

GOLD STAR SERVICE

Are those chores that need doing nagging away at you? CAROLINE PHILLIPS picks out eight super services that should be on your speed dial

1 THE DRY CLEANER

BUCKINGHAM DRY CLEANERS

Buckingham Dry Cleaners, the Mayfair dry cleaners and launderers of distinction, offer a tip-top service. They deliver and collect for no charge, six days a week, even at anti-social hours by appointment. (Theirs is the white Citroën emblazoned with a red and black guardsman driven by the charming Jason.) They're the number one choice for folk with air-conditioned cupboards crammed with red carpet numbers – but also perfect for clients with stained M&S shirts. They also offer an express tailoring service – for sewing a cuff to altering a wedding gown. Everything is dry cleaned on site, hand-finished and passed through tighter-than-tight quality control. Alan is the techie genius; his wife, Stella, knows her McQueens from her McCartneys. Unsurprisingly they're recommended by Burberry, Lanvin and Brown's. Plus VVIPs staying at the Ritz and the Connaught call on them. They're so good that clients even send their cleaning to them from India and the USA. Yes, really. *From £5.50 for a laundered shirt to £300 for a beaded gown.* buckinghamdrycleaners.com



2 THE PICTURE HANGER

BIG SODA

Founded by long-term BFs James 'Rolo' Rawlinson and Sam



Adams, Big Soda works with lots of fizz and enthusiasm. They're the duo who hang art for the cognoscenti and Croesus-rich – there's hardly a picture from Mayfair to Azerbaijan that hasn't had their expert touch. 'Move it just a centimetre higher,' Sam says. 'Ah, that's just right,' murmurs Rolo, as they place that Damien Hirst. Whether hanging Old Masters

in Moscow palaces or contemporary works at White Cube, for over ten years they've been helping artists, galleries and private collectors realise their arty dreams. *From £350 for a half day.* bigsoda.co.uk



Annabel Hodin works with celebrities like Helena Bonham Carter



3 THE LOOK DOCTOR

ANNABEL HODIN

There's (almost) nothing that former model Annabel Hodin doesn't know about wardrobes/styling and how to make people look better than their best. There's nobody better than Annabel for going through m'lady's (or gent's) closet, paring it down and freshening it up. She's in sizzling demand with the glossier glossies/TV – dressing Helena Bonham Carter and Mick Jagger – but also tends the sartorial requirements of a loyal band of off-duty slebs and 'ordinary' folk (meaning City whizzes to Kensal Rise babes). She takes care of every last nano detail – from recommending nimble Russian dressmakers 'to lift that hem by just two centimetres' to texting you when she finds your perfect tea dress – and knows what works for her clients psychologically and physically. She's as plugged into haute couture as the high street – and finds you lasting investments as well as the chiconomies of life. Little wonder clients dub her the 'Look Doctor'. *From £350 for a wardrobe consultation. annabelhodin.com*



4 THE UPHOLSTERER

JOHN FREDERICK

They've worked at Number Ten, in palaces and for pop royalty – cleaning antique Persian rugs to IKEA's best; and resurrecting silk curtains and stained upholstery. ('Grubby marks on the sofa? Coffee stains on the stairs? No problem,' they say.) Plus, they supply and fit drapes, carpets and blinds. And do excellent repairs and restoration works – from complete remakes to relining. They carry out carpet and

upholstery cleaning on-site and spirit away the rest for customised work in their own factory near the RAF Museum. ('Nobody can clean curtains properly in a home,' confides Wayne Church, one of the owners.) They offer a personal service – two cheery north London brothers own the business, plus there's one son and six staff. They've been working under the radar since 1928 – purely by word of mouth. And what mouths! The late Queen Mother's was one of them. *From £2.85 per sq/m (carpet cleaning) to £1,000 per sq/m to buy their hand-woven Thai silk carpet. johnfrederick.co.uk*

5 THE BUTCHER

BIFULCO

If something founded in 1924 can be considered one of the capital's best-kept secrets, then this is it. Bifulco is a first-class family butcher that was in Soho then St John's Wood until 1991 – before moving to focus almost exclusively on home deliveries from its outpost in Cricklewood. They sell meltingly excellent Aberdeen Angus delivered direct to them from the Highlands – owner Anthony Bifulco even knows the cattle by name – top quality Irish salt beef to tasty corn-fed French chickens. ('We only use long-trusted or RSPCA-approved suppliers,' reveals Anthony.)

Anything – ostrich steaks, kangaroo or suckling pig – is available. Even at short notice. There's no minimum order – clients ring for a pound of mince – no delivery charge and, hey, this quality produce is even competitively priced. They supply top restaurants and top tables. And feed endless carnivorous celebrities and others on the world stage. Princess Margaret was wild about their Toulouse sausages. *They deliver London-wide free of charge and with no minimum order requirement. 020 8452 2674*





