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# TOWER<sub>AND</sub>TOWN

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Lockdown  
Colour Supplement

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November 2020

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# In London:

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*With far less traffic, natural sounds are much more evident.*

## **NATURE'S MUSIC**

The shivering of the silvery leaves on the age old poplar tree,  
Not tall and tapering like a Lombardy but  
Generously spread, huge like a monolith,  
Rustling peacefully, gently, with the rhythm of the wind.  
Sounds of a rainmaker or of soft bamboo chimes.  
A natural "high rise" for scampering grey squirrels  
Leaping branch to branch like rainforest monkeys.  
A look-out post for our garden birds,  
Like springtime decorations on the supple branches of a Christmas tree.  
The princely blackbird swaying on his precarious throne,  
Shiny-feathered soloist singing songs of joy.  
The pair of puffed up pigeons preening themselves on high,  
The ring-necked doves contentedly cooing,  
Rosy-breasted robins resonating their territorial tunes.  
The melodious music of nature passed down from generation to generation.  
No composer needed, no scores, no choir practice, no concert hall but  
Born musicians to delight those who take time to listen,  
Trills and tremolos, staccato, legato, syncopation, triple forte,  
Incredible sonority that makes me smile.

Rosemary de Saram

# TOWER AND TOWN

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## Lockdown Colour Supplement

Lockdown is hard on everybody, but human ingenuity and indomitability has a way of wringing laughter and enjoyment out of even the toughest of situations. We are all familiar with World War II PoWs staging their own evenings' entertainment in their determination to keep their spirits up. The same spirit is evident as we all confront the Covid-19 corona virus.

You will find here a miscellaneous collection of accounts of life under lockdown from around the world. Each has a touch of that indomitable human sparkle. I hope they will give you some cheer; please do also look at the online edition (<http://towerandtown.org.uk>) where there is some video footage that we are unable to include in a printed magazine.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my very generous and vivid correspondents: thank you!

**Hugh de Saram, Chairman**



*Peter and Catharina Tinniswood,  
near Albi, France*

# On A Mediterranean Yacht: Sophie Carmichael

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First I have to admit that I felt very blessed to be in the circumstances I found myself in for the lockdown. I am part of a crew that live on a 125ft superyacht, with home berth in Mandelieu la Napoule, an upmarket port just west of Cannes. Mandelieu la Napoule is very beautiful, with steep mountains plunging into the sea and a castle right on the water's edge. Being so close to Cannes allows you to be as connected as you want, but the village has only a couple of boulangeries, tabacs, pharmacies and post office, so in the winter it's quiet, which is perfect for us.

Lockdown hit in France about a week before the UK with Macron informing us we were all at war with Coronavirus. At that time we had five crew members onboard, three women and two men, including two couples and ranging between the ages of 25-35, all of whom had spent the last year living and working together. Normal life in season on a Superyacht is a tough environment, you are working 14-hour days, the work is physical, there are no weekends and you cannot get off. It's safe to say it takes a certain type of person to survive in those conditions, let alone thrive. Fortunately, though, we do like our own personal space. Years in the industry and a light heart had made us all able to cope with living in a tin can, though some more than others. When lockdown hit that Tuesday, not a lot changed: it was the winter period, a relaxed time for us yachties as work was Mon-Fri 9-5, so work Wednesday was very similar to Monday. Lockdown never altered how we worked at all, so we all worked till 5pm and then scattered around the yacht to entertain ourselves. I have to reiterate, we were extremely lucky, the yacht has a lot of outdoor space which we are free to use for our own activities: our young deckhand would practice poi on the forepeak, or headstands on the swim platform, I would work out on the flybridge and our captain would read the newspaper on the main deck aft.

The situation off the boat, however, was drastically changing as we now needed to fill in a form to go anywhere, including saying where your home was and the time that you left it. Spend too long away or wander too far and you were fined; over 350,000 fines were given out in the first two weeks. Exercise off the boat was prohibited by our captain, for a number of reasons a) you couldn't go far (1 km) so no proper running b) crew were being stopped by the police for working out on the dock, opposite the boat, so he didn't want to risk us being detained as only one of us was a French citizen. On that matter, five of a neighbouring crew were fined for just sitting on the dock three metres from their boat. For us crew the most we saw of the outside world was the supermarket and that was only once every three weeks (we had a rota) and occasionally the *Capitanerie* for post, although that was closed

within the first week, so no post. When we ventured out, we would don our masks (efficiently ordered by our stewardess) and traipse through the aisles checking and double checking we had everything we needed for the next week, whilst the rest eagerly waited for the expedition party's return, hoping for titbits of human life e.g. any fights over toilet roll, or were there enough baguettes. To be fair to the South of France, our local supermarket always had food and that was never an issue. You had to queue on occasion, but that was only in the first month. No fights over any item were witnessed and of course they never ran out of baguettes!

