



# Redbridge NEU Retired Teachers' Newsletter Autumn 2020

## Tin in a bin!

*By Jackie Withnall*

At the beginning of lockdown I got involved with a Redbridge-wide scheme to support the local Food Bank. It is the brainchild of Juliet Harvey and organised by Juliet and friend, James Paterson - both of Wanstead.

The project is called *Tin in A Bin* and the concept is a neighbourhood approach to helping the most needy in our Borough. A spread of homes across Wanstead, Aldersbrook and South Woodford have a bin outside their houses to collect donations of tins and dried goods. The addresses can be found on Facebook @Wanstead Community Hub or from myself at [jcwithnall@btinternet.com](mailto:jcwithnall@btinternet.com).

The bins are then taken to a collection point and transported to the Food Bank twice a week. My bin is in my porch and it is so wonderful to open the front door and find a donation. One tin can make a difference to somebody.

I have thoroughly enjoyed collecting the food and meeting my neighbours. I have regular donators ... whom I recognise by their items! The generosity of strangers is humbling. One regular is already making up gift bags for Christmas! One elderly lady collected 5p pieces and gave me the collection to buy groceries with ...



The picture above shows what I bought. If you can donate ....

### **Urgently Needed :**

- \* Razors and shaving foam
- \* Tooth paste and toothbrushes
- \* Tinned Meat/ Tomatoes / Potatoes / Fruit
- \* Rice Pudding / Custard
- \* Jam
- \* Long Life Juice
- \* Sugar
- \* Toilet Paper

### **Regularly Needed:**

- \* Small Bags of Rice
- \* Shampoo
- \* Squash
- \* Deodorants
- \* Tins or Packets of Custard
- \* Peanut Butter
- \* Shower Gel
- \* Small Jar of Coffee/ tea bags
- \* Small Multipack Snacks

Sadly, however, the continuing crisis has increased the demands on the (Continued on p.2)

## LOCKDOWN SPECIAL

(Continued from p.1) Redbridge Foodbank at a time when many people are suffering financial hardship. It is fully understood that people may not be able to donate but even a single tin helps someone with nothing. If you are able to donate, please drop "a tin" in your nearest bin or donate through the paypal pool set up for this: Wanstead Community Hub Foodbank Pool. Or if you would like to get involved with your own Bin.... please contact me at the email address below.

A BIG thank you to everyone who has donated to Tin in a Bin since we started. At the time of writing we are just short of the 18 tonne (double-decker equivalent weight) target! This doesn't include two tonnes of donated food that the Food bank can't use and has been given to people in desperate need. Also, we've received over £6,500 in donations into the PayPal pool. A truly incredible achievement.

**Jackie Withnall**

[jcwithnall@btinternet.com](mailto:jcwithnall@btinternet.com)

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## Experiences of Lockdown

### Surviving with Technology

I tried to engage in similar activities to the ones that had previously formed a part of my normal routine but now by using SKY SUBSCRIPTIONS, the internet and wi-fi services.

This meant Sundays I would conduct my religious observances via what I call the 'God' Channel. This is anything from Tomorrow's World (Sky CHANNELS 146, to TBN 852) or other Sunday worship on BBC 1. During the week I stopped my actual church-going as it was the first place that had informed me that they had an outbreak of the virus. This meant, a Government inspection and a clean-up regime followed by a re-inspection.

I therefore politely declined any kind of visit even when they reopened recently. A victim of their own success, they have been posting out study-guides on varying religious themes which I love and look forward to receiving.

The main routine during each day was my writing project, which included an online blog: 'Creative activities for Well-Being'. This was satisfying and helped me to keep a focus on the hours I spend each day in what can feel like solitary confinement.

I had a good offer from a friend to pick up groceries for me locally and as I had lost my Tesco delivery slot this offer was a gratefully received.

During Lockdown there were a variety of Zoom sessions, including a weekly NEU Black teachers' meeting, a Labour women's group meeting and several others. When I said I was zoomed out I was not joking.

All of the above is fine if you have no problems with BT Broadband but when I was 'outed' once in July and again in October, I found the experience to be very isolating.