6 THE HOME TECHNICIAN

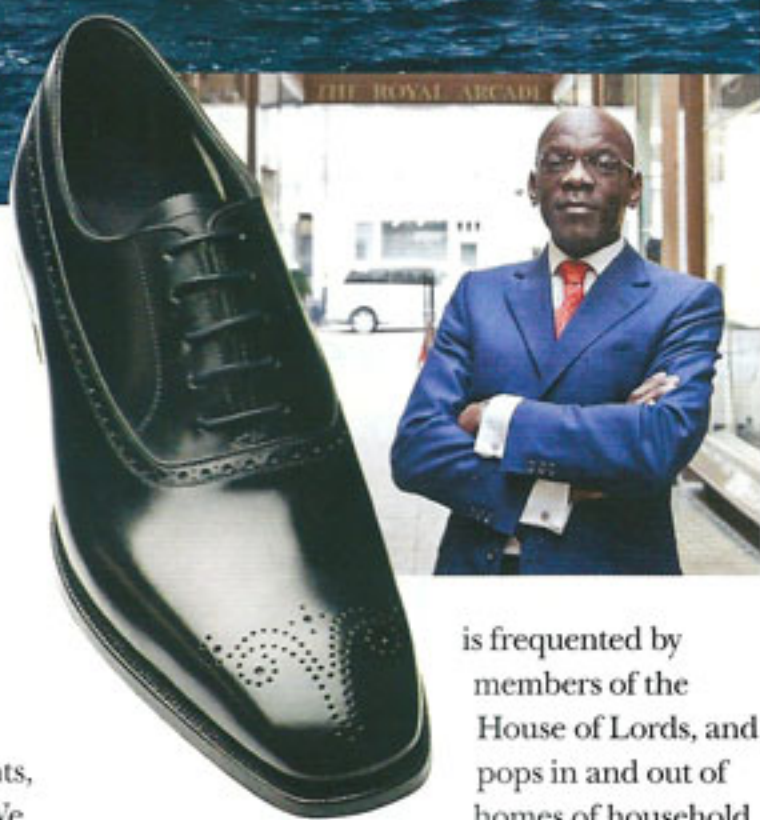
PRAVIN GARARA

Pravin Garara and his band of three merry geni design and install bespoke audio and video systems – fitting and fixing unfathomably complicated music systems, TVs and complex HD bits. (Think technology solutions for the elite with A*** customer service and support.) They're also superb at home automation – so you can control your lights, heating and security from your phone. 'We can amalgamate all your electronic gadgets into one remote control,' says Pravin. 'You can close your curtains or run your London bath from you're iPhone when you're in Australia, if you want.' Known as the best for smart AV solutions for new and retro projects, they've worked their magic in Marrakesh palaces, Monacan villas and super yachts in Cannes. But the nice thing is that no job is too small for them. Who could possibly say no to such an intelligent house and such a smart company? From £1,000 to £150,000+. smarthometech.net

7 THE VALET

BURFORD VALET SERVICE

Stephen Houghton – of Burford Valet Service – is everyman's Jeeves. He sponges, steams and presses suits (only occasionally using chemicals) until they're fresher than fresh. Then treats and polishes your GJ Cleverley (bespoke) shoes to a mirror finish you can see your face in or restoring your suede shoes. Clients don't even need to see him – he'll spirit away your Savile Row suits and brogues to his discreet London workshop while you're lunching at Lou Lou's or a valet can beaver away at your home. He's been Jeeves-ing for more than two decades. 'Being a valet,' he says, 'is my vocation.' Discretion is his watchword. But he's got royal clients,



is frequented by members of the House of Lords, and pops in and out of homes of household names – of which he's a keyholder – and Anderson & Sheppard, Prince Charles' tailor. Plus he looked after Sir Alec Guinness in his Connaught days. Think valet with passion and polish. *Shoe polish £17, suede shoes £30. Suit sponging £29. burfordvalet.com*



8 THE GROCER

CLIFTON GREENS

You can email or call Kamil at Clifton Greens to order a delivery of a ginormous selection of you've-probably-never-seen-or-eaten-these-before things. (That's if you don't want to venture forth for market-style shopping – you bag up your own produce at this cool Maida Vale greengrocers with double height ceiling and exposed brickwork.) Nearly everything they deliver is straight from



Mother Nature's garden. On site, there's box after wooden box of fruits, veggies, roots, berries and legumes. And purple, yellow, baby and common-orange carrots

in bins. Plus a fridge of herbs and 15 sorts of mushroom – from King Oyster to Shiitake, round and button. Fargo fruit, star fruit, custard apple, grandillo or rambutan, anyone? Mooli radish, horseradish, plantain or pink guava? Little wonder Yotam Ottelenghi loves the 'extraordinary' array. Just download a PDF of their stock, and click away. But first make sure you know the difference between a Sharon fruit and Kaka. *Free delivery on orders over £30 to most central London postcodes. cliftongreens.co.uk*

BEST OF THE REST

THE PA

CAROLINE BAKER

Caroline Baker is the HNWS' goddess of PA and property management services – offering beyond bespoke and supersonic service from team members like Chiara Phillips. Caroline – who cut her PA teeth working for now Masterpiece co-founder, Simon Phillips – introduces clients to the finest in everything (from The London Smile Clinic for dentistry to the best private client lawyers, GPs and interior decorators). Whether placing welcome flowers or managing mega projects, everything's done with precision and panache. carolinebaker.co.uk

THE CONCIERGE

XQUISITUS

His name is whispered reverentially globally. Enter Paul Pearson, grand fromage of Xquisitus, the achingly smart concierge service recommended by word of royal mouth and the super-rich. Luxury lifestyle enhancement, events management and business solutions is their bag – which covers nearly everything. Think VVIP events access, introductions to A-listers (including for funding and investments), making your shindig go with a bang, organising private jets... they do it all. For those banking privately. Membership numbers are capped. xquisitus.com

THE CUT AND COLOURIST

DANIEL GALVIN JR

For the ultimate unique and private appointment, colourist Daniel Galvin Jr speeds round on his motorbike with snipper Joseph Bilton: the capital's only hairdressers offering the dual service of cut and colour. Daniel (a fourth-generation hairdresser who's pioneering organic ranges with Prince Charles) bubbles with enthusiasm as he colours your tresses – mixing bowls of dye, painting your roots, doing low and highlights. Then Joseph – a natural charmer – swings into action, washing, snipping and giving you a blowdry. Hello, born again blonde.

£2,500, central London only. danielgalvinjunior.com