

TODAY'S EDITION

MAIN SECTION



'IN MY HEART FOR EVER'
Liz Dux, lawyer for the victims of Jimmy Savile and Rolf Harris, discusses her next move

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NOT TO BE SCOFFED AT
Cigars, whisky and haggis: meet Britain's most politically incorrect restaurateur

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COMMENT

"This conspiracy theory about a conspiracy theory could have graced a David Icke book"

DAVID AARONOVITCH, PAGE 23

DINNER TONIGHT

Potato gratin with shallots

The highlight of my festive feasting was a four-rib roast with hot creamed horseradish, Yorkshire puddings and this garlicky, almost healthy potato gratin. Leftovers made great sandwiches and superb stovies. I promptly made the gratin again, this time to go with sausages and apple sauce.

Serves 4 Prep 20 min Cook 40 min

Ingredients: 2 shallots, 65g; 1 garlic clove; 600ml chicken or ham stock; knob of butter; 900g charlotte or other large waxy potatoes.



Halve, peel and finely chop the shallots. Place them and a generous pinch of salt in a pan that can fit all the ingredients with a cup of stock. Simmer gently, covered, while you peel the potatoes and slice thinly as if making thick crisps. A mandolin is ideal, otherwise use the food processor attachment as it's laborious by hand. Do not rinse the potatoes. Add the remaining stock to the pan and bring to the boil. Slip the potatoes

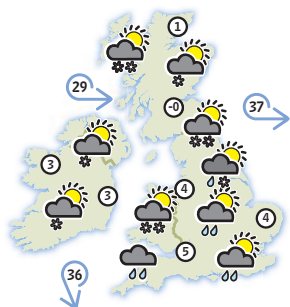
into the pan and gently return to simmer by which time they will be tender and the liquid slightly reduced. Crack the garlic with something heavy, flake away the skin, chop and crush to a paste with a pinch of salt. Smear the butter over a 1½ litre, 5cm deep gratin-style dish and dot with garlic. Using a perforated spoon, lift the potatoes into the prepared dish, lining up the top layer if liked. Spoon over stock to just cover, adding any leftover butter. Bake at 180C/gas mark 4 for 35 mins or until top is crusty and golden and the liquid has absorbed into the potatoes. Lindsey Bareham

OFFER

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SEE PAGE 53 FOR DETAILS

THE WEATHER



Heavy wintry showers across the north. Rain in the south, with the risk of snow. Full forecast, page 60

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Motorists flee more accidents to avoid 'crash-for-cash' scams

Graeme Paton
Transport Correspondent

Hit-and-run accidents have risen to their highest level in at least a decade, a university study has found.

More than 17,000 road accidents in 2015 involved a driver who failed to stop or left without providing any details. These included 77 fatal crashes.

In all, hit-and-run accidents made up about one in eight crashes, the highest rate since at least 2005.

Researchers say in a report, published today, that motorists are increasingly motivated by "self-preservation" after an accident. Many drivers who failed to stop feared being trapped in a fraudulent compensation claim by other drivers or pedestrians.

The study was carried out by the University of Leicester and commissioned by the Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB). Researchers found that many drivers put their own preservation before any responsibility to report the accident to police. Some offenders called for the creation of "safe havens" where they could report accidents after fleeing the scene.

Matt Hopkins, a lecturer in criminology who co-wrote the report, said: "There seems to be a public perception that motoring offences are not 'real

crimes' and therefore there is a tendency for drivers to justify their behaviour."

Numbers of road accidents have been falling in recent years, caused in part by improvements in vehicle safety. Figures suggest, however, that more of these accidents involve hit-and-run drivers.

MIB figures show that 17,122 hit-and-run accidents were recorded in 2015, including 77 fatal incidents and 1,562 classed as "serious".

In total, they made up 12.2 per cent of all accidents on British roads. In the previous year, 16,667 hit-and-run crashes were recorded — 11.4 per cent of the total number of accidents.

The number of hit and runs is at its highest since 2008 when 18,609 were recorded — 10.9 per cent of all accidents that year.

The proportion of hit-and-run accidents in 2015 was the highest on record. The latest MIB figures — sourced from Department for Transport data — go back as far as 2005 when they made up 11.2 per cent of accidents.

The bureau commissioned academics to look at the motivation of hit-and-run drivers and researchers surveyed 695 offenders by post and held in-depth interviews with 52.

They found that the main reasons that drivers fled from an accident were self-preservation, no knowledge of the

accident, the belief that it was too trivial to stop and impairment through drink.

The study suggested that the recent increase may be partly driven by the compensation culture, adding that some motorists were afraid that they were being "set up" as part of a fraud.

"This was commonly linked to incidents that were trivial in nature but where a victim 'over-played' the extent of damage or injury," researchers said. "In these cases, drivers made rational choices to leave the scene of an accident based upon their judgments on the extent of damage."

