 60 ultra-thin sheets. And to store this proof of thought crime, he hand-made a binder for his prison studies with a special cover into which he could slide the sheets. Snatched suddenly from his cell for transfer to the mainland, he cunningly ensured that his comrades got the chance to pack up his prize possession for him. It remained under wraps through several more jails before he dispatched it to London, where he used a razor to open it up. When Robben Island guards discovered Mandela's stashed long-hand scraps, the Maharaj version became even more precious. These days he's President Zuma's spokesman. Finessing the Zuma message may be demanding work, but Maharaj's real achievement was enabling the Mandela message to break free.

3 November 1921

Miscellany: style, beer and child killers

Most American newspapers have a "style-book" setting forth the rules of punctuation, capitalisation, and so on to be followed in their own columns. Some peculiarities of the "style-book" of the "Christian Science Monitor" are revealed by a former member of the staff in an article in the New York "Nation." The word "Principle" has always to be printed with a capital, and may be used only as referring to Deity.

Tobacco is under the interdict. If the "Monitor" reproduces a photograph of a man smoking, the cigar or cigarette is painted out. Vermin eradicators cannot be advertised, neither can such articles as tyre chains, for the reason that they connote accidents. Names of diseases are not to be mentioned, and the verb "to die" is barred in favour of "to pass away," or "to pass on." When it becomes necessary to refer to some person deceased the article has to be written in such a way that the fact of his decease will not appear.

What happens to breweries under Prohibition? Do they take to manufacturing "near beer" and other non-toxicating beverages? Apparently not, according to a note on the annual meeting of a brewery company in Colorado. The report to the shareholders states that "it has been found impossible to maintain sales of temperance beverages at a figure on which any substantial profit can be earned," and this failure is coldly attributed to "the fact that real beer and other liquors are freely obtainable." Presumably the real beer must be home-brewed - which suggests a highly annoying situation for the brewery company. However, the company is making the best of it and has installed a plant for the manufacture of ice-cream.

The common law till fairly recently held 14 years of age to be the earliest at which capital punishment could be inflicted, but its savagery is now toned down, and the sentence passed on Harold Jones was the only one now possible. Still, as late as 1896 a sentence of death was passed on a boy of 15 for murder at Lancaster Assizes, though, needless to say, he was reprieved. The common law declared that below 14 years of age children were incapable of felony or discerning between good and evil. But when there was evidence to the contrary the older judges allowed no immunity. Sir Matthew Hale quotes two cases in which children suffered the extreme penalty, one of a girl of 13, burnt for killing her mistress and a boy of 16, who burnt down three houses, in one of which was a child, and nearly caused the death of another person by falsely accusing him of the crime.

Corrections and clarifications

An online blog about documents released by the parliamentary select committee investigating phone hacking was amended to remove an incorrect reference to News International's former chief operating officer Clive Milner. The original said that a memo showed that Tom Crone, then the News of the World legal affairs manager, had a meeting in June 2008 with JM and CM to discuss a settlement with Gordon Taylor, the chief executive of the Professional Footballers' Association, and that CM "was presumably Clive Milner". CM did not refer to Clive Milner, who was not at the meeting, and we apologise for the error (Phone hacking: QC warned of 'culture of illegal information access' at NoW, 1 November, guardian.co.uk).

A story about the rendition of two men to Libya (MI6 knew I was tortured, says Libyan rebel leader, 6 September, page 1) named Richard Ottaway MP, as indicating that the intelligence and security committee was unaware of the cases. Some readers may have inferred that he was the source of the ISC position. He was not and his name was wrongly included in the story due to an editing error.

Further corrections and clarifications on guardian.co.uk include: For Cameron big bridges are sexier than real jobs, 1 November; Israel rushes settlement growth after Unesco accepts Palestinians, 1 November; Hugh Grant becomes a father, 1 November.

