

They hold our lives in their hands, so when we go under the knife it is vital that we have faith in

their skills. **Thea Jourdan** talks to those in the know for an exclusive guide to the scalpel aristocrats

THERE is an in-crowd for everything, and that includes surgery. As the daughter of a consultant surgeon and the sister of another, I have always been privy to the identities of the country's brilliant operators, the surgeons' surgeons.

To come up with the following list, I spoke to dozens of the country's leading and junior surgeons and

asked for their recommendations — which of their colleagues do they rate most highly, who would they trust with the care of their family? A fastidious process of checking has left us with 11 top London surgeons. There are, of course, other brilliant operators, but each of these stands out for the technical skill, innovative approach and flair for their chosen profession. Perhaps most importantly, you feel safe in

their hands when the nurses wheel you into theatre. They are predominantly men because 95 per cent of surgeons are still male. But a new generation of female stars is emerging which will provide the greats of the future. In the meantime, these are the people the insiders seek out when they need to go under the knife, whether it be for a hernia repair, a heart bypass or a face-lift.



THE GYNAECOLOGY SURGEON CON KELLEHER

Who is he? Aged 42, Kelleher graduated from King's College Hospital London, where he also completed his thesis. Lives in Dulwich Village. Married to consultant anaesthetist Andrea, who works at Brompton Hospital London. They have two children, Alice, 15, and Henry, 11. **Position:** consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, Lister Hospital Chelsea. Works privately and for the NHS. **What's so special?** He has many high profile patients and is famous for his invisible Caesarean scars. Known for his treatment of and research into bladder problems and prolapse. Good sensible care of high- and low-risk obstetric patients and those who have previously had complicated deliveries or pelvic floor problems after giving birth. **Cost:** for a hysterectomy, from £4,500 to £6,100. **Waiting list:** routine NHS less than six months; routine private surgery within six weeks.



THE VASCULAR SURGEON PETER TAYLOR

Who is he? Aged 51, he is married to Kochti, a radiologist at St George's Hospital, and lives in London. Specialises in repairing arterial aneurysms. A talented pianist, he often performs late romantic concertos for colleagues at the Vascular Society. **Position:** consultant vascular and endovascular surgeon, lead clinician at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and London Bridge Hospital, with NHS and private patients. **What's so special?** First surgeon in the world to use endovascular stent — a tiny metallic tubular mesh device to strengthen a vein — for arterial venous malformation. Awarded the James IV Travelling Fellowship in 2000 and spent time in international centres of excellence. He is known as a charming and brilliant surgeon and a good team player. **Cost:** a complex repair, requiring up to three stents, may cost from £20,000. **Waiting list:** for aneurysm repair on the NHS, 1-2 weeks. Immediate referral for private patients.



THE SPINE SURGEON JONATHAN LUCAS

Who is he? Aged 42, he is married to Susan, a marketing manager. Lives in Lambeth. Specialises in spinal tumours and spinal sepsis. **Position:** consultant orthopaedic spinal surgeon and lead clinician for spinal services at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and the London Bridge Hospital. Does private and NHS work. **What's so special?** Developed paediatric spinal deformity service serving the South East of England at the Evelina Children's Hospital at St Thomas'. Said to be the best guy for helping to improve the quality of life for patients who have often been told there is nothing more to be done. **Cost:** discectomy — removal of a fragment of herniated disc — costs £5,000 privately. **Waiting list:** on the NHS, 13 weeks for locals but up to nine months for outside referrals. Within weeks for private patients.



