

INSIDE The Mail 2 ON SUNDAY

REVIEW Pages 1-9

Miss Afghanistan was sharing a cigarette with Miss Russia. Luckily there was no Miss USA to shatter the calm

Beauty pageants are good for girls, concludes Georgetta Blakey as she goes backstage at the Miss Intercontinental contest Page 8

God and guns in Idaho

Peter Hitchens reports from America's West, where the men in pick-up trucks would rather have a head-on crash with a train than vote for Obama Pages 6-7



THE CRITICS Pages 10-21

Amazing Grace is back and she's still scary good

Grace Jones's first new album since 1985 is a triumphant return, says Tim de Lisle Page 19

When love is such hard labour

Even master of 'comic posh' Peter Bowles can't save the peerlessly long-winded verbiage in Peter Hall's new *Love's Labour's Lost* Page 13



TRAVEL Pages 22-40

It's like the Cote d'Azur ... but with more sand and less silicone

Andrea Catherwood finds that a villa in Corsica – 'the island with more gloriously unspoilt beaches than anywhere this side of the Seychelles' – is the perfect family holiday Pages 26-27



HEALTH Pages 41-48

My beautiful son has the XYY Factor... doctors call it an uneven cognitive profile, I call it bloody hard work

With devastating candour Annabel Giles describes her life as the single parent of a special needs child Pages 41-43

The Vitamin C overdose

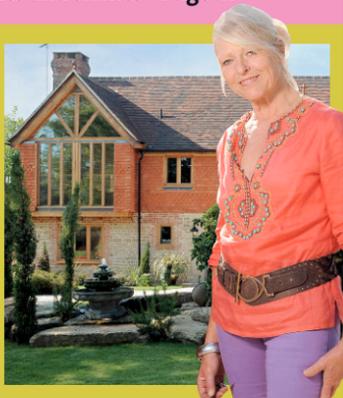
Will a massive amount of this supplement really stop those sneezes and sniffles? Page 47



PROPERTY Pages 49-61

I've spent £800,000 extending my fantasy home, but all it did was wreck my marriage

After a renovation budget doubled, Jill Constable reflects on the other cost of her dream project Pages 54-55



LETTERS Including readers' website postings Page 62

BRAINWORKOUT Pages 64-67

Is your brain in need of a workout? We've got crosswords galore plus Sudoku, Dingbats, Scrabble Meister and the fiendishly clever Brain Train

I looked for years, and

By Claudia Joseph

By any standards, Stuart Wheeler has led an enviable life. He made millions as the pioneer of spread betting in the early Seventies and lives in the magnificent Chilham Castle in Kent with his wife, a society photographer, and three glamorous daughters. One is the supermodel Jacquetta Wheeler, who has worked for the likes of Burberry and Versace and who was named Model of the Millennium by *The Face* magazine in 1999.

For decades, Wheeler has moved in the most elevated of circles. A dedicated bridge player, he has counted Omar Sharif and Lord Lucan among his partners. And in 2001, he gave £5 million of his multi-million-pound fortune to the Conservatives, becoming the party's largest single donor.

To most observers, Wheeler wants for little. Yet in this story of such success and privilege, the opening chapter has always been missing. Wheeler, now 73, has known since he was a child that he was adopted but didn't even know his mother's name. He had no idea whether he descended from riches or abject poverty and spent 30 years on a poignant search to discover where he came from, but to little avail.

Finally, after enlisting the help of *The Mail* on Sunday, his long search for answers about the mother who bore him and disappeared from his life ended in the most unlikely quarter: in front of a flickering television screen in a modest sheltered housing block in Edinburgh. There, for the first time, Stuart Wheeler saw his real mother smile.

The future tycoon was born with a club foot on January 30, 1935, in a hospital in Harrow, North-West London. He was adopted just before his second birthday by Alexander Wheeler, a 55-year-old former Army officer and heir to a banking fortune, and his young wife Betty, daughter of a baronet, Sir John Gibbons. The couple also adopted a little girl, Susan, on the same day – January 4, 1937.

