

developed extensive worldwide trade networks. Had they done so, it is likely that eucalyptus leaf prices would have been very volatile indeed,

colonised
distant
continents

energy diet. We have a lot of offshore wind, for one thing, and a healthily small Green party. This means we do not all don PLO scarves and face-paint

in a place with no hills. But for 80 per cent of people 90 per cent of the time, only a car will do. We need to say this more loudly and more often.

DEAR MARY YOUR PROBLEMS SOLVED



Q. I am organising a village fête and am happy to throw cash into it, as we want to make a favourable local impact as the new owners of the Old Rectory. We will have games for children, teas and cakes, secondhand stalls and a brass band. My question is – should I also hire an old-fashioned fortune-teller? I feel this would generate a lot of harmless excitement, but my husband thinks it could cause trouble as some people take fortune-telling seriously.
– Name and address withheld

A. A more useful community service would be to hire a pop-up GP. These now feature in the back rooms of certain upmarket London chemists and give consultations to the time-pressed for £45. Hold a men-only raffle to allow ten winners a free consultation. Men are hopeless at going to the doctor but here they could be lulled by the gaiety outside the tent into vocalising their prostate issues and thereby clearing the first hurdle.

Q. Has it really become ‘bad form’ to date someone one knows (Dear Mary, 8 April)? My brother is 59, newly single and lonely. He is still a romantic so would rather remain single than have to meet someone who had ‘swiped right’ on a dating app. So clinical. Any ideas, Mary?
– H.R., Wallingford

A. The new protocol only applies to the young. Dating apps allow young men to sidestep the spectre of #MeToo-ism as, by swiping right, the female has signalled theoretical interest in a physical relationship. Most older singletons also dislike the soullessness of apps, and hence friendship clubs are emerging. One example is *theottoconnection.com*, an invitation-only group offering friendship to those in their fifties and sixties. Everyone is pre-vetted by another member. The club offers parties, picnics, suppers, games nights, films and holidays, with none of the tensions of one-on-one encounters. The slow exposure is reminiscent of old-fashioned office life where, having got to know a colleague gradually, workers sometimes realised they

were attracted to each other. At least a friendship club would deal with the loneliness issue.

Q. My godfather owns a wonderful, fully staffed house near the sea and has offered it to me as a 40th birthday present. I can invite who I like. It sleeps eight but my wife and I have eight needy friends, all of whom are broke and desperately want a treat. How on earth can we decide which two to reject?
– F.J., London SW18

A. Email everyone in the middle of the night explaining that, because you can only have six guests, it will have to be first come, first served. The most desperate will be up through the night anyway with insomnia and this will be a fair way of filtering out the least needy.