

Received	13 APR 2007
File	
Distributed by	W
Action by	
Action date	
Copy	

# Working hard hints at failing marriage

David Smith

IF A woman suddenly starts working longer hours, it could be a telltale sign that her marriage is on the rocks, according to a study by economists.

Women whose marriages are collapsing will clock up an average of 283 hours a year – or six hours per working week – more than those who are in stable, happy relationships.

While one explanation could be that they prefer to spend time with their workmates rather than with an estranged husband, the research suggests the motivation is mainly financial.

Women facing divorce not only want to boost their income ahead of the break-up but also want to ensure they are employable once they are reliant on their own earning power. By working longer, perhaps moving from part-time to full-time work, they build up skills and are less marginalised in the job market.

Men respond differently. Faced with a marriage break-up they do not throw themselves into work. If anything, they cut down slightly on their hours.

The research paper, *The Effect of Divorce Risk on the Labour Supply of Married Couples*, will be presented this week by Kerry Papps, a Cornell University economist, at the Royal Economic Society annual conference at Warwick University.

The research findings were derived by comparing women's working hours with their marital status. If a woman was married one year but divorced a year or

two later, it was assumed that she would have seen the break-up coming.

That was then compared with her working hours to produce a significant statistical match. Marriage experts say the findings make sense for a variety of reasons. "If someone is unhappy they may throw themselves into work, and the socialising that goes with it, as a way of distracting them from being unhappy," said Denise Knowles, a counsellor with Relate, the UK's largest provider of relationship counselling and sex therapy.

"I don't think this always happens at a conscious level. Things may be unpleasant or unhappy at home so they work harder because there is a sense of stability at work. They may not feel valued at home but they do at work."

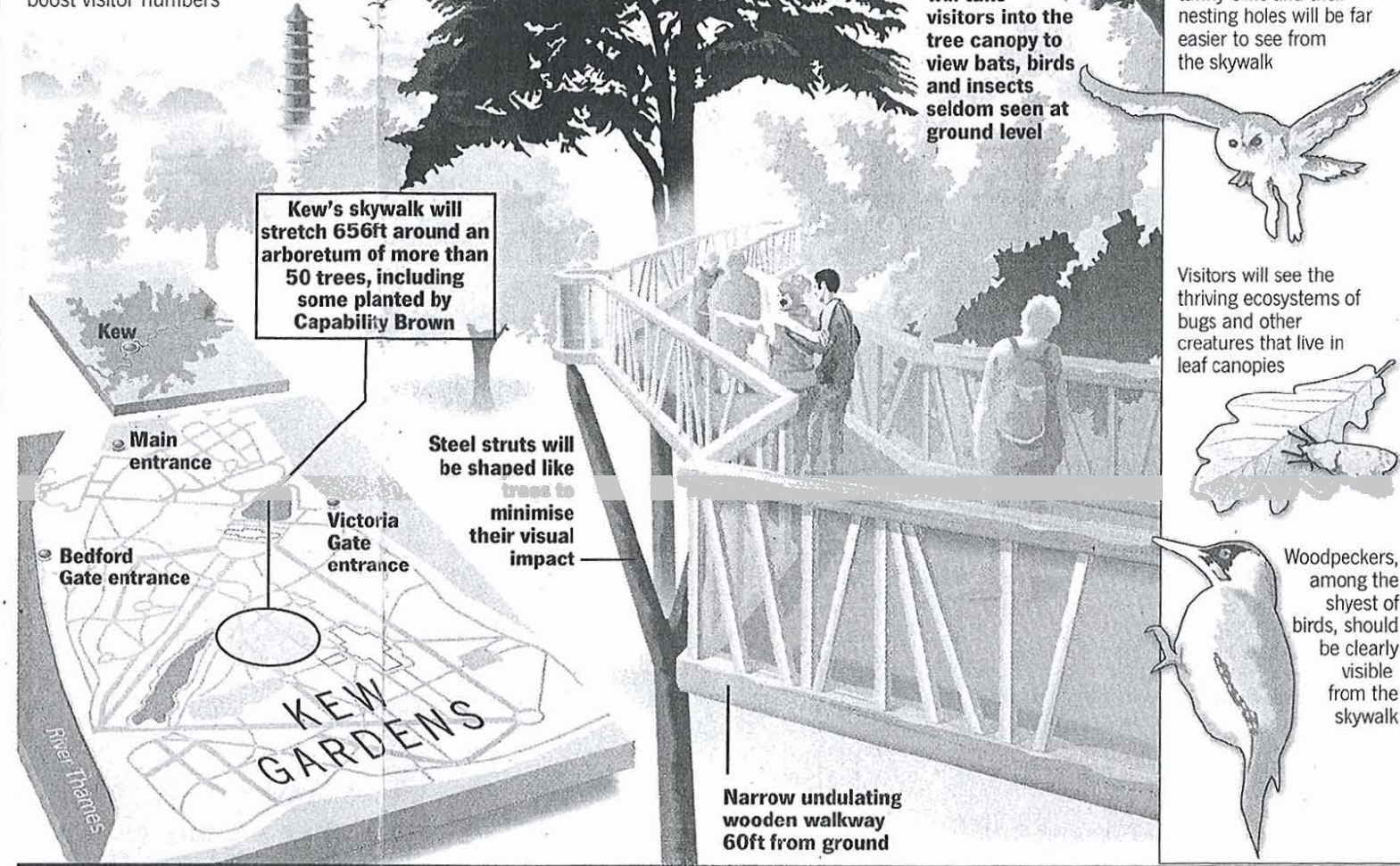
Papps's paper also includes so-called "hazard" rates for divorce – the time after marriage when the risk of break-up is greatest. For both men and women in their first marriages the risk of break-up peaks after four to five years. Women who remarry are much less likely to get divorced.

