

Robin Boyden | Pickled 

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Rural Britannia

BBC Radio 4's everyday story of country folk, *The Archers* celebrates its 65th birthday on January 2. But how well do you know the world's longest-running broadcast drama?

Test yourself here and prepare to be amazed!

PLUS OVERLEAP: Love or loathe? Writers weigh in for and against the Borchester chronicles

18 things you (probably) don't know about *The Archers*

From the secrets behind the sound effects to a who's who of famous cameos, facts that would even raise a surprised eyebrow at *The Bull*

- 1** BBC agricultural-programme producer Godfrey Baseley created the show in 1950. It was initially a dramatised public-information broadcast, giving farmers tips and encouragement to increase post-war production.
- 2** Pilot episodes were broadcast over the course of a week in May 1950, and the series began properly in January 1951. It originally went out at 11.45am on the Light Programme (then to the Home Service, which morphed into Radio 4 in 1967), before moving to its long-established Sunday to Friday evening slot at 7pm (with a 10am Sunday omnibus).
- 3** One of the names considered for the soap's fictional village was Little Twittington. Ambridge got the nod.
- 4** The show plunged its 20 million-strong audience into grief in September 1955 when Grace Archer, the young wife of farmer Phil, died trying to rescue a horse from a burning barn. One woman went into labour because of all the drama, and another woman's grandmother reportedly closed her front room curtains as a mark of respect.
- 5** But Grace came back from the dead – sort of – when actress Ysanne Churchman played gravely voiced farmer's wife Mary Pound in the Seventies. She also portrayed policeman's wife Barbara Drury – and Jennifer Archer as a girl.
- 6** Phil Archer (Norman Painting) soon found new love with Jill Patterson, a girl he spotted at the village fête. But rather than propose over a candlelit dinner, he chose Birmingham New Street station. The couple married on November 16, 1957 and stayed together until Painting's death in 2009.
- 7** Norman Painting wrote some 1,200 of the programme's scripts under the pseudonym Bruno Milne, including the 10,000th episode in 1989. He also took the role of Shula Hebben Lloyd's former boyfriend, Pedro.
- 8** The show's effects team recreates the sound of straw being handled using old-fashioned, scrunched-up reel-to-reel recording tape, while an ironing board makes the noise of a creaky farm gate opening.
The squeaky bath of a spring lamb involves engineers throwing wet towels onto the tape and putting their hands into a large pot of yogurt.
- 9** For the sound of a sink in an upmarket house – such as that of wealthy landowner Brian Aldridge – programme makers clang cutlery, plates and the like on porcelain. In poorer homes – think former tenant farmers the Grundys – they bang them on plastic.
- 10** Appropriately enough, the future of Ambridge is decided in a village hall. Following a long-term story plan, which roughs out characters' lives for as many as 20 years ahead, the programme's editor gets together with the writers to set out the next five weeks and how their individual stories will develop.
- 11** Five weeks' worth of episodes are recorded in just eight days, with each 13-minute programme completed in two hours. They are transmitted between three and six weeks later.
- 12** Ambridge's queen of romantic ill-fortune is Caroline Sterling (née Bone). She had a doomed affair with Brian Aldridge in 1985, a failed relationship with village doctor Matthew Thorogood, and was duped out of money by ex-boyfriend Cameron Fraser.
The love of her life, estate owner Guy Pemberton, died of a heart attack six months after their marriage.
On top of all that, riding-stables owner Shula Hebben Lloyd's first husband Mark died after swerving his car to avoid Caroline, who'd been thrown off her horse. On the plus side, Caroline is now married to >



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CHEESEBURGER

Digital Disruption

Hi-tech is hitting the high street as retailers strive to deliver a 21st century in-store experience. *discid quo volorrovidit maxim que dolo ommoluptasit*

Words: John Manning

Bricks and mortar retailers have had their world turned upside down. First came the rise of e-commerce – internet juggernauts such as Amazon started poaching customers, turning them into armchair shoppers with the promise of convenience and rock-bottom prices.

And as if that wasn't enough, customers are now daring to bring the internet in-store with them, using their smartphones to check reviews and product information and to see if items are available cheaper online.

Known as showrooming, the behaviour is increasingly prevalent. According to Google, as many as 84 per cent of smartphone owners use their device while shopping.

This means the collision between digital and bricks and mortar retail has, to date at least, been largely driven by shoppers. Retailers have been relegated to mere passengers, unable to steer purchase decisions as effectively as they could in the past. A 10 per cent discount doesn't seem such a strong incentive to buy when, with a single swipe of a finger, a shopper can quickly discover the exact same product is available 30 per cent cheaper online.

But smart retailers are beginning to realise

they don't have to be powerless. Customers unavoidable, but retailers are beginning to take more control of the mobile experience. Native apps provide a way for retailers

South Korean consumers are well known for being early adopters of mobile technology, so it should come as no surprise that the nation's retailers have been some of the first to venture into in-store apps. Discount retailer Emart worked with Cheil to develop a navigation app to help customers find their way around its giant stores. "It guides shoppers to the best deals, and direct to the aisle with items on promotion using their smartphones," says Cheil global head of retail experience Simon Hathaway.

A digital step ahead

Coffee shop chain Harris+Hoole has also created an in-store app. Customers can check-in online and, as soon as they do, their ID pops up on the Harris+Hoole system, listing their favourite drink. "By integrating the app into the ordering process we are able to share relevant information in real time," says Harris+Hoole director of digital experience Danielle Anderson. "This helps to create a more personal relationship between our baristas and our customers," she says.

