

## Comment

# It's impossible to put a true value on the Antiques Roadshow

DEBORA ROBERTSON



Sunday nights can be dreary. As darkness falls, a pall is cast over the gentle pleasures of the weekend, replaced by the To Do List tyranny of the week to come. And that's exactly why we need the *Antiques Roadshow* to see us through.

Not because it's cosy, feelgood telly. Absolutely not. Could that really be sustained for 40 series, as *Antiques Roadshow* has? No. *Antiques Roadshow* has survived – and thrived – because it is really about us, the British people. Oh, we may tune in for the mint-condition Meissen. But we stay for the sneering, hubris, class-war and steely eyed, thinly disguised greed.

No wonder *Antiques Roadshow* has such a wide audience. It's watched by grannies and generals, students and shift workers. Those at the recordings or watching on television are as likely to be wearing tracksuit bottoms as twill. Just as we watched *The Royal Family* watching the show from their Manchester sofa, each one of them guessing the price of each item, we wouldn't be at all surprised if the actual Royal family were doing the same, albeit with a little more insider antique knowledge. So those who dismiss it as a show about condition and provenance, overseen by Fiona Bruce, the nation's benevolent head girl, are missing the point.

While it's certainly interesting to peek at Napoleon's attaché case or Lady Astor's diamonds, the items that linger in the mind are often simpler ones. A great-grandfather's letters home from the Somme; medals from a long-forgotten war; an enormous piece of needlepoint listing all of Status Quo's hits created by a woman's disabled son who pulled the thread through the canvas with his teeth – none of them worth much but, as the valuers say, "I am sure, priceless to you."

We love it for its

surprises. We particularly enjoy it if that Hepplewhite table has been kept in a shed, the flawless vase was propping open a door, and the 14th-century Ming bowl was used to house gently browning bananas on the kitchen table. We loved the man who pulled something sparkly out of the hedge clippings, to find it was an eighth-century Anglo-Saxon ring worth £10,000, and we loved it even more when his wife declared that it looked like something out of a Christmas cracker.

We are particularly fond of the disappointments; you could call it the "Schadenfreude Sideshow" to the main event. For every original Chippendale chair, there's a bit of knock-off Clarice Cliff to keep us paying attention, a potentially valuable bronze ruined by an overzealous application of Brasso, and roughly Superglue'd bits of family china. A friend live tweets her antique dealer stepfather's comments throughout the show ("Bloody firewood!"; "Fake!"; "Robbers!"; "Man's an idiot!"). He says what we're all thinking.

What we love most of all are those people forced to pretend they don't care when they discover something they thought priceless is worthless. You know this is a kinder, gentler programme than more modern reality shows because when a chap showed up with a bottle he'd paid £1,000 for and it turned out to be a Tesco olive oil bottle, circa 2008 (good vintage), they declined to show it on account of it being too unkind. They give us just enough to thrill but save us from our basest instincts which, like many happy marriages, may be why our relationship with the show has lasted so long.

**FOLLOW** Debora Robertson on Twitter @lickedspoon; READ MORE at [telegraph.co.uk/opinion](http://telegraph.co.uk/opinion)



## A bleak existence

Life for a street dog is hard. Little Babu was found emaciated and exhausted lying on a rubbish dump, suffering from a nasty skin disease. For a puppy like Babu this was a very sad start to life, but one that is all too common in India.

Mayhew International funds and supports community animal welfare projects in India so that animals like Babu can be rescued, treated and given a second chance.

We aim to tackle animal welfare issues at the root of the problem by training overseas vets and funding neutering and vaccination programmes to control the overpopulation and the deadly spread of disease.

But we can't continue our work without support from kind animal lovers like you. Please help us today so that we can be there for an animal like Babu when they need it most.

Yes! I want to help animals like Babu when they need it most

£5 £10 £25 £50 Other £

I enclose a cheque/PGI made payable to 'The Mayhew Animal Home' OR please complete your credit/debit card details below

Please debit my VISA/Mastercard/Amex (delete as appropriate)

Credit/debit card no.

Start date Expiry date Issue no.

Signature

Date

Name

Address

Postcode

Email (optional)

We may wish to send you further information by email. Only if you email address if you wish to be contacted in this way. We will never sell or pass your details to any other charity or third party.

Please send this form with your gift to:

Freeport RTVA-KABG-HYBU, The Mayhew Animal Home, Tremay Gardens, London NW10 6BJ.