Divorce rates in Britain have fallen in recent years. In 2005 there were 155,052 divorces, a drop of 7% from the 167,138 recorded in 2004. The peak year was 1993, when more than 180,000 were recorded.

The sharp increase in the number of divorces from the 1960s to the 1990s coincided with a big rise in women working. Between the early 1970s and the mid-1990s the number of women in work rose from 9m to 12m. It is now more than 13m.

## Walkway in the sky

How the Royal Botanic Gardens is using designs taken from theme parks to boost visitor numbers



Kew's skywalk will stretch 656ft around an arboretum of more than 50 trees, including some planted by Capability Brown

Steel struts will be shaped like trees to minimise their visual impact

The skywalk will take visitors into the tree canopy to view bats, birds and insects seldom seen at ground level

Kew's population of tawny owls and their nesting holes will be far easier to see from the skywalk

Visitors will see the thriving ecosystems of bugs and other creatures that live in leaf canopies

Woodpeckers, among the shyest of birds, should be clearly visible from the skywalk

Narrow undulating wooden walkway 60ft from ground

## Kew branches out with £3m treetop walk

Robert Booth

THE architects of the London Eye are to build a spiral walkway to take visitors 60ft aloft into the tree canopy of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew.

The 656ft walkway, costing £3m, will snake through the treetops of chestnuts planted by Lancelot "Capability" Brown, the landscape gardener, in the 18th century.

The trustees at Kew, which has the world's largest living plant collection, have decided to adopt some of the techniques used by the Eden Project in Cornwall, which combines a theme park experience in giant plastic geodesic domes with botanical lessons.

"We want people to walk away with

the awesome feeling of going on a rollercoaster," said Jill Kowal, the assistant project manager for the walkway. "But this isn't about making Kew into a theme park. It is our attempt to bring people closer to the wonders of the trees in a very subtle way. It will be very tranquil and contemplative."

The English oaks, chestnuts and walnuts harbour colonies of insects, woodpeckers, tawny owls and bats. Visitors will be taught how trees play host to hundreds of species of animals and insects and how their leaves are vital in the fight against climate change.

Kew brought in Marks Barfield Architects, designers of the London Eye, after the success of a temporary wooden platform built in 2003.

The new Kew walkway will be a permanent structure of rusted corten steel, the material used for the Angel of the North statue near Gateshead. The 5ft-wide walkway will be held up on slender struts intended to resemble prehistoric trees. Handrails will be fashioned from sweet chestnuts and red oaks that fell in the February storms.

Tree walkers will pass through an underground exhibit on tree roots before climbing the winding 90 stairs, or taking a lift to the platform.

The "rhizotron" – the name is derived from the Greek for roots and device or instrument – will use animatronic robots to show the development of roots. It will seek to explain how roots and soil work as "the engine room" of the forest and

will reveal the diversity of "creepy crawlies" and fungi that thrive underground and on the forest floor.

Once in the canopy of the 50 mature trees that make up the arboretum, visitors may spot tawny owls and woodpeckers, as well as six species of bat, feeding on insects at dusk.

"We want to tell the story of a tree's role in diversity in this planet and as a key contributor in capturing carbon to help in the fight against climate change," said Kowal.

Construction is due to start in June, with the walkway expected to open in May 2008. It is the latest phase of a multi-million-pound spending spree by Kew, during which it has hired some of Britain's best architects to build new facilities to boost its visitor numbers from the current level of 1.9m a year.

## UKIP man used public cash to gag accuser

Daniel Foggo

A BRITISH MEP at the centre of a fraud investigation has used taxpayers' money to prepare a libel action against a critic accusing him of wrongdoing.

Tom Wise, of the UK Independence party, used £8,000 of public money to take legal action to silence someone accusing him of misusing public funds.

He used his MEP assistants' and secretarial allowance to pay his solicitor to prepare a libel case over claims by Greg Lance-Watkins that he was abusing the same fund by getting money under false pretences. Lance-Watkins, who runs a Euro-sceptic website, had accused Wise of having acted inappropriately by claiming £36,000 a year from his assistants' allowance to pay for his researcher, when he had arranged to pay her a fraction of that sum.

European Union rules state that in order to avoid fraud, payment for assistants must be made direct to them or to a third party. The MEP is not allowed to handle the money.

Wise had ensured the was paid into his own bank rather than that of the researcher by placing his account number next to her name on the form submitted to the EU payments office. Once the money was put in his account he began to spend it. Olaf, the European commission's anti-fraud body, is investigating the case, which was exposed by *The Sunday Times* in February. Wise has repaid £25,530 to the EU.

Following Lance-Watkins' comments about the case on the internet, Wise consulted Stephen Welfare, a solicitor, who prepared a libel writ. Although no action was taken, Welfare's bill of about £8,000 was paid for through the same account Wise had been accused of misusing.

Welfare last week confirmed he had acted for Wise and had been paid by the EU.