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A Not Actual Size publication

“Indispensable... whether you’re middle class or pretending not to be.” GQ

“Hilarious... we laughed our organic, brushed cotton socks off.” Grazia

As researched by Not Actual Size

Foreword by Peter York
Jeremy and Carol ("Jez" is fine for friends, but Carol is definitely not Caz; she thinks it sounds like "a bloody chav name") work in business – Jez for the UK sales division of a German food-processing equipment manufacturer, Carol as a manager in a media-sales company. Educated at local state schools that they claim were rougher than they really were, they are now in middle age with two kids, Jack and Francesca, in primary school. They live in the first village you come to after crossing the ring road of their Midlands city, but they never name the city as their home because they are proud of being "rural".

What people notice most about meeting Jeremy and Carol for the first time is their anger. They seem to be angry about everything. Politicians. The police. Bankers. Chavs. Speed cameras. Premiership footballers. Call centres. Eco-prats who whine about cars (Jeremy has a beloved Subaru Impreza, Carol uses the VW Sharan). Modern pop music (they believe it has been going downhill since 1988). Most things on television (Acceptable: *Top Gear* and *Loose Women*). Did we mention politicians?
The truth is that Jeremy and Carol always were a bit grumpy, but their dislike of political correctness, Labour’s nanny state, the bank bailout, and then the MPs’ expenses scandal, made them more political. Now, feeling ignored and equally angry at both the “benefits class” and the bankers, both of whom seem to be prospering at their expense, Jez and Carol are stormtroopers of the first group for many years to be aggressively, even militantly, middle class. They openly admit they want to live as far away as possible from the poor and working classes, but they are also scathing about the nepotism and vague crookedness of the super-rich. They loathe both old- and new-money establishments, and have no time for the old-fashioned snoots who run things in their area. As for Cameron and Clegg, well they might be an
improvement on Brown, but Jez and Carol are still unconvinced. Ideally they’d like Maggie back.

In many ways the restless Damn-Wrights are more comfortable travelling than doing anything else. They don’t exactly like functional, on-the-move environments such as airports, business parks and service stations but they are at ease with them. For work and leisure, they tend to travel away from the city centre rather than into it; they both have an immense knowledge of the motorway system, which they secretly like to pit against their full-spec sat navs, anticipating where they might misread the road.

Work is important to them, and it draws out strong emotions. Convinced that Britain has millions of scroungers who choose not to work at all, Jeremy and Carol profess annoyance at the long hours they
Jeremy and Carol love going to see bands from their youth. Their favourites include:

- U2 (though Bono “should give it a rest”)
- Genesis (post Peter Gabriel)
- Dire Straits
- Simple Minds
- Queen
- The Who
- Jools Holland
- Take That (Carol only!!!)

Queen are actually better without Freddie

have to do themselves, although friends think they seem to enjoy “slaving away”. They certainly enjoy the equipment. Both, for example, have the best in-car phone speakers you can buy. Both secretly love it when they have a passenger, and they talk to someone else in another car in a three-way conversation; it makes them feel like a good host, although in reality the passenger and the other person tend to be aware of each other feeling slightly awkward.

Away from work, visiting retail parks or holiday centres perhaps, their personal style has the curious quality of belonging to no definable period. Jeremy likes light-blue jeans (worn quite tight, a 1980s hangover), leather jacket, suede shoes, and keeps a pair of Merrell trainers in the boot with his golf clubs. Carol is well groomed, blonde and favours tight, bootcut jeans, pointy boots and an outsize chunky cardigan rather than a coat. For holidays they’ll get some new bits at M&S, Jez always being impressed by the value for money offered by the Blue Harbour range.

They love their holidays, because almost every
PLACES JEREMY AND CAROL DON’T GO TO ANY MORE

Jeremy and Carol enjoy the news because it makes them so angry. Each story on each bulletin makes them progressively more furious and friends consider it likely that one day, one of them will actually explode. “At least we could sue to get the licence fee back if we did,” jokes Carol.
Jeremy and Carol joined Friends Reunited a few years ago to see what had happened to the people they were at school with, but after that they did not bother much with social networking. In fact until recently they were not overly excited by the internet in any form, regarding it as a nerdy substitute for face-to-face conversation. What changed things was Jeremy’s discovery that you could embed YouTube videos in your Facebook page – he now competes with friends to find ever-funnier footage of vandalised GATSOs and people having painful accidents. Carol joined at the same time, but used it mostly to play Farmville (which she has now given up) and bitch about contestants on TV talent shows. Both of them are increasingly annoyed by receiving endless requests to join groups.

Country in the world (except France) seems to them more sorted out than bloody Britain – although the Brits are good at ruining anywhere of course. The Damn-Wrights used to holiday in Florida but like other places they used to go, it got spoiled when “every idiot with a passport” started going. Now they prefer Portugal or Phuket, where Jez will relax with a Lee Child and Carol will annoy herself with her Marie Claire. They will also discuss how annoyed the teachers were when they took Jack and Francesca out of school in term time so the holiday would be cheaper. The Damn-Wrights think that most of the teachers are bloody useless; Jeremy reckons he could do a better job himself sometimes!

It is important to note that Jeremy and Carol do hold some “seriously different” attitudes. When
The views expressed here are those of Jeremy Damn-Wright and not The Middle Class Handbook
it comes to politics, for example, Carol tends to be more vituperative and blames individuals, while Jeremy shakes his head and blames the Government. They bicker about each other’s personal faults, often publicly and entertainingly when they’ve have two bottles of the excellent Chardonnay they buy from the wine club. This is the only trouble with them as a couple, say their friends. They’re good company, in fact they can be quite charming (Jeremy knows this, and thinks he is a good flirt) but they can get a bit aggressive when they go off on their rants.

Feeling they are likely to be done over at every turn, Jeremy and Carol are increasingly happy to turn this aggression on people who cross them. They
often have it in for shop assistants, who tend to annoy them with their aloofness. Jez and Carol love telling visitors how much of a discount they got off all their white goods, although their very close friends know the story behind this is not always as rational as they make out. The reason they have such a huge fridge, for instance, is that Jez thought the assistant thought he couldn’t afford it. Actually they were dithering over the purchase because Carol correctly thought it was too big to look nice in the kitchen.

Where many middle-class people worry about appearing decent to other people, Jez and Carol want less to do with “society”, particularly the welfare state. “Go on,” says Carol, “explain to me why I should pay tax for someone who chooses not to work?” They tend to think they are the first people to have thought of the point, and have a habit of saying, “What people don’t realise is…” when actually, the newspapers have been telling people about the relevant fact for weeks. All this annoys liberals (“Good!”) but then, as Jeremy points out, the liberals are not queuing up to pay more tax either. It might be easy to criticise the Damn-Wrights, but they are not, at least, hypocrites.
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