**Barbara Roymacauley**



*A deserted Tube station. Photo: Liz Floyd*

### Short impressions

After the initial shock, and when the rules on public transport were relaxed a bit (or was I breaking them, who knows?) I took the tube to the Angel and wandered along the New River Walk, from Essex Road to Canonbury, then back on the overground to Stratford. The quiet station and peaceful streets reminded me of London of my childhood.

**Liz Floyd**

# A garden in lockdown

*By Liz Dolan*

During these last few months, the essentially circumscribed nature of daily life has created a need to focus inwards, producing a relishing of small pleasures, of incidental moments of perception, of hitherto unappreciated observations. For me, the garden has been a lifeline, whether looking out at it, sitting in it in the glorious summer heat, very occasionally entertaining in it – tea under the shade of the trees or a glass of wine in the wind-down before dinner - and of course, working in it.

A collapsed fence, with panels rotting or blown away by winter gales, needed to be replaced. It marks a boundary on the lower, eastern, side of our south-facing garden. It had over the years become swamped by ivy and brambles and hidden by a near-impenetrable thicket.

Most of this was beyond the civilised part of the garden, in an area which for decades we had allowed to grow wild, with minimal intervention, letting it revert to the natural woodland margins of the forest of which our neighbourhood was once part. Seedlings had become trees, modest shrubs enormous, tangled masses of greenery – the sharp almost lime green of dogwood contrasting with darker shades of juniper and holly, interspersed with ash, sycamore and hazel.

In early summer, clouds of white blossom on elderberry, hawthorn and wild damson glowed in the evening light. In August a vibrant slash of orange montbretia took the place of an earlier band of yellow daffodils.

All of this meant that a fairly radical programme of clearing would be required before any repair work could be contemplated. So I began to clear a pathway and inevitably that became a more comprehensive attack on the jungle. This is what I do best and it can absorb me for hours on end. Anxieties flee and my mind reposes. Working around shifting shade and burning sun, I made steady progress and soon found I was moving beyond simply providing clear access. I was effectively redesigning the whole end quarter of the garden.

As I cut and dug, I created vistas, gaps through which sunlight caught on tree trunks and brown leaf-mould-covered earth. Next door's expanse of close-cut grass was revealed and our garden felt enlarged, less confining. When the early morning light slants across the exposed earth and vegetation,



*Liz Dolan (above) and garden (below)*

it opens up possibilities; my mind is in planning overdrive.

The fence is being replaced as I write, and I am ambivalent about once again shutting the garden in. It had become a refuge, rather than a confinement, but also a window into the world beyond. Sitting out under the trees in the warm June weather, we were somehow in touch with our neighbours doing the same, no barrier between us as we chatted to each other or read our books.

We could share our gardening woes or put the world to rights together. It made a connection in a small but necessary way. Now the garden is enclosed once more. The morning light will fall differently, not on the ground or the base of the tree trunks, but on the yellowing leaves above, and again the perspective shifts. The connectedness, I hope, remains.





# Keeping the brain active in retirement: study for a degree

By Philip Hawker

Are you a retired teacher or a discharged prisoner? Whichever, you have so much more in common than you think. The school and prison share many characteristics: they stipulate

1. Where you should be on the estate at any particular point during the day (*the school plan*)
2. When you should be there (*the timetable*) often announced by an audio signal, which sends shudders down the spine of those familiar with similar choreographic mechanisms used to inform the Morlocks and the Eloi where they must go at certain times of the day in H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*;
3. What activity is prescribed for that place at that time (the National Curriculum).

There are two overarching functions which are facilitated by this spatio-temporal organisation:

- A. provision of both medium and long-term goals and
- B. criteria to evaluate the practitioner's performance.

The nature of the instructions and the method of the feedback take different forms in the two institutions but the excitement of the challenge of working towards goals and the sense of achievement from meeting them is indispensable for a rewarding and enjoyable post-retirement life.

## The Value of Study

I am not arguing that schools are really prisons or that prisons are really schools. Of course, they are not. What I am arguing is that they have certain features in common and that when the experience of either is withdrawn, it results in similar (and unwelcome) consequences. In conclusion, I advocate a *modus operandi* that has - for me - ameliorated these consequences and resulted in an enriched and satisfying retirement. Following a structured course of post-graduate study has provided me with intrinsically meaningful and achievable goals and an effective measure of how I have performed a deeply pleasurable course of study.