One driver told researchers he "barely hit" a pedestrian. He said: "It just touched his leg and after that he just started hopping around and going, 'Arrgggh, arrgggh'. I knew there was nothing wrong with him and he was just play acting so I drove off."

The study suggested developing a website or phone app to let witnesses or even offenders report accidents. Ashton West, chief executive of the MIB, said: "We handle 15,000 claims a year for victims of 'hit and runs' and felt an imperative to commission this research to gain an understanding of this area."

● Police arrested a man yesterday after a 78-year-old man was killed in a hit-and-run accident in Brighton on Tuesday night.

140,000 give views on press regulation

Jill Sherman Media Editor

More than 140,000 responses were submitted to the government over plans to penalise newspapers financially if they do not sign up to an approved regulator, the culture department said.

The consultation over the proposals to tighten press regulation ended on Tuesday with a flurry of submissions including large petitions.

Under the plans, newspapers could be forced to pay hundreds of thousands of pounds in legal costs even if they win a libel case unless they sign up to Impress, the approved regulator.

The government was also consulting on another proposal to proceed with the second part of the inquiry by Sir Brian Leveson into relations between the press and the police.

The number of responses reflected intense campaigning by media organisations opposing Section 40, the clause which would trigger the legal costs, and groups representing press victims wanting it to proceed. At least 30,000 responses were sent in from people or

organisations opposing the proposals. Lynne Anderson, deputy chief executive of News Media Association, which represents the industry, said that its titles were united in resisting Section 40. "They tell us feedback from their readers during the campaign shows the majority of the British public are equally opposed to these draconian... sanctions and want to see it repealed," she said.

Mike Harris, chief executive of 89up, a campaigning group, said that 10,000 people responded to the government through its site repealsection40.org with a further 15,000 submitting their views through freethepress.co.uk, a newspaper campaign opposing the new clause. More than 4,000 responses opposing Section 40 are said to have come from Sun readers online. Thousands of others put in written submissions.

"Our social media analysis shows twice as many people were sharing content to repeal Section 40 as were sharing content that backed this draconian legislation," Mr Harris said. "People in the UK take press freedom and free speech very seriously. Once the consul-

tation started there was a spike in online conversation about the impact of Section 40 on free speech."

Hacked Off, which backs the clause, said yesterday it could not put a figure on the submissions organised through its website. Last week there were suggestions 5,000 had been sent through.

Karen Bradley, the culture secretary, disclosed that 130,000 people had signed a single petition organised by the campaign group 38 Degrees. It was mainly aimed at ensuring that the second part of the Leveson inquiry goes ahead, rather than Section 40. The petition will technically count as one response but the culture department is expected to take note of the high number of signatures.

Ms Bradley said: "We know there is a significant level of interest in the consultation and we are grateful for all the responses submitted."

There were 30,000 responses to the plans to restrict freedom of information rules in autumn 2015. The BBC royal charter had 190,000 and plans to allow same sex marriage attracted 227,000.

Continued from page 1

a hack to damage Hillary Clinton during the US election campaign but said that he remains open to warmer relations with Russia. "If Putin likes Donald Trump, guess what folks, that's an asset not a liability," he said. "I don't know if I'll get along with Vladimir Putin... but even if I don't, does anyone in this room think Hillary Clinton will be tougher on Putin than me? Give me a break."

Likening US intelligence services to the Nazi regime is likely to further damage Mr Trump's relationship with the CIA. He and the agency have sparred over its conclusion that Russian hackers obtained Democratic Party emails to damage Mrs Clinton.

The dossier on Mr Trump's alleged links to Russia was commissioned by his political enemies in Washington. The work was farmed out to Mr Steele, a former MI6 official who now works as

a private consultant. He is said to have become so disturbed by what he found that he passed the information to the FBI.

Mr Steele is well regarded by intelligence sources but the report contains basic errors — such as the name of a Russian bank being consistently misspelt — and diplomatic sources have queried its quality. Reince Priebus, who will be Mr Trump's White House chief of staff, said that the dossier was "phony baloney garbage".

A spokesman for Mr Putin denied any effort to cultivate Mr Trump. "The Kremlin has no compromising dossier on Trump, such information isn't consistent with reality and is nothing but an absolute fantasy," Dmitri Peskov said.

Mr Trump shrugged off a call to prove he has no Russian links by releasing his tax returns. He added on Twitter: "Russia has never tried to use lever-

age over me. I HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH RUSSIA — NO DEALS, NO LOANS, NO NOTHING!"

The White House said yesterday that Mr Trump could choose to settle questions over his links to Russia — an apparent reference to his tax returns. "There's ample evidence that they could marshal, to make public to refute those claims... But they refuse to do so," a spokesman said. "That kind of secrecy only serves to sow public doubt."

Mr Trump also said that he would defy advice from an ethics watchdog to divest himself of his business empire. Instead, it will be run by his eldest sons, Donald Jr and Eric Trump. The president-elect had been urged to sell his assets and place the proceeds in a blind trust. His refusal could, some argued, set him at odds with the constitution.

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