

# Finding patterns



**T**here are some facts and figures about our current context that should give us pause for thought. Some are simply stranger than fiction, while others are connecting the dots and seeing patterns in the myriad events constantly unfolding around us.

## 1 Roaring Twenties déjà vu?

The first world war of 1914-18 was followed by the Spanish flu in 1920. Fast-forward 100 years, and the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-22 was followed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Indeed, former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson dropped the country's Covid-19 restrictions on 24 February 2022, the very day of the invasion.

## 2 Stability of UK government finances shaken

The 30th anniversary of Black Wednesday and the UK's historic ejection from the exchange rate mechanism (ERM) was on 16 September 1992. Pound sterling plunged to a 51-year low of £1/\$1.03 against the US dollar on 23 September 2022, exactly 30 years and a week to the day later.

## 3 Like Halley's Comet, royal pomp and global ceremony come round every 10 years

Royal jubilees have coincided with major global events that have turned the whole world's attention onto Britain. The late Queen's Diamond Jubilee of June 2012 preceded the August 2012 Olympic Games, while the Platinum Jubilee of June 2022 was followed in September 2022 by HM Queen Elizabeth II's funeral.

## 4 What's in a name?

Sometimes, a name lives up to its connotations. For example, in the case of Made.com, it was unmade by supply-chain disruption and falling consumer demand, and fell into administration.

## 5 Big Bang 1986, Big Bang 2.0?

According to City suits, after the Big Bang in 1986, the toffs became bankers doing the wining and dining, while the

barrow boys became traders doing the wheeling and dealing. Shortlived Prime Minister Liz Truss and her Chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, were due to unleash Big Bang 2.0, a bonfire of the regulations, in 2022, but blew themselves up by going too far and too fast.

## 6 UK for sale, bidders turning up like London buses

With a slump in the stock market, potential and actual bidders are seemingly lining up to take over UK technology companies. Avast, Darktrace, Aveva, Micro Focus, and GB Group have all had preliminary approaches or full takeover offers. All the bidders appear to be arriving at once, like London buses. Hurry, hurry, while stocks last!

## 7 Did any currency outperform the mighty dollar in 2022?

Why, the Russian rouble did! They had the black stuff everyone was desperate to get hold of to avoid a white-knuckle ride of winter blackouts. But being the world's leading economy and self-sufficient in energy has its virtues, and the US dollar ruled supreme against all other currencies.

## 8 Travel and transport must be down now everyone's working from home?

Wrong. Train and airline passenger traffic was back up in 2022, to 95% of 2019 levels. Human beings are social animals and the call of the wild is irresistible.

History repeating itself, recognising facts stranger than fiction, and connecting the dots to make sense of a changing world around us - all give us the confidence to make informed judgements and take calculated risks.

As Steve Jobs stated in his Stanford commencement speech in June 2005: "You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards. So, you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect... This approach has never let me down, and it has made all the difference in my life."