On the food perspective, it is always interesting cooking in the winter for yacht crew as we take pride in getting through the random supplies left by the chef from the previous summer: gluten-free flour, nori seaweed and zanthum gum were a few of the titbits left behind. This makes for experimental cooking. There were a lot of fancy grains this year and quite a few packages of flours with Turkish or Spanish labels, so when the flour shortage came, this made for interesting baking! Lockdown brought cooking to the fore front as I think it did everywhere, but we developed a weekend tradition based around it: every Saturday we had a BBQ on the flybridge or a big meal of some description, usually one person would make a complicated meal or multiple people would aid in a bbq, then we would settle into drinks and listen to music whilst putting the world to rights. One afternoon we even passed a plate of tapas to our port security man, which he gratefully accepted while declining the rosé.

Our interaction with the other crews was always a joy as it was the only real human contact off the boat, and it was one of these Saturdays we decided to get



*'England expects...' (see video in the online edition)*

out our three-man slingshot and blast our friendly neighbour with water balloons. So started the war, which continued for a good five weeks and in the end had four



boats involved. We had two new boats in our marina that winter, which we knew nothing about, but after a few water balloons and a semi-shouted conversation, they were firm friends and to secure this friendship further our Captain decided to hold a Friday night pub quiz with all the boats. The pub quiz was a hit, so soon every Friday night our captain would deliver our handheld radios and we would all descend onto our forepeaks and settle into teams of two or three - it was always a surprise to see how many people lived on board. Being a success in Mandelieu, we then opened the pub quiz up to our friends and family via Zoom and on one night we had 17 teams on three continents playing each other. We soon discovered that our neighbours were dressing up for the occasion and come VE day we went full out and even created bunting!



*Celebrating VE Day in La Napoule*

Maybe Blitz spirit is how one would describe our months in full lockdown on board the yacht. Mon-Fri we would work, then we would quiz, have a big Saturday meal and Sundays were movie days. We even managed to watch the entire Star Wars series. Although we couldn't go anywhere, life was good and when France opened up again we soon slipped back into normal boat life, but with a few more friends.



*Inflatable kayaks (see next page)*

When lockdown started here in Greenwich, Connecticut, I felt annoyed because I couldn't meet up with any of my friends. We still had school online every day from mid-March though. Whilst my family and I were all stuck in the house together, I felt a lot of tension between us because we were together all the time.

So we got out to try and have some fun. We did a lot of biking and hiking in State Parks such as the Babcock Preserve and part of the Appalachian Trail. I enjoyed driving my RC car along the rocky paths.

Once we were allowed by the State to bring our boat back to the marina, we went out boating and had a whale of a time. We went to the Sand Hole on Long Island and tied up to a mooring so we could swim to a restaurant on the beach. It was cold water but lots of fun to do.



On my last day of Elementary School, all my



*Graduation, lockdown style*

teachers  
drove in a  
convoy to

my house, beeping their horns to celebrate me graduating to Middle School. That was very special.

The next day, we drove 12 hours to the Outer Banks in North Carolina and spent a week in a house that you could only get to by driving 11 miles along a beach in a 4x4. It was really bumpy and fun to drive! We did lots of activities on holiday and we also took our inflatable kayaks with us. When we kayaked on the inner side of the Outer Banks, we watched wild horses leap into the water. We felt very lucky to be so close to them and I even got them on video.

One of the other fun things we did at home was go strawberry picking. They were delicious! We made jam out of the bright red strawberries and are still enjoying the jam now, in September.

Living in a tiny hamlet in South West France, lockdown has not been difficult. Surrounded by countryside and with our local village eight kilometres away, we are lucky to have a large garden and swimming pool which we have been using since mid-May. Obviously, it's a very different picture for those living in apartments in cities. Coronavirus infection rates have until recently been low in the Tarn so the risk to us has been small. During the period of hard lock down, neighbours and locals have been marvellous, sharing shopping and other jobs. Our French vet offered to come out to us if the cat required any treatment and our builder offered us any help we might need.

