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of "alternative facts". And the Brits' response to Brexit? Thick eyebrows, apparently.

Beauty "experts" claim that there's a new trend for darker, fuller "Brexit brows" because women want to feel more "in control" during uncertain socioeconomic times. What tosh.

Where I'm from caterpillar brows have reigned for years under the term "Scouse brow". It's nothing

to do with Europe, everything to do with fashion and the fact that thicker eyebrows look more youthful. Brexit brows: nice phrase, fake news.

Just look up

A pox on TV weather forecasts.

When they come on, I now switch off. Why so many? No sooner has the national news one finished than the local news version strikes up. And who dreams up those phrases?

There'll be a "notable breeze", a "risk" of rain, "spits and spots", a "good dollop", "mist and murk". And let's not forget we must "wrap

up warm". Are we toddlers? My favourite phrase is "not amounting to much". Really? Then why mention it? And does the whole country need to know it's clouding over in Thurso?

The Historic Houses Association recently complained that overly pessimistic forecasts were deterring visitors. Maybe the melodrama is a symptom of the modern world's snowflake risk-aversion. People want charts, maps and certainty instead of the old way — opening the front door and looking up.

Beer bore

I read claims of Johnny Depp's \$30,000-a-month wine bill with a smug glow. My monthly wine bill is currently £0. I'm sticking to my beer-only resolution and feel much better, though there's an unfortunate side-effect. I'm becoming a real ale bore. I peruse websites, seek out craft beer pubs and tell glazed-over faces that it's the key to life. Wine drinker Depp doesn't know what he's missing. I've raved before about Dead Pony Club pale ale but am now getting into Blue Moon and Timmermans, though I can't get along so well with Brooklyn. I could go on but, alas, space prevents. I've already got the cardigans; maybe it's time to grow the beard.

@CAROLMIDGLEY

Carole Midgley's piece in the Times on Friday 3rd February 2017

Cloud cuckoo

Sir, Carol Midgley is right about the oddity of some of the phrases used by weather forecasters (Notebook, Feb 3). One that always jars with me is "more organised rain". I notice that we never have "less organised rain", and who organises the rain anyway?

CHRIS HUNT COOKE
Welwyn, Herts

Above: a letter to the Editor from Chris Hunt Cooke published in the Times on Monday 6th February 2017

Right: in the Weather Eye column in the Times on Tuesday 7th February 2017 Paul Simons makes a telling point about the oddity of phrases used by weather forecast presenters. He notes audiences crave "plain and simple information . . . stripped of superfluous language and delivered without amateur dramatics" as "we want facts, not entertainment".

Weather Eye

Paul Simons



Carol Midgley pointed out how weather forecasters on television use bizarre and confusing language (Comment, February 3).

What do they mean by "notable breeze", "spits and spots", a "good dollop", and "mist and murk"? Then there is irritating nanny advice such as "wrap up warm", confusing remarks about "not amounting to much" and trivia such as "clouding over in Thurso".

It is all symptomatic of burbling, defined as "speak continuously and at length in an unintelligible or confused way" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Perhaps forecasters feel they need to indulge in mindless chatter to make forecasts more digestible, even though it has the opposite effect. Chitchat adds so many words that forecasters are forced to gabble through bulletins. Pity anyone whose mother tongue is not English because these broadcasts are riddled with colloquialisms and high-speed delivery. The problem is worse on radio. Small wonder that few people can remember what a forecaster said immediately after a bulletin.

Chris Cooke, in Welwyn, Hertfordshire, made a telling point about the oddity of phrases such as "more organised rain". As he explained: "We never have 'less-organised rain', and who organises the rain anyway?" (Letters, February 6). What forecasters probably mean is rain that falls in a well-defined weather front, rather than local showers from pockets of rising warm air, which are more difficult to predict.

Audiences crave plain and simple information. Is it going to be hot, cold, rain, snow or blow a gale? Perhaps we need something more like the Shipping Forecast, with information stripped of superfluous language and delivered without amateur dramatics. Let the audience decide if they need to wrap up warm if there is a freeze, or take an umbrella if it is going to rain. The Met Office's website has made its mark with the simplest, easiest and clearest of information. We want facts, not entertainment.