I am not to be understood to be arguing that such impositions are necessarily either egregious or unjustified. Schools and prisons need a well-functioning bureaucracy if they are to function effectively. My



Philip Hawker

point rather is that those of us living a large part of our lives under these twin constraints can experience a pointless directionless-ness in retirement if we do not plan for the transition.

When teachers retire or the prisoner is discharged, they find that the goals that drove their purposeful behaviour quite suddenly evaporate. Also, the rationale for and the evaluation of their performance is similarly withdrawn. I have known colleagues see their retirement as a gateway to purposeless inactivity or what is worse busy purposelessness! A neurologist working in this field has observed:

'The work-pension social model, seen as an abrupt transition from activity to inactivity is a disaster. It's no wonder many people look for other jobs or interesting activities to give their lives meaning. Those who don't tend to deteriorate much faster physically and cognitively'. (Marco Magrini, *The Brain: a user's manual*, p.215)

A structured course of formal study of a subject that holds intrinsic value for the engaged retiree provides a life that is a) both goal-directed and purposeful and b) immensely pleasurable. As educators we have the advantage in being mindful of what makes learning effective and enjoyable for others, so don't we owe it to ourselves to spend the fruit of our experience in enriching our own lives?



## Counting My Blessings

Diary Extract 24/3/20 - from *Lockdown: 100 days that changed my world*, by Shereen Pandit

The sun has continued to shine determinedly, if coldly, upon London on this, the third day of total lockdown. Already our lives have lost the steady cadence, the regular rhythm, of routine. This used to comprise exercise, household chores, tutoring, writing, meetings or other political activities, even if that be only reading. Now there is the wild fluctuation, the chaos, of arrhythmia. Rise when the sun comes in through the window, wander about in pyjamas, make coffee, read the paper, wander aimlessly until finally going outside for the precious hour of exercise.

The usual three forms of exercise, tutoring, collective action of any kind – these have vanished but left behind their shadowy outlines in the spaces they used to occupy, filling them with stress and aimlessness, mental vacuity, physical ennui. Spectres haunting not just Europe but the world. Today it took until 4pm to get to the door – and I cannot honestly account for the day, knowing only that a large proportion was spent rewriting the piece I should have finished yesterday and repeatedly clicking for yet more and more disheartening news on email or BBC online. It's called driving oneself crazy.

### Coping

Fortunately, there are two good regular emails, one from the Mosaic Rooms and another from the ICA. The latter, today, included tips from an astronaut on how to survive isolation, as he has had to do in space. He emphasised setting up and sticking to a routine. Get up, wash, have breakfast and go about the day as though it were any other. Tomorrow I shall rise at swim time and do the dryland swimming

exercises I downloaded before settling down at my desk and continuing with the memoir I was working on before the world fell apart. Tomorrow, the second form of exercise will be the garden and the third, clearing my daughter's room of the things she left behind a decade ago – or maybe not this last activity. Two out of three is not bad.

### Privileges

These are things for which I must be grateful. I have the privilege of actually resetting my life to this new norm and doing so with the roof over my head secure, with food on my table for the foreseeable future, with the distractions of books, newspapers, music, TV, computer, internet. Not so in my birth country, South Africa, where millions face lockdown in overcrowded shacks or tiny houses, where the public healthcare system is far less robust than even an NHS decimated by years of Tory austerity and sell-offs, and where security of income doesn't exist for millions. After midnight tomorrow, the army will be out manning roadblocks and patrolling the streets to ensure that people only leave their homes for the permitted reasons – to work, if their work is exempt from restriction, to collect social security, such little as there is, to buy food for the next two or three days, or for medical reasons. The transport system is shut down except for taxis which can only take a limited number of people. No exercise outdoors and no dog walking.

### New Norms and New Hope

We have to hope that the new norm will not become the accepted norm (is that tautologous?) as in Isaac Asimov's short story, *It's Such A Beautiful Day*, which plays on the relation between normality and abnormality. I have been a fan of Asimov since my teens, as I have been of Atwood, London and others whose writings posit altered norms, much like those which now surround us. The fiction of these authors was great fun when today's reality wasn't staring me in the face. How like the ruling men of Gilead the Trump monster is in his misogyny. How we have been ground down by the Iron Heel of Oligarchy. And now we face the forbidden outside – hopefully only temporarily.

