

Not so Swinging Sixties: proof that sex and money doesn't make us happy

National mood surged after the war but hit a peak in 1950s, index of Britain's happiness discovers

By John Bingham
SOCIAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

IT WAS the age of free love and fridge freezers, yet the sexual revolution and promise of greater prosperity of the 1960s did not make Britons happy after all, according to a study charting the national mood through history.

Despite dramatic changes since then – from mass international travel and the birth of the internet to an overdue improvement in the national cuisine – we have never quite reached the level of happiness of the 1950s, it found.

It suggests that when Harold Macmillan, the prime minister, claimed in 1957 that people in Britain had “never had it so good” he was already a few years out of date.

Academics at the University of Warwick have produced the first long-term happiness index, gauging the national mood in the UK and five other western countries over more than 200 years by studying the use of words.

A team of economists and psychologists analysed eight million books digitised as part of a project led by Google, assessing subtle changes in vocabulary in the UK, US, France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

Billions of words were given a “happiness” score based on a metric developed in previous research. Countries' average scores were calculated for each year since 1776, when the US Declaration of Independence was signed, and charted on six graphs.

The shifts in recent years largely tie in with the findings of modern surveys designed to measure national well-being, the researchers said. Going further back, the peaks and troughs also mirror major historical events.

The graph for France, for example, shows happiness surging around the time of the revolutions of 1789 and 1830, to levels never since replicated, and plunging to a nadir during the First World War.

A paper co-authored by Prof Thomas



Symbols of the Sixties: Jane Birkin and Serge Gainsbourg

Hills, a psychologist, and Dr Daniel Sgroi and Eugenio Proto, both economists, concludes that money is not the secret of happiness but good health and long life could be.

In Britain happiness rebounded after the Second World War, peaking in the early 1950s before a gradual fall in the 1960s. It reached a low point around the Winter of Discontent in 1978, when Britain was paralysed by strikes, before gradually improving, gaining momentum during the 1990s and into the early 2000s.

Dr Sgroi, who presented the paper to the European Economic Association in Geneva, said the period after the Suez Crisis in 1956, characterised by a loss of post-war optimism, marked the beginning of a generation-long slump in the national mood.

He said: “Post-war, you have got tremendous aspiration: the war has been won; you've got the end of rationing; everything seems to be OK and there is a feeling that Britain is going to be great again. But it doesn't really happen.”

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‘Polished’ Bake Off hopefuls who are not ready to be in the mix

By Patrick Foster
MEDIA CORRESPONDENT

THE 12 contestants in this year's *Great British Bake Off* have been described as the most polished in the competition's history, with more than half having professional-looking websites and social media feeds.

But viewers who tune in



Candice, a PE teacher, complained her cake bases were ‘like rubber’

at 8pm tonight for the opening episode of the BBC One baking show will see that those careful preparations seem to have been in vain, as a third of the amateur bakers are forced to ditch their cakes and start again in the show's final challenge.

The fact that four of the contestants elect to throw their freshly baked cakes into the bin, and instead begin their recipes from scratch, is said by show in-

siders to mark a new record for the programme.

It also happens after Paul Hollywood, one of the competition's judges, opens the show by telling viewers that he and Mary Berry will take this year's series “back to basics”, by setting simpler tasks, but judging them more rigorously.

In tonight's opening episode, the 12 contestants try to create a classic British style of cake for Hollywood before attempting a smaller treat for Berry.

On the final showstopper challenge things then go very wrong and Candice, a 31-year-old PE teacher, is shown throwing her cake bases, which have failed to rise, at the wall of the *Bake Off* tent, complaining: “They're like rubber.”

Tom, who works for the Royal Society of Arts, fails to mix in the flour properly, and has to start again and Benjamin, a 23-year-old teaching assistant from London, who has said that she dreams of becoming a professional baker, is shown in tears after her mix also fails.

Idle returns to Rutland for a festive one-off

By Patrick Foster

RUTLAND *Weekend Television*, the chaotic station created by Eric Idle, is to return to the airwaves after 40 years, as the BBC delves into its back catalogue of comedies once more.

The fictional broadcaster, Idle's first project after *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, will feature in a one-off Christmas special entitled *The Entire Universe*.

The BBC Two musical comedy will feature Brian Cox, the science presenter, turning up to the TV studio to give a lecture about the origins of the universe, before realising that he is actually in a musical choreographed by Arlene Phillips.

Throughout the show, Cox will attempt to tutor the scientifically illiterate Idle in

the basics of the history of the universe.

Idle created *Rutland Weekend Television* in 1975, and the show went on to spawn the spoof Beatles band, The Rutles.

The comedian said: “No doubt what Rutland did for TV in the 70s it will now do for science – and set it back 40 years.”

The commission comes as the BBC prepares to broadcast remakes of classic comedies including *Porridge*, *Are You Being Served?* and *Keeping Up Appearances*.

◆ ITV announced yesterday that *Blankety Blank*, the celebrity quiz show, will return for a festive one-off special, the first full-length episode to be made since 2002. David Walliams, the comedian and author, will present the programme.



The new black Lily James, the *Downton Abbey* star, appears in an aptly shaded Bardot dress as the new face of fragrance My Burberry Black at Burberry's London café, Thomas's. *Downton* co-stars Elizabeth McGovern and Laura Carmichael also attended.

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