Donate online at [www.themayhew.org/babu](http://www.themayhew.org/babu)

Or call to donate Tel: 020 8206 5870



To order prints or signed copies of any Telegraph cartoon, go to [telegraph.co.uk/cartoonprints](http://telegraph.co.uk/cartoonprints) or call 01642 485322 ♦ [cartoonist@telegraph.co.uk](mailto:cartoonist@telegraph.co.uk)

# With Trump in charge, America faces an economic renaissance

After years of decline under Obama, a new era looms of lower taxes, less red tape and more growth

NILE GARDINER



On Friday January 20 2017, Donald Trump will become the 45th president of the United States. His inauguration will mark the end of the Obama era and herald a new period of dominance by American conservatives. The Republicans will be in control of not only the White House, but also the Senate, the House of Representatives, 33 governorships and both chambers of 32 state legislatures.

Not since the Twenties will the Republicans have wielded such influence. The American Right is in an extraordinary position to usher in a new conservative revolution, one based on free markets, economic liberty, limited government, controlled borders, a strong national defence and a robust foreign policy. At the same time, the new US administration must resist the siren calls of protectionism and isolationism, ensuring that America leads again on the world stage.

Mr Trump triumphed against all expectations in the face of deep divisions within his own party, an overwhelmingly contemptuous US media, a slick Democratic Party machine and a flawed but resilient presidential rival who, just weeks before election day, looked to be in a formidable position in the polls. But

Hillary Clinton had spent most of the past two decades in the White House, Senate and State Department, and was the ultimate political insider in a year when outsiders were in the ascendancy.

Mr Trump tapped into deep-seated disenchantment with Washington and everything it stood for in the eyes of millions of Americans: big government, cronyism, a blatant unwillingness to control America's borders, Left-wing social values, a sneering condescension towards Christian conservatives, and a suffocating culture of political correctness in the face of a rising Islamist terror threat. After nearly eight years of the Obama presidency, with one of the most Left-wing administrations in US history, polls show Americans' trust in political leaders has plummeted to a new low.

So what will the Trump presidency look like? The relatively sluggish state of the US economy and the slow pace of recovery from the Great Recession of the late 2000s played a big part in his victory on November 8. The national debt soared under Barack Obama's tenure, rising from \$10.6 trillion in January 2009 to nearly \$20 trillion today. Real wages have remained stagnant, and six million manufacturing jobs have been lost since 2011, despite a huge infusion of infrastructure spending. Businesses have suffered under mountains of red tape and a federal corporate tax rate that is among the highest in the world, at 35 per cent. So one of Mr Trump's first moves will be to slash the corporate tax rate to 15 per cent, greatly increasing America's ability to compete internationally.

That determination to liberate the American economy will be at the heart of the new conservative revolution. Economic freedom has declined in the US in seven of the past eight years,

significantly weakened by a "big government" mindset in the Obama White House that has greatly expanded the role of the executive branch in the economy and the healthcare system.

Above all, the new United States will be determined to avoid the fate of the European Union, so admired by Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, but presently mired in a death spiral of soaring public debt, rising unemployment, eroding competitiveness and inevitable decline. President Trump must free America's corporations, entrepreneurs and small businesses from the heavy hand of big government, including the disastrous ObamaCare reforms, enabling them to generate wealth and prosperity for all Americans. Vice President-elect Mike Pence has already made it clear that the repeal of ObamaCare will be an immediate goal for the Trump presidency.

It is a change of attitude, as much as anything. Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich put it best recently, when he declared that Mr Trump was going to "kick down the table" when he comes to Washington. But it is not just the president-elect. In the space of just a few weeks he has assembled an unconventional but highly impressive team of cabinet appointees, drawing together some of the most brilliant business figures in the country with a revered team of generals, including James "Mad Dog" Mattis, who led US Marines to victory in the hard-fought battle of Fallujah in 2004.

Many of Mr Trump's picks lack a typical federal government background, but they bring with them a track record of striking success and innovative thinking. From gifted neurosurgeon Ben Carson to Governor Nikki Haley, the brilliant daughter of Indian immigrants and now nominee for US ambassador to the United Nations, this is a group that is

guaranteed to shake up the status quo.

Mr Trump's team has sent a clear signal that a trade deal with Britain will be a foreign policy priority for the new administration, and there are currently no fewer than five bills in Congress urging support for such an agreement. That makes sense: an embrace of genuine free trade principles should be a key part of this economic revolution, with a US/UK free-trade deal the centrepiece of a series of bilateral trade deals that will benefit American workers and create jobs.