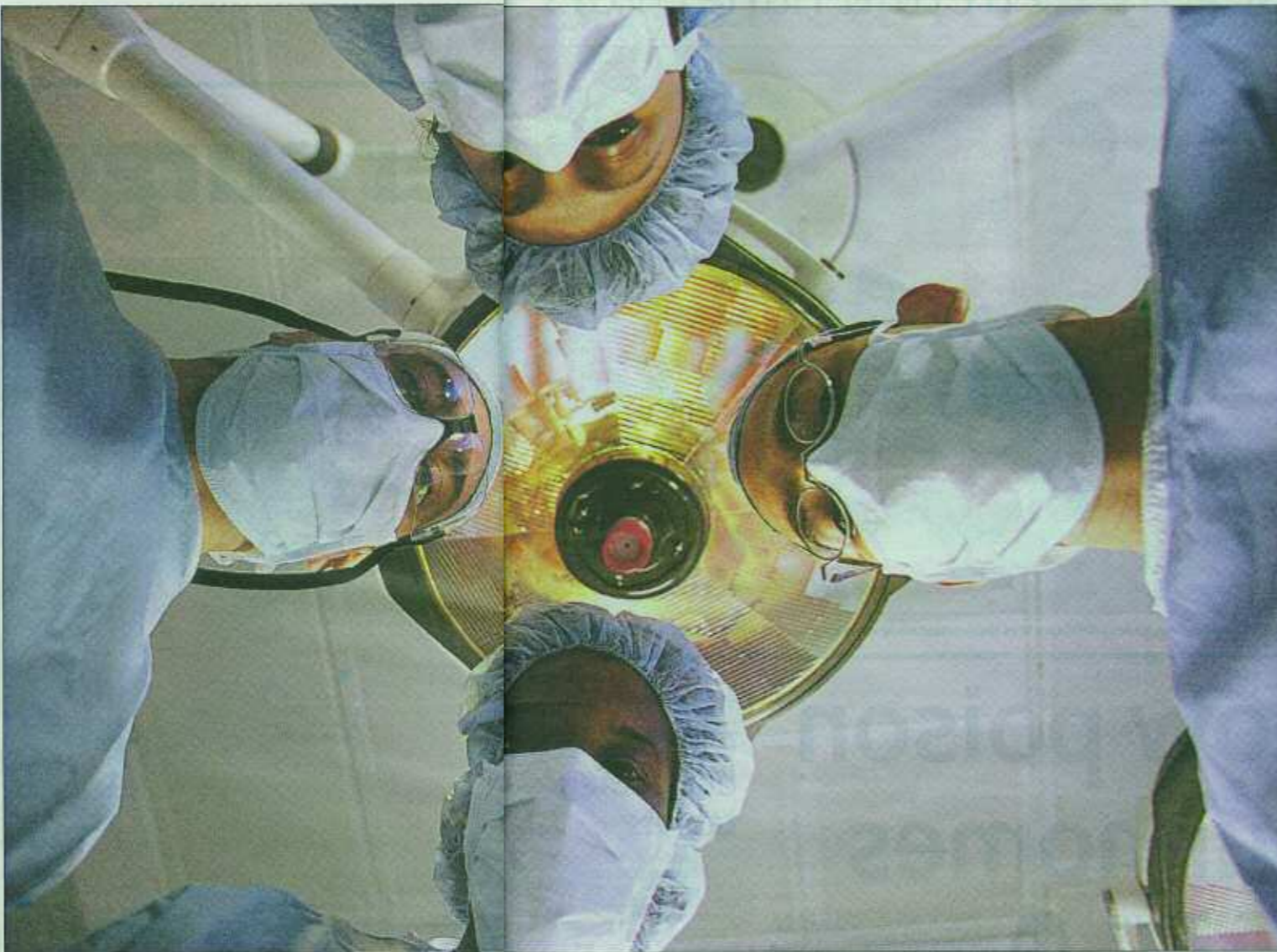
THE KEYHOLE SURGEON MIKE BAILEY

Who is he? Aged 63, Professor Bailey divides his time between Surrey and Westminster. His wife, Carol Ann, a physiotherapist, was deputy Lord Mayor of Westminster. They have three grown-up children. **Position:** professor of surgery and director of the minimal access therapy unit at the University of Surrey in Guildford. Also works at the Guildford Nuffield Hospital, the Mount Alvernia Hospital in Guildford and the Princess Grace Hospital in London. Both NHS and private patients. **What's so special?** He pioneered keyhole surgery in the UK and has helped to make it a gold standard for many procedures. Tutor in minimal access surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons. A debonair surgeon of the old school and a real pioneer, he has an international reputation for excellence. **Cost:** keyhole repair of groin hernias, about £2,000. **Waiting list:** up to three months for NHS patients. Immediate referrals for private patients.



THE ORTHO SURGEON NICOLA MAFFULLI

Who is he? Aged 47, he lives with his partner Gayle Walley, a research nurse, and their newborn son in Staffordshire. **Position:** consultant orthopaedic surgeon, professor of trauma and orthopaedic surgery at the University Hospital of North Staffordshire and the London Independent Hospital. Both NHS and private work. **What's so special?** Has operated on countless sports stars for ruptured tendons, including Leeds footballer Matthew Upson. Developed his own keyhole method to repair major sports injuries. Maffulli is a star whose prowess matches his confident demeanour and he is now the first port of call for sports stars with potentially career-ending injuries. **Cost:** Achilles tendon repair, £5,000.



The London surgeons who are a cut above

Waiting list: for NHS patients, 17 weeks. Private patients, no waiting.



THE EYE SURGEON PENG TEE KHAW

Who is he? Aged 49, he lives in London with his wife, Peggy, and their two young children. Enjoys photography and making short documentary films. A specialist in glaucoma. **Position:** professor of glaucoma and ocular health and consultant ophthalmic surgeon at UCL Institute of Ophthalmology and Moorfields Eye Hospital. An NHS specialist. **What's so special?** Designed a new safer form of surgery to treat

glaucoma, which has been adopted worldwide. A dedicated surgeon who has helped to reduce side-effects for patients with a debilitating condition. **Cost:** not applicable. **Waiting list:** three weeks.