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Country diary

Inverness

The latest mammal to "invade" Inverness is, judging by the recent queries I have had, the pine marten. Some people just commented on their presence and what they were doing in gardens, while others were having problems with them. Most sightings were of pine martens feeding on bird tables and feeders, with peanuts being the main target. One correspondent saw them tucking into oats.

A main reason for this sudden increase in sightings is because most observers are now feeding birds all year round. Initially there was an invasion of red squirrels, and it seems that pine martens have joined them. Most pine martens seem to be able to readily open the new-style red squirrel feeders, which have a flap on the top that the animal lifts open to get to the peanuts. One pair of pine martens, filmed at night, had not read the instructions and demolished the box.

A correspondent believed he saw a polecat and asked me if this was correct. I pointed out that polecats are now probably extinct in the Highlands, whereupon the reader sent me a photograph to back his contention. It showed a pine marten on a garden trellis peering, as they do, at the camera. Misidentification is understandable as the animals do look alike. At one time both were widespread in the Highlands and both had their synonyms, with the pine marten being called the sweetmart and the polecat the foulmart after their smell.

A reader had a pet rabbit taken while another had four hens killed one night. The answer is to make the rabbits and birds secure each night. This is not as easy as it sounds: we have lost ducks and hens in the past to pine martens, and on both occasions it was my fault for not enclosing them securely.

Ray Collier

the guardian

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Eurozone crisis

The revenge of politics

Whatever happens to George Papandreou in the confidence vote due today – and after this week his days as Greek prime minister are surely numbered – his referendum plan is dead. He claimed yesterday that a Damascene conversion by the opposition leader Antonis Samaras on the rescue package allowed him to drop the plebiscite on the Euro-bailout and offer a national unity government instead. But that is like a fox faced with a pack that's about to rip him apart proclaiming that every animal has its part to play in the ecology of the countryside. Mr Papandreou's party listened in silence as he explained that the referendum episode had been a "useful shock" that had established consensus. Yes, a consensus has been reached in Greece. But it is not the one that Mr Papandreou claimed. It is that he himself should go.

He started out with the best of intentions, a Swedish-style social democrat and gifted diplomat who arrived determined to reform decades of Greek patronage, practised not least by his own party. He instantly made enemies. The man who became his deputy prime minister and finance minister, Evangelos Venizelos, was one. Having not been consulted about the referendum, Mr Venizelos yesterday returned the compliment by delivering – at 4.45am – a statement that torpedoed it. He said Greece's place in the euro was a historic conquest, not a ball to be thrown in the air by an amateur juggler. Still less when the solvency of Greek banks depends on the sixth tranche of IMF funds coming through. In a subsequent speech, the deputy laid down the law to his boss: there must be no referendum, and the package must be endorsed by at least 180 votes in a parliament where Mr Papandreou's splintering bloc is down to 152. For good measure, he added that it must be done quickly, to avoid a run on the banks.

What had appeared to Mr Papandreou to be good Greek politics – playing hardball with an unruly party – turned out to be a lousy European strategy. He failed to take account of the fragility of the deal that had been hammered out in Brussels: if its components failed to hang together, each vulnerable state would hang apart. Sky-high spreads on Italian debt yesterday confirmed that it is next in line. It is the third-largest debt market in the world, an economy with the sheer heft to shake the eurozone to its foundations. This reality never entered Mr Papandreou's calculations, but for Germany and France it was bound to be decisive – and so it proved. While Silvio Berlusconi fights a desperate battle for his own survival after his failure to win agreement for urgent reforms in Rome, the minds of Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy were already being distracted from the Greek farce by the question of how to salvage the solvency of an Italian state which is too big to bail out. At the G20 in Cannes, the German chancellor and French president broke the last great taboo of the crisis and referred to the possibility of Greece being cut loose from the single-currency club.

