

ALL TOGETHER NOW HOW THE COUNTRY CELEBRATED, FROM NURSES TO THE PM



Boris Johnson and Annemarie Plas, the founder of Clap for Our Carers, lead the applause outside No 10, right, while Labour's Sir Keir Starmer and his wife Victoria, below, join in. Left, an NHS well-wisher at London's Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. Bottom, a Spitfire performs a flypast over Cambridgeshire



A woman outside Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, left; staff at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle, below; and nuns sing out their thanks to the NHS in Sunderland, centre



# A clap to remember. We must hope it is the last

Commentary



By Harry de Quetteville

And so, at 5pm, it started. At hospitals across the land, where wards are mercifully more normal now; at Anfield, where the champions of English football saluted a power greater even than they; among Black Lives Matters protesters, who found their cause momentarily trumped by another; and of course, on high streets and doorsteps, metropolitan, suburban and rural – the applause rippled out. Among the heartiest to join the final

Clap for Carers was the PM, or Patient Johnson as he was for those hours when he hung between life and death. Annemarie Plas, a Dutch yoga teacher who will forever be known as the one who started the weekly cheers, was alongside him in Downing Street. Her campaign has gone far. In Wales, the ovation echoed through Tredegar, Nye Bevan's birthplace. In Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon joined in. The Prince of Wales sent his own video tribute. In Cambridge, as if to underline the momentousness of the struggle that front-line workers have endured, a Spitfire flew over the city, tipping its wings in admiration to those working the corridors and wards of the NHS. "This," it seemed to say, "was your finest hour." Then the acclamation ended, and with it came the end of that

paradoxical demonstration of appreciation for care workers, both spontaneous and highly organised. It was a ritual that had miraculously managed to banish sensible British suspicion of stage-managed sentiment and draw us all out on to our doorsteps, the better to acknowledge not only those toiling in distant care homes and Covid wards but also, gingerly, those neighbours standing right next to us on their stoops too. What exceptional circumstances they were at its outset in March. Strict lockdown had just been imposed, confining us all to our homes except for a single daily excursion. But there was no greater reminder of the terrible oddness of that period than those weekly eruptions of applause when, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, we clapped or hooted,

or battered the bottom of a saucepan, before retreating inside again. With each week that passed, nods to neighbours became "Hallos", and then, perhaps, muttered enquiries after well-being and finally smiles of ease and familiarity. The artificial ceremony became natural. And so organisation really did lead to spontaneity. Only for it to peak – just as Covid cases did – and the process to shuffle ever so slightly into reverse. The Thursday night institution, in truth, began to lose its universality, its simplicity, its ease, when it became apparent that Covid would not kill us all, that the nation would overcome. Not that we weren't grateful to the doctors and nurses and key workers. By God we surely were. Not that political gesturing had everywhere gazedumped genuine emotion, though

in places it definitely did. Rather, that Clap for Our Carers lost it lustre a little because it no longer felt quite right for a country that was beginning to dream of the future, whose people were starting to think of leaving those doorsteps again. It is the first realisations of that dream now that are the greatest possible recognition of NHS efforts – the tiny flourishings of the mundane that have recently been possible, from a pint with friends to a diary date for grandparents and grandchildren. There is so much more to do, and much more pain to absorb, certainly economic and possibly medical. But we are taking the measure of Covid-19 now. When we clapped for carers most fervently, it was because it was so unknown. Not just patients, but those treating them, were entering the abyss, and we applauded them as we

applaud astronauts, blasting off into darkness: "What courage," we thought. "Rather than me." When the next wave comes, as it may, blanket applause will no longer be the right response. It almost never is, disguising mistakes, deterring necessary criticism, lumping in incompetence with heroism. However, the fact that it felt so right for so long, reveals just how seismic the months of lockdown were. Yet that, for the moment, is now mercifully behind us. And that is why so many may have chosen to spend 5pm yesterday in the afternoon sunshine, at the pub, rather than on their doorsteps. Raising a glass was always an act of tribute too. Indeed we must hope there's no need to clap, amid the same doubt and fear and peril, ever again.