After the tightest lockdown eased, we found ourselves using local restaurants for 'take-aways' Many around here prepared meals for collection and we would eat with friends outside around the pool. Indeed we have probably eaten 'out' more than in normal times. We also managed to have socially distanced *apéros* with our neighbours opposite, much to the amusement of the local community passing by on their tractors. And, as things have opened up, we have been to an outdoor concert at a nearby chateau and in August eaten outside several times at one of our local *vignerons* where a superb chef who has not been able to open his restaurant this year has served outstanding meals in beautiful countryside.

Yes, we have missed travel, friends and concerts and operas and, because we are still partially isolating, our wonderful Cordes market – too many people and tourists who are unmasked and do not 'distance' – but that is a problem we can easily live with. We have been lucky: now we will see what the future holds.



*Drinks with the neighbours*



Having lived in many homes, I am appreciating enormously the one where I found myself at the beginning of the lockdown in March here in Virginia. I had just resolved a family dispute over a big chunk of mostly swamp land my cousins and I inherited from our two grandfathers. For years it had been a source of conflict among a few of the cousins, and a pain in the neck for the rest. As the largest shareholder, I felt I should try to resolve the situation. In a court case that took four years, I ended up with nearly 500 acres of forest and some great young ally cousins who wanted to keep our shares in the family and work together under a written agreement to maintain it as a wildlife habitat and sustainable hardwood forest.

That was October 2019. So when I arrived at the property in late February, with a long list of improvements to begin, the pandemic simply lengthened my stay. It is a half hour out to the grocery store, pharmacy, post office, bank, farm- & auto-supply and hardware; further to anything else; but I rarely need more.

‘Weatherall’ is at the end of a five mile long country road and two miles of dirt track. I am alone out here, but should anyone want to try to reach me with less than kind thoughts, they have to pass a goodly number of neighbors, all with guns. ‘Trump’ signs and Confederate flags abound along the road, but they know me and will protect me. So I don't need a gun. Plus, all my neighbors planted huge gardens, of which I am beneficiary. One hunter friend even supplies deer meat.

The Spring was very long and slow and lovely, lasting from March through June. July was very hot and dry and horrible, but with no bugs. Lots of work down in the bottom land. Then August arrived, with 100% humidity and 16 inches of rain, a huge bloom of edible mushrooms, and a voracious population of biting bugs: mosquitoes, deer flies, horse flies, gnats. The perspiration washes off bug spray quick as can be. Now we are getting a taste of autumn, with temps in the 70s and a breeze out of the north.

I greedily count the days I don't need to leave the property. Several of my neighbors are helping with major projects, like the barn and cabin rebuilds, the stone bridge reinforcement, walking paths through the woods, wisteria eradication. They have the big tools I don't have: tractors and excavators. Or we rent them. Everyone in the construction trades is working, as so many people are caught at home with nothing else to do. Since I can provide all sorts of projects in clean air and quiet, I'm a preferred customer.

We don't wear masks out here, but I take one to the village for the interior places where one is required. There are no shortages at the stores anymore, and of course

I can order online. The children are all headed back to school on the school buses now. So I am keeping away from friends' children until I see how that works out. I may well be here through Christmas!



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## In Ueda, Japan:

Isao Hommi

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I am Hommi Isao, aged 61. I am principal of Ueda-nishi highschool. We have 800 students and 70 staff in our school. It is located in Ueda City, Nagano Prefecture, Japan. We held winter Olympic games in Nagano in 1998. Ueda City is surrounded by a lot of hills and mountains. We have many hot springs in Ueda.

Due to Covid-19 our school was closed from March to May. During closure we had on-line classes. We began school again on June 1<sup>st</sup> and reduced summer vacation to secure classes. To prevent infection we wear a mask and are doing hand-washing diligently. We open the window of the classroom and antiseptic solution for sterilizing hands is provided for the entrance of the classroom. Recently, infected persons are very few and we live under approximately normal life every day. Almost all people wear a mask in the public place.



My name is Molly de Saram and I live in the Cayman Islands. Lockdown was just as hard but a little different from other places. This is what happened.

It all started when an Italian tourist arrived on one of the many cruise ships that regularly visit Cayman; he tested positive for Covid 19 and later died of a heart attack. This was in March. Restrictions were almost immediately set in place, and we could only go out every other day, according to what letter our last name started with, and only for essentials.

Lockdown was worst over the Easter break. Trapped in our house day and night, we couldn't go to the beaches, we couldn't see friends and family; we didn't even have online school to distract ourselves with. It was not very fun.

Then, after about two weeks, the government eased off a bit. First, we were allowed out for exercise, then we got our beautiful beaches back. Our summer holiday usually enables us to leave the island for a change of scene, but our airport has been closed for months. Still, this turned out to be a blessing in disguise as we joined with several other families to rent a big holiday villa at the far end of the island (all of 20 miles away) and spent our days exploring the magical reef and waters that surround us - even swimming with a nurse shark!