Should that happen, as it may, the consequences for Greece are wildly unpredictable, and could be dire indeed. But so too could be the consequences for Europe more widely, as the entire periphery of the continent scrambled to avoid going the same way. The doomed Papandreou plan for a referendum was always both messy and risky, but it at least had an intelligible aim – injecting some desperately needed democratic legitimacy into the resolution of Europe's crisis. The prospective parliamentary elections could prove an even messier way to do the same. For all the talk of vast, impersonal forces, financial markets must exist in a social context, and their functioning relies on a measure of acquiescence. In administering ever more austerity, Europe's ruling powers have forgotten this simple truth – and now the continent is paying the price. European economics ignored politics for too long, and now European politics is wreaking its revenge.

Cricket corruption

Umpire's ruling

It's not cricket, Mr Justice Cooke could not resist saying yesterday as he sentenced the four men at the centre of the Pakistani spot-fixing trial to lengthy spells in prison. Sadly, on the evidence that has unfolded in Southwark crown court over the past three weeks, this is what cricket is, or is becoming: a business that opens almost unlimited opportunities for gambling, and so for fixing. To have amassed the evidence to secure the first ever criminal convictions for cricket corruption is a major breakthrough, a genuine triumph of investigative journalism for the News of the World and its reporter Mazher Mahmood, who has always insisted it did not involve phone hacking. And – however desperately sad the personal stories, in particular that of the 18-year-old bowling genius Mohammad Amir, who came from a poverty-stricken village to strike terror into the heart of the England batting lineup on the second day of the Lords Test last year – the judge was right to impose immediate custodial sentences. The Pakistan captain Salman Butt – who, the court was told, had been a powerful influence on his young team-mate – bears a particular responsibility. But now what?

The evidence of the past weeks confirms what many cricket lovers have long and unhappily suspected. Corruption may not be endemic, but it is widespread. It is 11 years since another cricketing god, the South African captain Hansie Cronje, was found to prefer cash and a leather jacket to defeating England in a Test match. Since then, there has been a trickle of lifetime bans and the odd fine, but no way has been found to prevent the refinement of the gambling market to the point where thousands of pounds can be won or lost on a statistically irrelevant moment that in itself amounts to nothing – no result changed, not even a run forfeited. On something as small as a bowler's footfall, the shady figures in global gambling, running sophisticated operations from transient addresses, are a little bit richer, and the sport's fans that bit poorer.

This is not just Pakistan's problem, though the temptation must be greater in a country where – as Imran Khan argued yesterday – corruption is commonplace, cricket salaries are erratic and the fat cheques of the Indian Premier League are denied by international politics. But greed is a global phenomenon and the corruption it motivates stretches far beyond sporting endeavour. Worse, corruption rarely leaves an obvious trail, least of all in unregulated and increasingly offshore gambling markets. Some warn the cure could be worse than the disease. But it's no time to surrender. A beefed-up International Cricket Council, longer bans, greater powers to investigate. The fightback starts now.

In praise of... Alexandra Palace

Curtains pull back and a woman strides in front of the camera. Accompanied by the BBC Television Orchestra, the musical star Adele Dixon sings: "A mighty maze of mystic magic rays is all about us in the blue / and in sight and sound they trace living pictures out of space..." This was the song Television, as performed 75 years ago this week, at the launch in Alexandra Palace of the world's first high-definition television service. Let's not mess about with qualifications or caveats: TV was magical back then. Scarcity was part of that: fewer than 20,000 homes in London caught the early broadcasts. But just as important was the emotional investment made by those who worked in it: from the dinner-jacketed announcers to the cameramen in their lab coats. And central to the mighty mystic magic was the People's Palace, or Ally Pally (the name was Gracie Fields' invention, apparently). Towering over a light-industrial part of north London, 400 feet above sea level, the Victorian building was an ideal spot for a transmitter. Making the programmes on the same site may not have been such a good idea: at transmission time sparks would fly from the canteen cutlery. No wonder it was soon largely deserted for Lime Grove. Yet of all the many majestic and beautiful buildings BBC staffers have had the privilege to work in, Ally Pally must be one of the most awe-inspiring. The rest of us get a chance to see what it was like at this weekend's special free exhibition.