## Families seek second homes to use as protective 'bubbles'

Property

By Charles Hymas  
HOME AFFAIRS EDITOR

DEMAND has surged for double plots of land to build second homes with room for Covid-secure swimming pools, spas, cinemas and games. Companies offering self-contained holiday homes with space for leisure facilities for families to create coronavirus-free "bubbles" have reported an eight-fold increase in demand following the national lockdown. Many families are spurning foreign holidays to instead invest between £500,000 and £1.4million in such second homes in anticipation that coronavirus or other viruses with pandemic potential will remain a threat for the foreseeable future. The trend is confirmed by estate agents Knight Frank which found nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of 450 householders surveyed said the lockdown had made them more likely to purchase a second home. The top three most popular amenities for a new property were a large garden, outdoor space or access to land (56 per cent), a home office or study (53 per cent), and privacy (43 per cent). Red Paxton, whose family business offers people the chance to build their

own bespoke second homes in the countryside or seaside, said the proportion of enquiries seeking larger plots with private facilities had increased from 5 to 40 per cent after lockdown. Of the deals secured since the restrictions were lifted, six families are proceeding with a mix of private pools, mini spas and games rooms. These account for half of the sales since families have been able to visit Mr Paxton's two estates in Dorset and the Cotswolds. His company, Habitat First Group, founded by his father Jeremy, gives people the opportunity to buy a single or double plot, ranging from 400sqm (4,300sqft) to up to 1,000sqm where they can work with an architect to design a second home. The larger double plots – which allow for 8x4-metre swimming pools, spa, sauna, barbecue, cinema and games rooms – start at between £1.3million and £1.4million and are sited either by wooded lakes in the Cotswolds or on Dorset's Jurassic Coast. A single plot starts at £535,000. "There are no walls or gates but it means you can put a bit more space between the properties," said Mr Paxton. "That's all people want as long as they have their private space. They can go out and come back to their own private bubble," said Mr Paxton.



End of the rainbow The Hemmings from Bewdley, Worcs, were told by officials to remove a rainbow they painted around the doorway of their listed home.

## Check gardens for toxic plants, dog charity warns

Pet health

By Valerie Elliott

BUYING a puppy and sprucing up the garden or patio has been a feature of national life in lockdown. But your new pooch must be protected from the dangers lurking in the greenery. The Dogs Trust is so concerned about naive new puppy owners it has issued a warning about plants that can harm, and even kill, an adored pet. Some of Britain's favourite blooms are among the plants toxic to dogs such as wisteria, hydrangea and chrysanthemum, while those friendly to dogs include lavender, rosemary and dill. Puppies are particularly vulnerable because of their small size and playful curiosity. Iris, clematis, laburnum and tomato plants can poison dogs. Dogs eating leaves, buds or berries of toxic plants can suffer nausea, stomach upsets, breathing difficulties and in some cases death. Azaleas, for example, if eaten in large quantities, can be fatal for dogs. While the leaves of yew are so harmful to dogs, besides causing dizziness and stomach cramps, they can trigger

sudden death without any symptoms or warning. Oleander can affect a dog's heart, trigger skin disorders and can also be fatal. New owners should also be vigilant when walking their pet in parks and the countryside. Even buttercups can cause a stomach upset or dermatitis. Catherine Dobbie, Dogs Trust vet, said: "We know many people have added a four-legged friend to their family during lockdown, and many new dog and puppy owners may not realise that among the colourful blooms their garden could contain plants and flowers harmful to dogs, due to the toxins, if eaten." She urged all dog owners to "give your garden a quick once-over to ensure it is dog friendly and you have not unwittingly put your beloved pet at any risk." Owners are also warned to watch out for any harmful house plants and to keep pots high out of a dog's reach. Last month, actress Kate Wagner issued a warning on Facebook when her French bulldog died in her arms after eating a sago palm. She posted: "My sweet baby Lily got into one of my house plants and ended up fighting for life."