THE BREAST CANCER SURGEON IAN FENTIMAN

Who is he? Aged 61, he divides his time between a basement flat in north London and a cottage in rural Dorset which he shares with his second wife and two Harlequin cats. He enjoys walking, gardening and entertaining friends. **Position:** professor of surgical

oncology, based at Guy's & St Thomas' Foundation Trust and Guy's Nuffield House. Does NHS and private work. **What's so special?** Pioneered the use of breast conserving therapy, improving the treatment of cancer in older people and leading a European trial to avoid mastectomy for cancerous breast tumours which have not spread. He was the first to show that tamoxifen was an effective treatment for severe cyclical breast pain. Highly regarded for his research, he was honoured by Cancer Care in 2002 for advancing treatment of early breast cancer. **Waiting list:** 10 working days for referral on NHS. Private, depends on availability. **Cost:** breast lump removal from £1,150 to £2,250.



THE HEART SURGEON ROBERTO CASULA

Who is he? Aged 41, he was born in Italy but trained in the UK. He lives in Little Venice in London with his partner. When he isn't operating, he enjoys playing tennis, or windsurfing in Sardinia. **Position:** consultant cardiothoracic surgeon at St Mary's Paddington and the Wellington Hospital, London. Both private and NHS. **What's so special?** Lead clinician at St Mary's and responsible for the robotic and minimal invasive cardiac surgical programmes since its creation in 2002, for which he has developed one of the largest clinical experiences worldwide. At

the forefront of surgical innovations and performed the first robotic-enhanced cardiac operations in the UK, such as a totally endoscopic coronary bypass on the beating heart without opening the patient's chest, keyhole correction of an irregular heart beat and robotic heart valve repairs. **Cost:** coronary bypass, £15,000. **Waiting list:** two months for NHS. Private within two weeks.



THE PLASTIC SURGEON DALIA NIELD

Who is she? Aged 58, married with two children. Her interests include music — she plays the piano —

opera, ancient history and gardening. **Position:** consultant plastic surgeon at The London Clinic, and an honorary consultant to St Luke's Hospital for the Clergy. Has been a consultant at both St Bartholomew's Hospital and the Homerton Hospital. Her main interests are skin cancer, aesthetic (cosmetic) breast surgery, breast reconstruction after mastectomy, liposuction/liposculpture, trunk reconstruction, pressure sores and facial aesthetic (cosmetic) surgery. She also works with lasers. Now exclusively private. **What's so special?** At the London Clinic Nield is chair of the plastic surgery unit, chair of the medical records committee and a member of the medical advisory committee — and the only female listed as one of the top three breast disease experts in the country thanks to her immense experience in breast reconstruction. **Cost:** liposuction £2,000-£5,100. **Waiting list:** none — private appointments only.



THE UROLOGY SURGEON CHRIS EDEN

Who is he? Aged 44, he lives in Odham in Hampshire with his partner. He's a scuba diver who is also learning to fly — and plays the saxophone. **Position:** consultant urologist based at the Royal Surrey County Hospital and the North Hampshire Hospitals NHS Trust. Also has a practice in Harley Street. Both NHS and private patients. **What's so special?** Has published 22 papers on laparoscopic urology. The UK's most experienced surgeon

in performing total prostate removal, having performed the first such procedure in the UK in 2000. A delicate operator and pioneer in his field. **Cost:** £9,500 for laparoscopic radical prostatectomy. **Waiting list:** four weeks, both NHS and private.



THE CANCER SURGEON'S RIGHT-HAND MAN ANDY ADAM

Who is he? Aged 55, he was born in Cyprus and trained at the Middlesex Hospital medical school. Lives in London with his wife, Jane, a diagnostic radiologist, and two daughters aged 21 and 17. Enjoys reading history. **Position:** professor of interventional radiology at Guy's, King's and St Thomas' medical school. Has NHS and private patients. **What's so special?** A brilliant and modest man who is internationally recognised, his main contribution has been to the development of tumour-targeting technology, using ultra-sound guidance to thread tiny catheters directly to cancer sites to deliver pinpoint radiation treatment, minimising the risk to a patient's health. Also known for his superb design work on stents. Chairman of the board of the European Congress of Radiology and incoming president of the European Society of Radiology. **Cost:** tumour ablation — the pinpoint destruction of cancerous cells — from £2,000. **Waiting list:** in most cases, two to three weeks for NHS patients. No difference for private patients.

HOW TO SEE THE TOP SURGEON YOU WANT

AS a private patient, you can request to be seen by any surgeon. Tell your GP who you want to be treated by and they will refer you to your chosen specialist, as long as it is clinically appropriate. For NHS operations, it is not as simple. Patient choice is usually limited to a selection of about five hospitals, but not specialists, in the majority of cases, your GP will try to take your views into account, bearing in mind availability and clinical need. For elective surgery, you will also have to go on a waiting list. But if the surgeon has a private practice you can pay to bypass the queues. You should always get a GP referral, whether you are a private or NHS patient.

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