

# HICKEY

REFLECTING on her much-publicised portrayal of Margaret Thatcher in Netflix series *The Crown*, Gillian Anderson admits she's still waiting for feedback from the Iron Lady's family.

"I would be very curious," says the actress, 52, *pictured*. "I've heard from a couple of people who knew her well, but not from family."

Don't expect Maggie's son Mark to be offering praise any time soon.

His younger self was seen in an unsympathetic, idiotic light when played by Freddie Fox in the show.



FORMER home secretary Amber Rudd, who previously dated current Cabinet minister Kwasi Kwarteng, has a fierce protector in daughter Flora Gill.

With mother Amber, 57, these days in a relationship with an unnamed partner, 30-year-old Flora reports: "The perfect present for my mum's boyfriend: a nice framed photo of her and then a threatening message hidden inside should he ever try and remove the photo." She reveals the said handwritten note reads: "I see you've decided to remove this photo from its frame...if it's because you hurt my mum, get ready - I'm coming for you!"

I trust the gentleman in question is suitably terrified?

HAVING broken wife of 47 years Michele's wrist after tripping up and falling on top of her during their daily walk, Gyles Brandreth now cheerfully confirms: "Her hand is out of the cast. I don't have to cut up her food for her any more."

Decidedly limited in the culinary department, Gyles, 72, less encouragingly adds: "The bad news is I'm still doing the cooking."

RECALLING growing up with her Prime Minister sibling and fellow brothers, Rachel Johnson, *pictured*, points out:

"As children we - as in my three brothers and I - didn't watch TV. Didn't even have one in most of the many houses we lived in, in Washington DC, Brussels, Somerset or London. If there was one it was small, fuzzy, black and white, and didn't broadcast in English. I challenge you to watch more than five minutes of *The Waltons* in Flemish."



HIGHLIGHTING one of the more ill-fated online purchases she's been alerted to while presenting BBC TV's *Rip Off Britain* during lockdown, Angela Rippon tells *Woman's Weekly*: "A lady bought a machine that threw a ball for her dog. But all she got was an old tennis ball. It didn't even have any bounce in it!"

DAYS after cheekily revealing his first romantic liaison with wife Linda Gray was inside *Doctor Who's* Tardis during a visit to Television Centre 50 years ago, Bee Gees star Sir Barry Gibb admits he's required to regularly perform more mundane tasks half a century on.

On the secret of ongoing marital harmony with Linda, *How Deep Is Your Love* singer Sir Barry, 74, now explains: "She just tells me...and I bring the laundry down."

# Minister's praise for our fair deal crusade

By **Steph Spyro**

THE Daily Express has won praise from the highest levels of Government for its campaign to support students struggling during the pandemic.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said she supported the newspaper's Fair Deal for Students crusade highlighting the plight of the nation's youngsters, which we launched last Friday.

Speaking to Sunday Express columnist Nick Ferrari on his LBC radio show, Ms Donelan said it was vital those studying were given all the economic and emotional backing they can get.

She said: "It is absolutely right



we invest in them and support them through this time.

"They are our future, just as those who are studying in further education or apprenticeships are our future as well.

"The younger generation will have to deal with a lot of the fallout from the pandemic as well in the years to come."

Ms Donelan added that the focus on schools "does sometimes leave higher education students feeling that they haven't been given that same airtime or that same consideration".

The minister was speaking as the Government announced an extra £50million for students, boosting total support for this academic year to £70million.

But Sheffield Central Labour MP Paul Blomfield, who leads a cross-party group of MPs and

Picture: CHRIS MCANDREW/UK PARLIAMENT



## 'I would feel exhausted and anxiously panic'

Megan Price, 20, is a third year journalism student at University of Gloucestershire. Here, she explains the stress and worry of studying online

**I WAS** told my final year of university would be the most important one. A year to focus but most importantly to have fun and enjoy my last few months of freedom with my friends.

Now I fear I will be learning digitally up until the end of my degree. I cannot knock the support I've been offered from lecturers during the pandemic. I have had check-up emails, support on assignments and I was even lucky enough to have face-to-face classes at the start of the term.

When I came home to my family in the first lockdown I felt lucky to be around people I love. I'd never really suffered with my mental health before so when I'd feel exhausted after online interactions or anxiously panic over small things, I struggled to know what to do.

It's disheartening when you realise the effort being put in to work for an online degree is met with less job opportunities after graduation because of the pandemic.

There's something very lonely about pushing yourself to work hard in your room when you're not sure where it will take you.

I know I'm not alone in worrying about the future and more awareness for student's well-being and support for grades should be heavily considered.

peers looking into student support, said this amounts to around £25 per individual and "falls well short" of what is needed.

He added: "The Government have acknowledged the problem but failed to provide a solution. Our cross-party report called for substantial new hardship funds.

"It offers no guarantee on rent refunds for unused accommodation and no support to universities to provide extra education to catch up for lost learning." He said that "it's disappointing that

in its response to our bold calls to protect students and universities, the Government have ducked their responsibility".

Yesterday, MPs from across the political spectrum reiterated the Daily Express's calls for refunds to students who are unable to use their digs during lockdown.

In the Commons, Tory MP Steve Double said accommodation providers should show some flexibility. He said: "While it is welcome some universities and accommodation providers

are providing partial rebates to students, too many still aren't."

Shadow education secretary Kate Green said students were "isolated at home...paying for accommodation they're forbidden from using and seeing their future placements, jobs and opportunities disappear - utterly devastating and utterly unjust".

Ms Donelan responded, saying: "Our priority is to ensure that the opportunities of our young are safeguarded and that students aren't left in hardship."

## Help students make up for lost learning

THE Universities Minister announced a £50million rise in hardship funding this week.

It might sound a lot, but it falls well short of our recommendations and the Daily Express campaign.

In fact, it amounts to just £25 per student in England. Hardly enough to make up for the year of increased financial pressure from lost part-time jobs and reduced family income, while paying for accommodation that can't be used.

In Wales, support announced by the devolved government is worth over £300 per student, while in Scotland it's around £80. It won't just fail to provide

### COMMENT

**PAUL BLOMFIELD**  
Sheffield Central MP and chairman of All-Party Group for Students

the financial help needed, it doesn't cover rent refunds.

And there's no mention of support for lost learning. While universities have worked hard to offer the best possible teaching, it could never match the normal offer and many students have missed vital opportunities. Some students have missed out on specific

types of teaching, access to labs and studios, fieldwork, group activities and much more.

In some professional degrees this learning is essential for graduation and for others it is vital for progression.

Therefore, we recommended Government funds universities to provide learning remediation programmes.

This

Learning lost...Paul Blomfield



should focus on students who need practical experience to get their degrees, but it should be available to all who missed out.

These programmes could run through the summer.

It's a better and fairer way to support students than the tuition fee discounts which some have suggested. MPs and peers from across the political spectrum made a bold call for Government to support students.

Ministers have ducked their responsibilities and must now think again.