4 November 1975

Call for Buy British code in oil revolution

A new economic order was heralded for Britain by the Queen yesterday when she officially inaugurated the flow of oil from British Petroleum's Forties field 130 miles out in the North Sea – a flow which the Prime Minister said will lead us to a new industrial revolution. The Queen said the day was one of "outstanding significance in the history of the United Kingdom." And steps to strengthen the claim made by Mr Wilson are likely to be announced soon.

Mr Wilson said the first industrial revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which made Britain rich was heavily concentrated on parts of Scotland, Wales and the North of England. But, as revolution led to decline the people of these areas had suffered most from the poverty created by depression. It was, therefore, abundantly right that these areas should gain from the work created by the new industrial revolution based on oil.

What Mr Wilson did not say was that the Department of Energy hopes to reach an early agreement with the UK Offshore Operators' Association on a code of practice for "buying British." This will cover such expensive items as production platforms, which now cost about £100 millions, as well as the wide variety of supply vessels, electrical pumps, generators, and even domestic furnishings needed to sustain development in the North Sea. The code is a compromise between a free market in which many valuable orders could go abroad and legislation which would conflict with Common Market and international trading agreements. Although the code will be voluntary, there is little doubt that it will be supported by strong Government pressure on the oil companies. The next allocation of licences for exploration in the North Sea, expected in the spring, will almost certainly be used as a bargaining counter in implementing the code.

In a sense the celebrations yesterday were either a little late – oil has been coming ashore since Thursday – or a little premature because the flow is still a trickle. The present flow from the whole North Sea is enough to provide Britain with all its oil for about one hour a day. But it will soon rise to a flood, and in 1977 the giant Forties field alone will provide us with 20 per cent of our oil requirements. By the end of the decade we can snub our noses at the Organisation of Petroleum-Exporting Countries.

By OPEC standards we are not much to worry about with only 2 per cent of the world oil reserves. But the prospect of an eventual £4,000 millions saving on the balance of payments was enough to celebrate yesterday.

Peter Hillmore and John Kerr

Corrections and clarifications

A report on the Greek prime minister's decision to hold a referendum on the debt rescue deal said polls showed that 60% of Greeks were "vehemently opposed" to the bailout. In fact a poll showed that 60% had a negative or partly negative view of the rescue deal (Papandreou's bombshell a surprise to his own ministers as well as Europe's leaders, 2 November, page 5).

An obituary of the film-maker George Kuchar was illustrated with a photograph that did not show him, as the caption said, but his twin brother, Mike (20 October, page 35).

Giles Fraser, until recently canon chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, was described as having, in a fortuitous piece of timing, signed up to present a radio series on the church and money. Our timing was out: the series has already been made and aired last June (What do religious folk do after they resign?, 2 November, page 2, G2).

An article about the new Photographs Gallery at the V&A museum in London was accompanied by an uncredited photograph of teddy girls. The photographer was Roger Mayne (Photography's alchemists get full exposure at V&A, 25 October, page 11).

Further corrections and clarifications on guardian.co.uk include Sir Jimmy Savile's obituary, 29 October; Greek government teeters on brink of collapse, 2 November.

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Country diary

South Uist

It's one of those days when the cloud has persisted at ground level all morning and, despite the slight but steady breeze, has remained completely unmoving. At the beach the landward limit of visibility is defined by the half-hidden dunes, and on the other side by a few yards of grey sea which merge seamlessly with the grey of the mist. As I advance along the beach the mist keeps pace, retreating steadily before me and following stealthily behind so that I walk in a curiously hushed and chilly cocoon. Pale gulls appear briefly, sailing silently along the ridge of the dunes, and even the oystercatchers feeding at the shoreline are uncharacteristically quiet.