Bringing that hope to fruition depends on resistance. I think that is what attracted me to the writers I have mentioned - the resistance, the willingness to take risks in the name of freedom, and the hope that was at the heart of them all. And, of course, the happy endings. Gilead is being undermined by rebels. The Iron Heel has vanished by the time its story is told – told by the people who resisted it and

forged a new and positive future. Asimov's shrink sees a beautiful day and takes a walk outside.

As an aside, and a very important one – another blessing to count? – let me say that someone sent me a brilliant article by Asimov on race.

If I didn't love the man's writing before, I'd have become a convert from that piece of writing alone. The Thought Police have not yet come for Asimov and his followers, but, when this crisis is over, they no doubt will. So today, despite the bus which nearly knocked me off my bike when I swerved to avoid a

homeless man collecting cigarette ends from the gutter (I mean, he was a CoVid-19 case waiting to happen! Two metre rules!) – I shall count my blessings. I can walk. I can ride. I can run. I just can't do all three. Hurrah!

**Lockdown by Shereen Pandit is  
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## Lockdown in Turkey

*By Eve Ewers*

I decided about five or six years ago that I wanted to be somewhere warm to help my aches and pains – somewhere relaxed and happy.

I had been coming to Turkey for many years (always at the most expensive, hottest times courtesy of our teachers' holiday schedule). To say I loved it here would be an understatement. For four weeks in the year I was almost aches and pain free. So, no surprise when I made the decision to try living in the country for six months to see if it still suited me, with the possibility of then choosing it as my semi-permanent home. Usually, I come back to the UK at least a few times during the year to see family at Christmas and just to check that my sons haven't burnt the house down or lost the cats.

However, this year it all turned out a bit different. Actually, everything turned out very differently for everyone – not just me. I had returned to Turkey at the end of January, aiming to return to the UK in early April. When I left things were normal – just a virus causing concern in Wuhan, interfering a bit with the Chinese New Year! Soon though, it became fairly apparent that this virus was not going to go away.

### **Government Response to the Virus**

Here, the President acted very quickly. Early on March 13th he closed all schools and introduced regulations to ban large gathering. Gyms, parks, cinemas closed, then Çay houses, where the men gathered to play their games of backgammon. Barbers, hairdressers and many other non-essential shops and businesses also shut up shop. A large-scale disinfecting plan was also quickly implemented. Then, no one under 18 or over 65 was allowed to leave their home. I must say neighbours and strangers all rallied together to help those who could not go out to shops or banks etc. A really good commu-

nity spirit developed, with everyone helping each other. Furthermore, travel between provinces and international travel was prohibited, which meant that commuters were badly affected and many people couldn't get return flights.

Restaurants and bars did not open, so anyone who relied on seasonal work was basically unemployed. Some places started to help out with take away services and essential deliveries still went ahead, enabling supermarkets to avoid empty shelves. Fortunately, there was no panic buying. Mask wearing, even outside, was made law and tougher penalties have been recently introduced. Furthermore, in a family car no one could sit next to the driver and only two people were permitted in the back. In taxis one person is required to sit diagonally opposite and no passengers were allowed on motor-cycles. Prayers at the mosque were stopped and every evening the daily teachings were delivered over loud-speakers.

### **Life Changes**

Life was different. I luckily could still go out as I was under the 65 year rule but if the lockdown starts again I will not be free to leave my home except for essential shopping. My neighbours came out here on one of the last flights and self-isolated for the 14 days, so I helped them out. We rallied together, sharing books and walking around the gardens of the complex.

As well as the early lockdown restrictions we had weekend curfews. The first was a bit chaotic as an announcement came on a Friday evening that people were to stay home from midnight for the whole weekend. That saw panic!!! Everyone went out to buy mainly bread and any other food items they required. It was total madness – almost mass riots on the streets of the big cities. (*Continued on [page 7](#)*)





*These two pictures show a great Turkish idea for helping families to keep social distance. The picture on the right shows how it didn't quite work!*

(Continued from [page 6](#)) We had many weekends like this and a few weekdays after the Ramadan Fast (Bayram /Eid). Of course, the idea was to prevent family get togethers that would usually happen during this holiday and the later smaller Bayram celebration.