In addition, America's armed forces must be greatly strengthened after years of underfunding and neglect under the Obama presidency. This will require a significant increase in the size of the military as well as the modernisation of America's combat systems. The US Congress is already preparing for a major boost to defence spending under a Trump presidency. Combined with a robust foreign policy that projects strength and resolve, with the Nato alliance and the Anglo-American special relationship at its core, assertive American leadership should be restored.

Four years from now, the United States is likely to be in a significantly stronger position than it is today, more feared by its adversaries and better respected by its allies. America has an opportunity to undergo an economic renaissance, sparking a bonfire of the taxes and regulations that presently suppress growth. It can also lead again on the world stage from a position of strength rather than weakness. The US badly needs to change course, and fast. President Trump has been given a powerful mandate by the American people to deliver exactly that.

*Nile Gardiner, a former aide to Lady Thatcher, is the director of the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom at The Heritage Foundation*

# A grave threat to the freedom of the press

Newspapers will be unable to fight for justice if Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act is passed

JACOB REES-MOGG



It is hard to believe that a free democratic state passed a law that fines people for telling the truth. Yet this is what happened in 2013 under the notorious Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act. It has not yet been given effect by the Secretary of State but it would make the courts impose costs on a newspaper that told the truth – if it had not agreed to be regulated by a government-approved body.

Libel laws have played an important part in the development of liberty in this country. In the 17th century, William Prynne was put in the pillory, had his ears cut off and was branded with the letters SL for seditious libeller. He had been rude about Archbishop Laud and his punishment

was imposed by the Star Chamber. By the 19th century, however, the press was expanding hugely along with the electoral franchise. The British people came to expect a free and vigorous press, with a variety of papers appealing to their particular audiences.

This is now under threat from a number of different angles. The internet has changed the economics of newspapers, yet their website competitors are effectively excluded from the penal section of the 2013 Act. In the case of the BBC there is a specific exemption. This has the deeply perverse effect that a wantonly dishonest website can lie through its teeth without even a risk of a penalty, especially if it is based abroad, but an honest newspaper in the UK could metaphorically be put in the pillory and have its ears cut off for telling the truth.

This will be especially damaging for local newspapers. It is natural for an MP to lavish praise on the papers published in his constituency but that it is commonplace does not make it false. Local papers report the happy community events that give such pleasure to the participants – but their purpose is also greater than that. If they can always be sued at no cost to complainants then they will not dare to report on the failings of the moderately

well-off for the fear of facing costs that would bankrupt them. Anyone could go to court and have a free ride against a non-government paper for any story that he or she did not like.

This month a specific and important example, written by the editor Selina Cuff, appears in the *Chew Valley Gazette* – which has signed up to Ipsos, the press regulator that is free of government control. It has reported on a solicitor called Peter Rhys Williams who has been barred for dishonesty from practising law by the Solicitors Regulation Authority. He has also been investigated in relation to a scandal that affected one of my constituents when he worked for Burgess Salmon and was alleged to have been involved in the sale of unregulated commercial loans to farmers via a company called Acorn Finance. Ultimately, in September 2016, the Serious Fraud Office stated that it could not accept the case for investigation.

In reporting the story, the *Chew Valley Gazette* is taking on some pretty powerful interest groups. Peter Williams is a solicitor, while his former employer, Burgess Salmon, is an important Bristol firm with an otherwise good reputation. If the *Chew Valley Gazette* could face ruin for publishing this account of Mr Williams

**READ MORE** at [telegraph.co.uk/opinion](http://telegraph.co.uk/opinion)

and his career it would simply not take the risk. This means that people would not be warned about the dangers of some farm finance schemes nor of the suggestion that it is wiser to seek advice from the National Farmers Union. Across the board, questionable activities would be less exposed and decent people less protected. This would be the chilling effect of Section 40. Local papers would be reduced to being a whimsical Jennifer's Diary of the area's social scene.

Of course, local papers could submit to Impress, the regulator that is state-sanctioned. Unfortunately, it is funded by one of the great media haters of our time, a certain Max Mosley, who has run a vendetta against the press since his fondness for orgies was exposed. Only a quiescent newspaper could agree to be subject to the suzerainty of an organisation tied to someone so thoroughly antithetical to free speech and under the ultimate control of the state. Such a paper would be too spineless to report the truth about the powerful. Yet those who refuse to register with Impress risk bankruptcy if Section 40 goes ahead. To preserve our liberty, it must not.

*Jacob Rees-Mogg is MP for North East Somerset*