All the familiar landmarks are hidden, when I become aware that the enclosing mist, though just as dense, is no longer a light-deadening grey but is becoming brighter and creamier. Unexpectedly, the clouds have parted to reveal a very small patch of blue which, rather than being immediately re-engulfed, begins slowly to widen. Though still behind a veil of cloud, the sun is now visible as a hazy silver disc. There is a faint but perceptible rise in temperature, colour begins to break up the monochrome of the day and it appears the mist will soon be vanquished. It does not lift or thin, however, but gradually clears as if being pushed apart by some unseen force. Over a now blue sea it rolls back in two dense walls like a scene from a biblical epic. I head for the highest point of the dunes, the ideal place to watch the continuing drama of the landscape's reappearance, as from here both the sea and the inland hills can be seen.

But whatever factors caused this unexpected respite, they are changing, and by the time I reach my vantage point the tide of battle has turned and the mist is sweeping back, swiftly regaining the ground so recently lost.

Christine Smith

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G20 summit

Slumping to the occasion

Yes they Cannes? Sadly, in the end, no they couldn't. It is important, nevertheless, not to overstate the failure of the Cannes G20 summit. This is not apocalypse - or even Acropolis - now. Modern summits are an ongoing bargaining process, not a one-off, all-or-nothing shoot-out. But it is just as important not to understate the missed opportunities and the perilous consequences either. The fundamental fact about the Cannes G20, like the Brussels eurozone summit last week, is that the nations of the world had the chance to get a stronger grip on the European sovereign debt crisis and they let it slip. One way or another, therefore, they are doomed to have to try again. But the context may not be any easier when they do. In fact, it could be much worse.

The easy excuse is to blame Greece. If George Papandreou had not thrown a spanner into the post-Brussels works by announcing a referendum on last week's rescue package, the argument runs, then Germany and France could have come to Cannes with a shiny new eurozone prospectus for China and others to buy. That argument won't wash. Mr Papandreou's timing, though not his spasm of democratic instinct, was terrible. But Greek instability is a given in this crisis, however you frame it. The bigger problem was that Europe's three-part rescue plan was virtual reality, not money on the table. It was a rights issue with a prospectus lacking hard numbers. It was not a bad plan - and it has certainly gained the eurozone some time. But it was inadequate. It contained insufficient bankable and quantifiable commitments on Greece, on Italy, on the recapitalisation of the banks and on the euro stability fund. The very fact that the EU had to come to the G20 for help was indicative of the fact that the EU was failing to pull together - and was perhaps incapable of solving its own problems.

That judgment can now be extended to the G20 too. Yesterday's Cannes communique is a compromise document, as they always are. But the Cannes conclusions rarely rise above generality. "We all commit to further structural reforms to raise output in our countries," they say. But who commits to exactly what? "We will ensure the IMF continues to have resources to play its systemic role to the benefit of its whole membership," says what is arguably the communique's single most important sentence - not least in the paranoid worm's-eye-view world of Westminster Euroscepticism. But how much resources? From whom? And where will it be spent? Even the apparently concrete Italian commitment to call in the IMF "to carry out a public verification of its policy implementation" lacks the necessary steel rods that would reinforce Italy's pledge to restructure its debt,

It may not seem from the reporting as if the G20 was about anything other than righting Europe's banks and public finances. In fact, every G20 is and ought to be also about low global growth. Yet Cannes disappointed here too. The communique talks of an action plan for growth and jobs. But where is it? There are vague commitments to take "discretionary measures to support domestic demand, should economic conditions materially worsen." And there is an apparent Chinese commitment (which nevertheless does not mention China) "to increase domestic demand coupled with greater exchange rate flexibility". True, these are not technically inconsistent with an energetic growth pact. Yet to pretend that this is in any sense a co-ordinated or credible action plan for the nations to combine to get ahead of the markets is simply false.

Any summit is better than no summit at all. It is also important to have realistic expectations about the ability of nations with different interests, and often ruled by coalitions, to take transformative collective actions. Yet if not them, who? And if not now, when? Cannes provided few answers. All the big questions still remain on the table for next time.

Mars experiment

500 days of solitude

There are a handful of people who believe the Apollo moon shots never actually happened. Other people, it now appears, can suspend disbelief for long enough to create a scientifically useful trial of the psychological impact of the combination of prolonged isolation and extreme intimacy.