We wore masks for a bit. Now, in September, we are back in school and we can go anywhere and everywhere. The only difference from before this worldwide pandemic is that our borders are closed; many small shops and businesses have already shut down because there are no tourists. Also, gatherings of more than 250 people are still banned.

Corona virus is basically gone from the Cayman Islands, but our government is taking no risks. That will be worth it if it keeps us all safe.



*[Ed: Grand Cayman is about one hour flight south of Havana, Cuba]*

## In Vancouver:

Almas Godfrey

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Vancouver is seeing an increase in COVID cases as we approach fall. However, so far, with government regulations the numbers are controlled. As you may have read in the papers, the wild fires from California and Portland have deteriorated air quality to “worst in the world” at this point. British Columbians are weathering all these problems in thoughtful, caring ways. Children went back to elementary schools full time with many precautions. High schools are operating part time with different pods attending at different times.

It is interesting to realize how people are coping with this COVID situation. Some people refuse to leave their homes, some people meet friends in the park six feet apart, thus making our loud voices stronger. Masks definitely make people fear that they need hearing tests! Community centres have been closed so the enthusiastic seniors have been holding exercise, yoga, tai chi and Zumba classes in the open.....noooo flies on seniors! Working people, of whom I am not one, have quite happily settled into working from home. In fact many of them are hoping to work from home most of the time even post-Covid.

It seems many people have had time to reflect and slow down. I see many families go for walks everywhere together during lunch break or pre-dinner time and many of our side streets have been blocked to cars and host benches and tables for people to take a pew. Many young people buy a coffee and sit outside working on their computers. Most restaurants around us have opened using the outside patios which fill up quite quickly.

I think nature is making it pretty clear: nature can do without us but we can not do without nature so we had better smarten up and take care of our environment.

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## In Fife:

Vera Lethbridge

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Last March 23<sup>rd</sup>, I was not prepared. It wasn't just toilet paper that was lacking. As the months stretched ahead, I had to think on my feet, and make do. Not least of all because I am NOT a computer whizzy dizzy. Quite the opposite. When we started lockdown I had never ordered on line. My computer was for documents and long letter-like emails. Luckily, I had just acquired a smartphone that I could hardly use. It turned out to be vital.

Today, six months later, our leaders have announced a new sort of lockdown. Not a complete shut down, but still daunting. And this time it will not be a wonderful sunny spring to set us going. Winter is coming. Time to scrabble again

for ways to energize and engage, to keep buoyant. For me, that has always meant more projects.

The first time round, in March and well into April, I restored a bureau for Clara, age 6. All her older siblings and cousins had already had the Grandma bureau treatment. She was the last one waiting and she was desperate. I couldn't trawl the junk shops looking for the perfect desk. And how would I get hold of the paint? And even if I managed to do it, how would I get it to her?

There was a bureau in the loft, deemed too lovely to be painted with monkeys eating bananas, or tractors, or butterflies and cats (*see next page*). I had a lot to live up to. She was convinced she could order anything and it would appear, so she didn't hold back. She ordered the entire solar system to be painted on the lid and please, could I also paint a unicorn on the side? What is it about unicorns?

I probably ruined a solid well-crafted mahogany bureau. She got lucky, as the many cubby holes and tiny drawers will hold plenty of treasures. The lid goes up and down smoothly, and the drawers have lovely brass handles. I got lucky too because she wanted the same midnight blue colour as her older brother. I had just enough chalk paint and black wax left over. She did have to make do with photographs of the finished bureau until lockdown eased in the summer, but at least she knew it was done and it was hers. And it gave her Grandma huge pleasure.

Looking back, it's got easier with every bureau I've painted. The early ones I spent days sanding before I even began to paint. Then I discovered chalk paint, which can go straight on the most black and hideous varnish and turn something heavy into something wonderful. Only the shape and solidity of the piece matters. Charity shops are still stuffed with wonderful pieces of well-crafted hardwood furniture crying out for a revamp. It remains one of the most satisfying and lasting projects out there.

Run right now to the nearest charity shop and buy something solid. Anything that takes your fancy. You're probably way more competent than me. At the touch of a key, you'll be able to order chalk paint and wax (or just varnish, that's less effort) or the new mineral paints from Fusion. The paint colours available now are wonderful, and if you're not super artistic, get busy with stencils or carbon paper, or leave it elegantly plain.

Your mission is to lighten your days!

*[See overleaf for the transformed bureaux]*