Things have eased up since and both internal and international travel (air corridors) have opened, as have restaurants and hotels. But, as a result the spread of the virus has increased. Friday prayers can now be at the mosque and the overflow are accommodated in local open areas - football pitches etc. School have recently returned and reopened. Rules are still in place for us oldies to follow - we can only go out between 10am - 10pm. But I don't intend to do much partying - ha ha! I think that the government

will probably introduce more lockdowns if the number of cases rise.

I am hoping to return to England and have already made provision to self-isolate if necessary. I have missed my family and this year's stay at my second home has been very challenging. But I am sure everything will work out in the end.

Covid 19 has, in my opinion, changed many things, both here and in the UK - changes that we will have to adapt to. There is bound to be more working from home and a greater need to be more tech savvy and more resourceful. All of us have a greater recognition and appreciation of the needs of others – both family and friends. In addition, it may even have had a positive knock-on effect on the environment and global warming. Well, we can but hope!

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

We are very interested to find out your reactions to anything you have read in this edition of the RRTA Newsletter.

So please send your letters to Mike Peters at [mikepeters1@ntlworld.com](mailto:mikepeters1@ntlworld.com)

Contributions on a range of topics relevant to retired teachers are also welcome – do get in touch with ideas and articles.

Thank you.

## The Covert Human Intelligence Sources Bill

By Liz Floyd

This Bill, currently going through the House of Lords and often referred to as the "Spycops Bill", proposes wide-ranging powers for government bodies to grant "Criminal Conduct Authorisations" which would allow authorised people to commit criminal acts

- in the interests of national security,
- for the purposes of preventing or detecting crime or of preventing disorder and
- In the interests of the economic well-being of the UK.

CCAs can be granted by a range of public bodies, from police and intelligence services to the Department for Health and Social Care and the Environment Agency.

Many trades unions, human rights lawyers and organizations and civil rights campaigns have pointed out that, if it becomes law, the Bill will authorise criminal activities, including rape, murder and torture, to be carried out with impunity. Other lesser crimes will be committed with limited oversight and no external verification.

It would also deny the right to compensation to victims who have suffered as a result of a CCA, as legally no crime would have been committed in the first place. In October, amendments to the Bill were tabled in Parliament aimed at stopping the authorisation of serious offences including causing death or bodily harm, torture, and violating the sexual integrity of a person, but were defeated.

Amendments aimed at protecting trade unions were similarly defeated. Past criminal misdemeanours carried out by police infiltrators into environmental and political organisations will be able to be

perpetrated in the future, under protection of a CCA, with no time limits and no judicial oversight.

So much for government assurances that the Human Rights Act would be respected if the Bill becomes law. This goes beyond what is allowed in even the USA and Canada, where murder, torture and rape are specifically excluded in their own legislation.

Human rights groups in the UK have also pointed to the silence of the Bill on the granting of CCAs to children. In an under-reported legal case in 2019, the then Home Secretary Sajid Javid successfully fought off a judicial challenge over the government's policy of allowing children to be used as spies by the police and other agencies.

A government review revealed that at least 17 children (under-18s) had been used as spies since 2015, and there doesn't seem to be a lower age limit. But as the CEO of JustForKids Law, who took the government to court said,

"When the police identify a child who is being exploited, their first response should be to safeguard that child and help them to get out of that situation rather than put them at great risk of further exploitation and abuse."

So why are there no safeguards in the Bill that would protect children from physical and emotional harm? Will CCAs be granted to children to spy on their teachers perhaps, "in the interests of the economic well-being of the UK" as stated in the Bill, given DFE statutory guidance stating that anti-capitalism is an extreme political stance and should not be taught? It sounds a touch Orwellian, but maybe not so far from the truth.



*Lives were ruined when undercover police officers formed relationships with women activists in groups under surveillance and even fathered children. The Undercover Policing Inquiry was announced in March 2014, and formally 'started' in June 2015. It is only now about to start hearings*



# Government hypocrisy\* during the COVID-19 era – 10 top cases

\*‘Hypocrisy is the homage which vice pays to virtue’, François de la Rochefoucauld.