ILLUSTRATIONS: ROBIN BOYDEN



Britain's nine most pathetically easy cycle routes

As the Tour de France departs in Yorkshire we strike back on behalf of Britain's lazy lumps and soft pedal merchants. By **Sophie Campbell**

It was a warm, sunny day in Devon and we were pedalling lazily along the flat path that once carried the Barnstaple-Bideford railway line and its cargo of ball clay, milk and passengers. We were thinking about a cream tea. Hark! There is in those two sentences everything I most like about cycling: warm, sunny, lazily, flat, railway, cream tea.

I know, it's not fashionable. We should have been hating up a 15 per cent ribbon of asphalt, checking our heart monitors. That's what they'll be doing in Yorkshire this July as Le Grand Départ, the first stage of the Tour de France, sets off from Leeds. But let's face it, there are those who want to wear the Yellow Jersey

and there are those who would prefer to be in the car cavalcade, reading *Le Monde* and chucking free hats and balloons out of the window. Why put yourself through it?

Right now we were on the horns of a tactical cycling dilemma – almost literally, as the rivers Taw and Torridge curve down to the estuary like a pair of antlers – which was: to cross to Appledore by the cute little ferry for tea, or to stay in Inatow, visit the signal box at the old railway station and hang on for beers at a pub near the beach?

I know. *Je sais*. Yes, chuck. It's not the sort of dilemma that will occupy the Yorkshire racers, but it's the sort of thing that occupies me for a pleasurable

chunk of the day as I pedal demurely across the British countryside. It varies. I may be thinking about, say, Bakewell Tarts in Derbyshire or Welsh Cakes in Gwynedd, rather than scones in North Devon. But I am never, ever thinking about buns of steel.

So, I like canals. I love fens, marshes and old railway lines. Fells bad. Valleys outcous. Downs invariably mean up. I like public transport that takes bikes, luggage-carrying services and cycles with baskets and three gears. My gift to you is this definitive guide to the best cycle routes for Le Grand Départ de la Pomme de Terre Chaisse Longue.

So back, put another log on the fire, enjoy. ➤





L'ELEGANTE 6HP
(1903)



BUGATTI TYPE 35 B
(1927 - 1933)



FORD MUSTANG GT390
(1968)

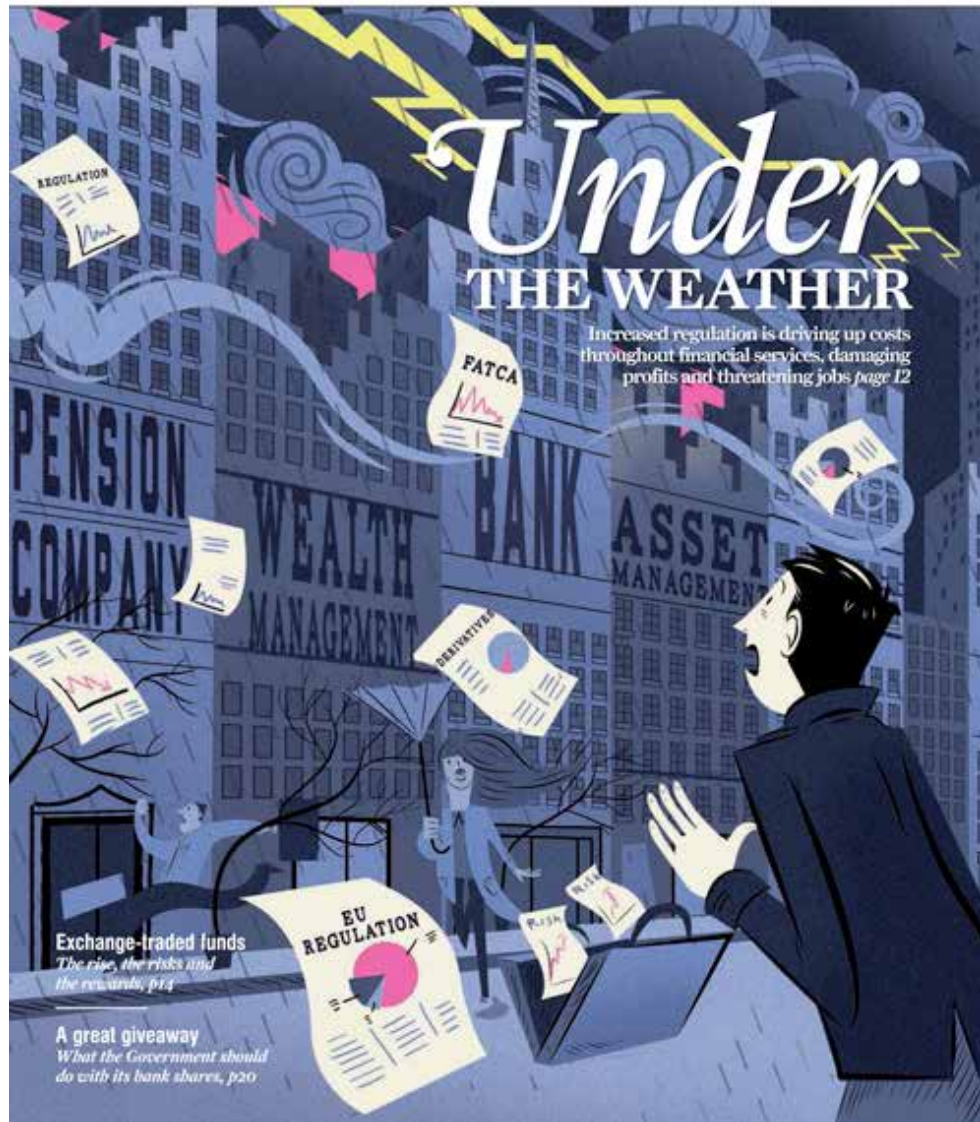


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