Unless it was a moment of life's extremes, of life or death, you are unlikely to remember where you were 520 days ago. You may not recall very much of what has happened since. But the six men who emerged yesterday from one of the grander experiments in make-believe - a return trip to Mars, all taking place in a hangar in a Moscow suburb - have been in a kind of suspended animation. Since 3 June 2010, through tsunamis, global economic crisis and the real-life incarceration of Los 33 in a Chilean mine-shaft, they have been voluntarily deprived of most of the best bits of being alive.

The difficulties are obvious. Getting along with five different personalities and several different cultures. The food (dried), the air (recycled) and the space (cramped). The monotony. Nothing to fear, nothing to love. And although the astronaut's-eye view of planet Earth is said to be one of the great joys of space travel - the International Space Station actually has an Italian-designed cupola, the better to revel in being in space - there was absolutely nothing to see.

Sometimes such isolation experiments have been carried out under water: then the sense of the danger of a hostile environment is real. These men awoke only a taxi ride away from a Starbucks, to the squeak of their morning blood pressure test. Their days were measured out in spaceship-type activities and a compulsory daily hour in the gym. No weightlifting, obviously. Not in space. At one point there was a simulated power failure and the cabin was filled with smoke.

So far, little of the impact of all this on the crew has emerged. There are no reports of unwanted sexual advances, nor of actual physical violence, both of which marred an earlier experiment. The videos make it look as if six blokes have found themselves not unhappily marooned in the games room of a health spa. But there are small signs of human frustration. One crew member, desperate to construct a sense of purpose, plotted the mission's imaginary trajectory and mapped it on to planetarium software so that Mars could be seen to get closer with each passing day. The scientists observed that on the way home there were signs of lassitude. One of the men said what he most missed was the randomness of life. And as their journey neared its end, another tweeted: "life: the ultimate extravehicular activity".

Unthinkable? **A Fry-free Friday**

Stephen Fry does not merely bestride our narrow world like the proverbial colossus. His bounty to us is also as boundless as the sleepless airwaves. Switch on your radio or television any day, and the great immanent polymath will be there, giving of himself. Tonight it will be in the latest episode of QI XL, a show which gets better and better. The other day he was Napoleon's horse. But that's merely the iceberg tip of his serial benefactions. In recent times, Mr Fry has been in California to say farewell to Steve Jobs, in New Zealand to film the Hobbit, backed the new Jarrow march, supported efforts to save a crab-processing factory in Cromer, opined to Australians that Adam Gilchrist would make a good president, and got into an unfortunate spat with the Observer about female sexuality. At the end of the month he will be a voiceover at Southwark Playhouse. And then, of course, there is Twitter, on which it comes as something of a surprise to discover that Mr Fry only has 3 million followers. Yesterday, the fact that his Qantas plane was diverted to Dubai after pilots decided to shut down one of its engines was global news. Whether it is cricket, the Greek bailout, new technology, Oscar Wilde, Chekhov or Wagner, Mr Fry always has more to say than anyone. He is inexhaustible. The rest of us, sadly, are not. Can he not grant mere mortals an annual Fry-free Friday? If only, of course, to allow us to savour the other 364 days all the more keenly.

5 November 1980

It's President Reagan by a landslide

Ronald Reagan will be the next President of the United States. He was heading for the White House today in what appeared to be a landslide victory in the presidential election. As the returns poured in, it became evident within 90 minutes of the first counts that the coalition on which Mr Carter had counted had crumbled all over the country. The President was reported to have burst into tears as he returned to Washington on board Air Force One. He was told by his staff that "it was all over." Mr Carter was reportedly ready to concede victory to his opponent by 1.30 a.m. but was persuaded to wait a little longer by his press secretary. The Carter campaign manager, Mr Robert Strauss, made the first public acknowledgement of defeat just before 2 a.m.
Harold Jackson and Alex Brummer

Stetsons and slogans greet victory
Enthusiastic supporters of Mr Reagan began to fill the Century Plaza headquarters hotel in Los Angeles early this morning, and the Republican presidential candidate's jubilant advisers predicted victory by a wide margin. Mr Reagan's advisers wandered through the press areas apparently dazed by the results coming over the television screens.