1. **Taking back control:** a cabinet packed full of Brexiteers, who had assured us that they’d be ‘taking back control’, in the event, through a combination of ineptitude, apathy and misplaced neo-liberal ideological commitment, **lost control** by being late on lockdown, adoption of PPE, test and trace, on stemming the death of people in care homes and on the quarantining of people arriving in the UK – all of which managed to achieve the highest death toll in Europe and one of the most severe economic downturns in the world. And the Tories’ ongoing, insidious privatisation programme is **transferring control** from the public sector to unaccountable economic elites in the private sector, while, in the case of trade deals, legislation has been passed to, in effect, **cede control** to powerful US corporations and **remove control** from Parliament.

2. **The NHS:** following 10 years of battering the NHS as part of its destructive austerity regime, and following the cheering by Tory MPs of the result of a parliamentary vote in 2017 which blocked a pay increase for nurses, the government encouraged us to clap the NHS workers. But they soon followed the clapping with a slapping: in the July pay round, they denied a pay rise to nurses and other low paid NHS staff. And, lest anyone be in any doubt about the Tories’ true intentions for the NHS, in order to channel public funds to their mates in private corporations, the so-called ‘world-beating’ test and trace was unnecessarily contracted out to the likes



*The Tories’ ongoing, insidious privatisation programme for the NHS is transferring control from the public sector to unaccountable economic elites in the private sector*

of companies, such as Deloitte and Serco, at a cost of more than £12bn to the tax payer - without any competitive tendering and with well-documented farcical results.

3. **The care sector:** with the claim by Matt Hancock to have thrown a ‘protective ring’ around the care sector and that of the PM that we need to ‘look after people better who are in social care, residents of the sector would have had every reason to feel safe. In the event, thanks to years of widespread privatization, deregulation and fragmentation, a dire lack of PPE, a formal procedure for discharging more than 25,000 people from hospitals into care homes without (Continued on [page 10](#))

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Review:

## **Trust**

(a BBC radio drama written by Jonathan Hall, available on BBC Sounds)

I listened to a three part drama recently on BBC Sounds, which I enjoyed greatly and, if you were teaching from the good old 1970s and 80s until the bad old days of recent years, I think you might too.

The play is about an experienced teacher who finds herself as acting head of the school she has taught at for many years.

The school is a Salford, inner city comprehensive, struggling for money and is part of a large group of

academy schools. The academy executives are intent on growing their portfolio, regardless of what type of school or where it is situated.

They are also intent on pitting school against school, with some held up as doing the job well and others not.

They are focused on producing excellent results without spending much money and without taking into consideration the circumstances of the pupils.

*Trust* bring out the everyday strains and stresses of secondary school life in an easily accessible way, making it light listening but with serious messages about today's education world.

*Elaine Allouf*



*“Sitting ducks”: The government achieved the notable record of making care home residents more likely to die of Covid-19*



*Roosevelt spent 40% of US GDP on projects such as the Grand Coulee Dam (above). ‘New Deal’ wannabe Johnson plans to spend 0.2% of UK GDP.*

(Continued from [page 9](#)) testing for C-19, and a rejection of an April 2020 11-point plan by health officials for care homes, the residents were pretty much reduced to the status of ‘sitting ducks’. And the government achieved the notable record of making care home residents more likely to die of C-19 than in any of the other major European countries, apart from Spain, with 28,186 excess deaths over a three month period compared to the previous year.

**4. Lockdown:** Dominic Cummings, the power-crazed, delusional chief government adviser and de facto, unelected PM, achieved a spectacular hypocrisy double. As Downing Street’s Brexit guru who had railed against the ‘absurdity’ of EU subsidies, it turned out that he is the co-owner of a family farm that has received £235,000 from the EU in (yes, you’ve guessed it) subsidies! And, of course, as one of the architects of the government’s C-19 lockdown stay at home policy, he famously chose to drive his family 300 or so miles to his parents’ farm and surrounding areas, while himself ill with the virus.

**5. Biodiversity:** Almost before the ink could dry, in the same week that BJ signed the ‘Leaders’ pledge on Biodiversity’, with himself pledging ‘to put nature and biodiversity on a road to recovery’, police forcibly removed pro-biodiversity protesters against HS2 from Jones’ Hill Wood, Buckinghamshire. This is one of the thirty pieces of ancient woodland being destroyed for the sake of a government flagship, vanity project that will succeed in lopping off all of 35 minutes from the London to Birmingham train journey. And, if past performance is anything to go by, this Government’s failure over the past ten years to reach 17 out of 20 promised biodiversity targets,

with a slippage backwards on six of them, is likely to be an accurate indicator of the sincerity of BJ’s sudden concern for the future of the planet.

