

Pass notes

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The Good Old Days

Age: Old. But good.

Are we talking about the light-entertainment TV series you have to be quite old to remember? No, we are talking about the

period in the past when things were better than they are today.

Don't be a silly old fool. That's just because you're looking through your rose-tinted half-moon spectacles. That's half-full-moon spectacles, not half-empty-moon ones ... No, it really was better back then.

Says who? A study. By psychology researchers at the [University of Warwick](#). They analysed millions of books and newspapers going back to 1825, counting key words that signify happiness and sadness.

And they found? That in the UK, we were happiest in the 1920s and after the end of the second world war. And least happy in 1978 during the winter of discontent.

The winter of discontent? There is a clue in the name, to be fair. What about anywhere else?

The research also looked at books and media in the US, and found happiness peaking in the 1920s before plunging into the depths of the Great Depression and the second world war. Moods went up in the 50s and 60s, followed by more gloom about Vietnam.

Back to blighty, though. Have we seriously not been happy since the end of the war? Things - well, we - did cheer up a bit in the 90s and the early 00s.

That's because everyone in the 90s was ... er ... enjoying themselves on the rave scene. Speak for yourself. It also had something to do with the pre-crunch boom.

Is it all about money? Not entirely. Highs in national happiness are sometimes caused by increases in national income. But also by health. A one-year increase in life expectancy has a similar effect to a 4.3% increase in GDP. War, unsurprisingly, has the opposite effect.

So, what with political polarisation, an unstable world, the climate crisis and stagnating incomes, it's not surprising I'm feeling a bit down today. Probably, but it is worth remembering the research only includes books and media until 2009.

Any other indications that the good old

days are a thing, rather than sentimental wistfulness? Well, there is Emily Eavis.

Who runs the Glastonbury festival with her father, Michael? Yes. "You can't help

but think to the 90s, when it was so much easier," she said recently, although that seems to be mainly to do with annoying modern health-and-safety regulations.

I'm with Emily. We already know why you were so happy in the 90s.

Do say: "Things aren't what they used to be."

Don't say: "Nostalgia ... it isn't what it used to be."