Beneath the chandeliers in the Los Angeles ballroom, and to strains of patriotic music, they held a series of impromptu press briefings, explaining their plans for a Reagan administration and forecasting the scale of victory. As more results came in the ballroom began to fill with joyous young Reagan supporters, sporting banners and wearing boaters and stetsons displaying Reagan and Bush stickers. Around the ballroom were assembled some 20 television cameras ready to capture the moment when Mr Reagan entered the hotel, to acknowledge his victory.

Mr Ed Meese, Reagan's chief of staff, indicated that the Cabinet appointments would not be unveiled until late November. While Mr Meese, in an interview with reporters here, discounted a cabinet role for former President Ford, he left open the possibility that there might be a job for the former Secretary of State, Dr Henry Kissinger. [Mr Meese] said that "for humanitarian reasons" none of the present cabinet members would be considered for posts. He said that the Governor would seek new appointments at the CIA, the Veterans' Administration and the Environmental Projection Agency.
Alex Brummer

These archive extracts are compiled by members of the Guardian's research and information department. Email: research.department@guardian.co.uk

Corrections and clarifications

An article said that David Cameron's senior adviser on troubled families had set up a firm to bid for work under a programme that she helped design to get households into employment. Families Unlimited has asked us to make clear that it was not set up solely for the purpose of bidding for European Social Fund (ESF) monies but rather to jointly develop and market their expertise in connection with the whole family/total person approach to worklessness, including preparing for and submitting tenders for work with local authorities and central government and if successful to undertake the provision of contracts. Further, we are happy to clarify that while Families Unlimited explored the possibility of acting as a subcontractor with a number of primes in bidding for ESF funding, they took a commercial decision not to do so (PM's 'families champion' set up firm to bid for work on project she devised, 12 September, page 11).

A photograph accompanying an article about the bailout deal for Greece was wrongly captioned in early editions as showing "the Danish prime minister, Mark Rutte". He is the Dutch prime minister (Leaders battle to solve crisis as deal on euro reaches deadlock, 27 October, page 1).

Further corrections and clarifications on guardian.co.uk include: Prince Charles is the voice of Mel Phillips, not the people, 31 October.

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Country diary

Avignon

High above, the famous medieval bridge appeared to be still under construction. Four perfect stone arches carried it so far over the wide river Rhône, but then no more. Down below, with my back to the limestone cliff on which the ancient town sits, I was discovering unexpected delights along the eastern shore.

This river was not a pea-soup Thames. Here was a wide shallow shelf with clear water revealing the light upturned shells of freshwater mussels lying on the bottom, looking like so many coins in a fountain. A stream of bubbles issued from the light grey mud - there were still living, breathing shellfish on the river bed, filtering the silt for food. Close to the shore, long tresses of hornwort held fast, winnowed by a gentle current. There were other water plants, too, including the flattened-soup-spoon-shaped leaves of potamogeton, floating just under the surface.

Everywhere there were fish, some tiny, some up to a foot long. Some were light grey with tiny scales and wide mouths with lips thick as if inflated. Others resembled catfish, showing brown and black patches down their sides, and overshot lower lips drooping barbels like wayward tusks. The most numerous were olive-backed fish with black-tipped tails and dorsal fins. They swam in mesmerising shoals, interweaving, overlapping and coursing through the water in pairs, turning their bodies to flash silver bellies.

Current opinion now has it that Avignon's celebrated song was about entertainers underneath the arches, who tempted travellers to indulge and part with their money. But as I watched those captivating creatures darting about in the water, it seemed they were providing a natural inspiration for the original words: *"Sur le pont d'Avignon / L'on y danse, l'on y danse"*.
Derek Niemann