'My adoptive mother was going into the Adoption Society to find suitable babies,' says Wheeler. 'Her husband was too busy to go with her so she took along her sister Vera. She saw a very good-looking baby and was considering adopting that one when Vera saw a child standing up making a bit of nuisance of himself and said to my mother, "That one might be more interesting in the long run." That child was me. So I'm indebted to Aunt Vera.

'My memory tells me I learned to walk with my new family, but that sounds unlikely. I would have been nearly two by then and presumably should have taken my first steps a bit earlier. Perhaps it may be true because of my club foot.'

Due to the wealth of their adoptive parents, Stuart and Susan initially enjoyed a privileged upbringing, living in a country house in the village of Manaton, Devon, where the family employed five servants. But Alexander, who originally came from Pennsylvania, was a spendthrift who frittered away his inheritance before dying of leukaemia in November 1942.

'Alexander was American but so loved Britain that he became naturalised,' recalls Wheeler. 'He was very much a man of those times. He hunted, shot and fished and never did a day's work in his life, unless you count fighting in the

They even walk the same way

By Jacquetta Wheeler

I have always known my father was adopted. I did miss having a grandfather – both my grandfathers died before I was born – but I had lots of cousins, aunts and uncles.

As I was growing up, I remember my father telling us that he had found out his mother had been a teacher and a bridge player, which was fascinating, but then he hit a dead-end.

So it was incredible when we found out that my father had traced one of his first cousins and other relatives. I flew to Edinburgh with my parents and Sarah to meet them. They were the loveliest people – intelligent, sweet, kind and very engaging. I don't think we could have asked for a nicer new-found family.

I adore Aunt Mabel. We all refer to her as Aunt Mabel because she is the matriarch of the family. She is such a sweet woman and my cousins all have a wonderful relationship with her, making sure she is comfortable, helping her down the stairs. There is clearly a lot of love for her.

We went back to Aunt Mabel's flat and watched the video of Dad's mother. It was

amazing. Her walk, her gestures and the way she held her hands behind her back are all the same as Dad. I think it is sad he never met her, but he had a lovely adoptive mother and a happy upbringing.

Aunt Mabel told me Chrissie was her favourite aunt. Chrissie was really good with kids, a natural teacher. It was really moving to find out that she was such a kind woman.

We also had a lovely weekend with them all in Kent. I was amazed they made the effort to come down. We watched *The X Factor* together and chatted after dinner. We plan to keep in touch.

Once my cousins found out what I do for a living they looked me up on the internet, but I don't think they had heard of me beforehand. We come from different backgrounds but it just doesn't matter. Your background doesn't define who you are as a person – we are family and that's what counts.

My father is not given to huge displays of emotion but I could see he loved the whole process of getting to know his relatives. It was wonderful to watch.



AT THE HELM: Stuart, then aged three, takes charge during a family holiday in Ireland

First World War. He got a Military Cross for that. I barely remember him but I do recall going to visit him in hospital and then one day, after Betty had read me a story, she told me that he had died.

'His will said, "My two adopted children must be treated in every way as if they were my own offspring except that no adopted son of mine should have my pair of Purdey guns." What was behind that thought I have simply no idea.'

After Alexander's death, the family had to downgrade to a suburban house on the outskirts of Oxford. Vera, married to the head of the Oxford University Press, lived in

the same road. It was while Wheeler was a pupil at St Aubyns prep school that Betty told him he was adopted. She gave him precious little information about his birth mother, though he remembers her mentioning he had come from a 'respectable' family. He sensed Betty might have known more but did not press her. 'Funnily enough, it didn't really strike me as anything amazing,' he says. 'It just made me feel important.'

Although Wheeler downplays the impact of the news of his adoption, it is perhaps significant that he seized the first opportunity to investigate his origins, and then made strenuous and repeated efforts to uncover more information, with varying degrees of success.

In 1975, when the Children Act gave adopted adults the right to get a copy of their birth certificates for the first time, Wheeler applied for his own. By then, he had graduated from Oxford with a degree in law and had worked as a barrister and merchant banker. In 1974, aged 39,