**6. Wannabe aspirations:** Boris Johnson has made no secret of his admiration for Winston Churchill and his desire to be like him, but during the crucial early stages of the pandemic, a senior Downing Street adviser felt compelled to note that, ‘There’s no way you’re at war if your PM isn’t there. He didn’t chair any meetings. He liked his country breaks. He didn’t work weekends.’ And then, as a wannabe Franklin D Roosevelt, BJ compared his proposed ‘build, build, build’ infrastructure spending programme to the latter’s New Deal. Only there were a few differences: FDR spent 40% of US GDP on multiple job creation schemes, while BJ’s plans involved the princely sum of 0.2% of UK GDP. And the £5bn promised was ‘old money’ that had already been allocated in the previous March budget.

**7. Levelling up – corruption, cronyism and nepotism:** under cover of the pandemic, the PM used a well-concealed peerages list to make good on his promise to ‘level up’ the country -by rewarding friends and family with jobs for life in a shameless display of abuse of the honours system. Beneficiaries included Evgeny Lebedev, a Russian oligarch who is the son of a former KGB agent, Philip May, Theresa’s hubby and, of course, his own kid brother, Jo.

**8. Levelling up – housing:** another notable hypocrisy double was achieved by the Housing Secretary, Robert Jenrick. Having also broken lockdown rules by ostensibly delivering food to his parents’ house, RJ’s levelling up in relation to the residents of Tower Hamlets, a borough where 48% of children live in poverty and 20% of (Continued on [page 11](#))



(Continued from [page 10](#)) families have an income below £15,000, had a distinct **levelling down** feel to it. By what RJ would have us believe was a freak coincidence, shortly after they met at a Conservative Party fundraiser, he gave the all-clear to Richard Desmond, a billionaire property developer, for a multi-million pound property development to go ahead in the borough, overruling his own planning inspector, just 24 hours before the introduction of a community infrastructure levy that would have cost the tycoon £40M. And the affordable housing provision, which was originally to have been 36%, was reduced to 21%, a decision personally endorsed by RJ himself.

**9. Levelling up - A level exams:** any educational process designed to achieve levelling-up would necessitate that all students have an equal chance of gaining good, university-acceptable grades. And, initially, BJ, with characteristic groundless bluster (otherwise known as utter bullshit), tried to convince us that his government's disastrous algorithm had done just that: 'Let's be in no doubt about it: the exam results that we've got today are robust, they're good, they're dependable.' Clearly, he and his hapless Education Secretary, Gavin Williamson, until forced to U-turn by a public outcry, were indifferent to the impact of something that would critically affect the future life-chances of hundreds of thousands of young people. And, patently, it wouldn't take a statistical genius to ascertain that if you take teachers' predicted grades and then adjust them across

the board according to previous school performance, the result would be to level down according to class size, postcode and the results of predecessors - and favour those with long-established advantages, (e.g. wealthy pupils in fee paying schools) over the up-and-coming. So, the algorithm laid bare not so much a desire to level up but an officially approved system for preserving existing advantage and disadvantage according to birth and social background.

**10. The rule of law:** undoubtedly, a real hypocrisy winner – the party of law and order breaks the law by trashing its own EU withdrawal treaty, which was negotiated and signed only a few months previously by BJ himself. But cabinet minister, Brandon Lewis, was able to offer a defence of the indefensible: international law was, he claimed, only broken 'in a very specific and limited way.' However, no such flexibility of interpretation has been afforded to those people trying to save our planet, who belong to Extinction Rebellion, which has been labelled an 'organized crime group', nor to legitimate asylum seekers, who have had to face the full fury of the Government's 'hostile environment' policy, which has, in several instances, itself breached human rights law through illegal detentions and deportations.

With such a hideous record of hypocrisy, perhaps, before too long, this deplorable Government will manage to socially distance itself from power!

*Henry Tiller*



*Extinction Rebellion, labelled 'an organised crime group'*