

Dear readers,



The following article is a summary of an article I found on the BBC webpage. It shows how extremely life has changed in the UK the past weeks and days. I truly hope you are all well, will stay healthy and of course enjoy reading this summary. Best wishes from Susanne Immenrodt-Brötzmann.

In the space of a month, the United Kingdom has transformed beyond recognition. On 28 February 2020, a British man who'd been infected on a cruise ship became the first UK citizen to die, in Japan, from Covid-19.

That afternoon, children were still in classrooms and adults were still at work. People shook hands and hugged and kissed. In the evening, they went to pubs and restaurants. Some went on dates and others visited elderly relatives. They assembled in groups and mingled with residents of other households.

As the weekend went on, football fans crammed into stadiums. Worshippers gathered in churches, mosques, temples and synagogues.

You could go outside for as long as you liked, if you didn't mind the rain. On supermarket shelves, toilet paper and paracetamol were plentiful. Recent storms had left large swathes of the country flooded, but for most British people, life went on as it always had and seemingly always would.

Insofar as any of this describes a British way of life, though, it was one that ceased to exist entirely within just a few weeks.

On 28 February 2020 people in the UK were already taking notice of the outbreak. It would have been difficult to ignore entirely the headlines about what was happening in China, South Korea, Iran and Italy. The first confirmed cases among travellers returning to the UK had come as early as January, but it still seemed possible to regard this as something happening, for the most part, a long way away.

By 1 March, the virus had reached the four corners of the United Kingdom - cases had been detected in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Two days later Prime Minister Boris Johnson launched the government's Coronavirus Action Plan.

The following day, the first reports of hand sanitiser selling out in supermarkets were published.

Each day the number of confirmed cases crept up. In a press conference, the prime minister told anyone with a continuous cough or a fever to self-isolate. His instruction came with a warning that "many more families are going to lose loved ones before their time". The bluntness was shocking. Some asked why, in that case, more wasn't being done.

On Friday 13 March, the London Marathon, the Premier League and English Football League and May's local elections were all postponed.

Around the country, people looked at Italy, France and Spain, which had already gone into lockdown, and wondered if the UK was next.

In person and on WhatsApp, families and groups of friends argued about what it all meant. Wasn't it just a bit of flu? This was exactly the kind of thing the government's advisers were most worried about.

Most school pupils were told they wouldn't go back to their classes until further notice. Exams, proms, farewells to classmates and teachers would now never happen.

But although the UK had been told not to go to restaurants, cafes and pubs, many restaurants, cafes and pubs stayed open. They were quieter than usual but some customers still came. On the evening of Friday 20 March, the prime minister ordered restaurants, cafes and pubs to close, a measure that even in the darkest moments of World War Two would have been unthinkable.

For much of the weekend that followed, there was bright sunshine, and people poured outside to take advantage of the last leisure option open to them. This was not how "social distancing" - now regarded as

everyone's social duty - was meant to operate.

The lockdown was coming.

On Monday 23 at 20:30, the television screens showed the prime minister sitting behind a desk. He was about to announce some of the most draconian restrictions on individual liberty the UK had ever seen.

You could only leave home to exercise once a day, travel to and from work when absolutely necessary and only go shopping for essential items. You had to stand two metres apart from people you didn't live with. You weren't to gather in public in groups bigger than two.

The British people were being told to avoid human contact when they needed it most.

British life had been transformed so dramatically, and so fast, that people hadn't had time to dwell on it.

Initially, the lockdown was supposed to last three weeks. But a month on from 28 February, the UK is settling in for the long haul, with the prime minister, the health secretary and the first in line to the throne all having tested positive for the virus.

You remember your last trip to the gym, the last drink you had in a cafe or a pub, the last time you hugged your mum or your grandad. You think about

the life you once took for 
granted. You wonder if it will ever
return.