

HICKEY

ARRESTED five times while fronting climate change protests in Washington DC, Hollywood star Jane Fonda, 82, says of her recent spells in jail: "You want a lot of layers of clothes, so you can use them for pillows and things."



It remains to be seen whether glamorous Jane, pictured, will stick to her much-publicised environmental vow to never buy a new item of clothing again...

BRITT Eklund's appearance on ITV's Good Morning Britain began awkwardly when she pointed out the large studio picture, supposedly of her younger self, was in fact of a Swedish lookalike.

Britt remarked of the unnamed actress: "She once went to a Bond premiere and they said, 'It's Britt Eklund!' Of course it wasn't, because I wasn't there."

The 77-year-old added: "It doesn't bother me. Everybody knows what I look like."

MEANWHILE, Good Morning Britain co-host Piers Morgan talks down the programme's chances of success at the National Television Awards later this month.

"Humbled, as always, to be nominated for another National Television Award... despite the certain knowledge that [rival ITV show] This Morning will win it again," he tweets.

"Because, like Ant and Dec, that is apparently television law. So don't bother voting for Good Morning Britain - it's pointless."

UP for another National Television Award for best TV judge - he's won the last two - David Walliams is asked whether it's time fellow Britain's Got Talent regular Simon Cowell triumphed instead? Walliams replies: "No."

FANS are still waiting to hear word from Eric Idle, pictured, after last week's news that his longtime comedy collaborator Neil Innes had died aged 75.



While fellow Monty Python stars John Cleese and Sir Michael Palin have both paid tribute, the situation seems trickier for Eric, 76, courtesy of a falling out with Innes during the final years of his life.

The feud was over royalties for Idle's hit musical Spamalot.

PLAYING current pontiff Pope Francis in film The Two Popes, Jonathan Pryce admits initial reservations about accepting the religious role were caused by memories of a fellow British actor.

Recalling Robert Powell's famous portrayal in 1977 epic Jesus of Nazareth, Pryce says: "It changed his life completely. Of course, he was much younger. I think he suffered from being seen as Christ for a long time."

The 72-year-old jocularly adds: "But I've not got that long left to be seen as the Pope, so I'm OK!"

AMID speculation Harry and Meghan could start a new life in Canada, I'm reminded of the time Prince Philip inflicted his trademark diplomacy on Canadian hosts.

He remarked: "We don't come here for our health. We can think of other ways of enjoying ourselves."



SPOTTED: Russian suspects in the Skripal case

Meet the gifted individuals - known as 'super recognisers' - who can never forget a face



By JS Monroe

IT'S A COLD winter's evening in south-east London and Emma Mitchell is scanning people as they file into The O2 Arena for a concert. Her blue-grey eyes move quickly from one face to the next, processing each one as she mingles with the crowd.

The previous week, the 39-year-old was sent mugshots of 90 criminals who are known to steal mobile phones at large events. Her job tonight is to identify as many of them as possible as they approach the pinch points where bags are searched and tickets checked.

Then she spots one: "Herman". She gave him the nickname earlier, when she was memorising the mugshots, because "he's got a big forehead, like Herman Munster".

Others nicknames she uses include "Bruce" (pointed jaw) and "Miss Piggy" (funny nose). Herman has grown a beard since he was last photographed, and he's wearing a beanie hat pulled down low over his prominent forehead.

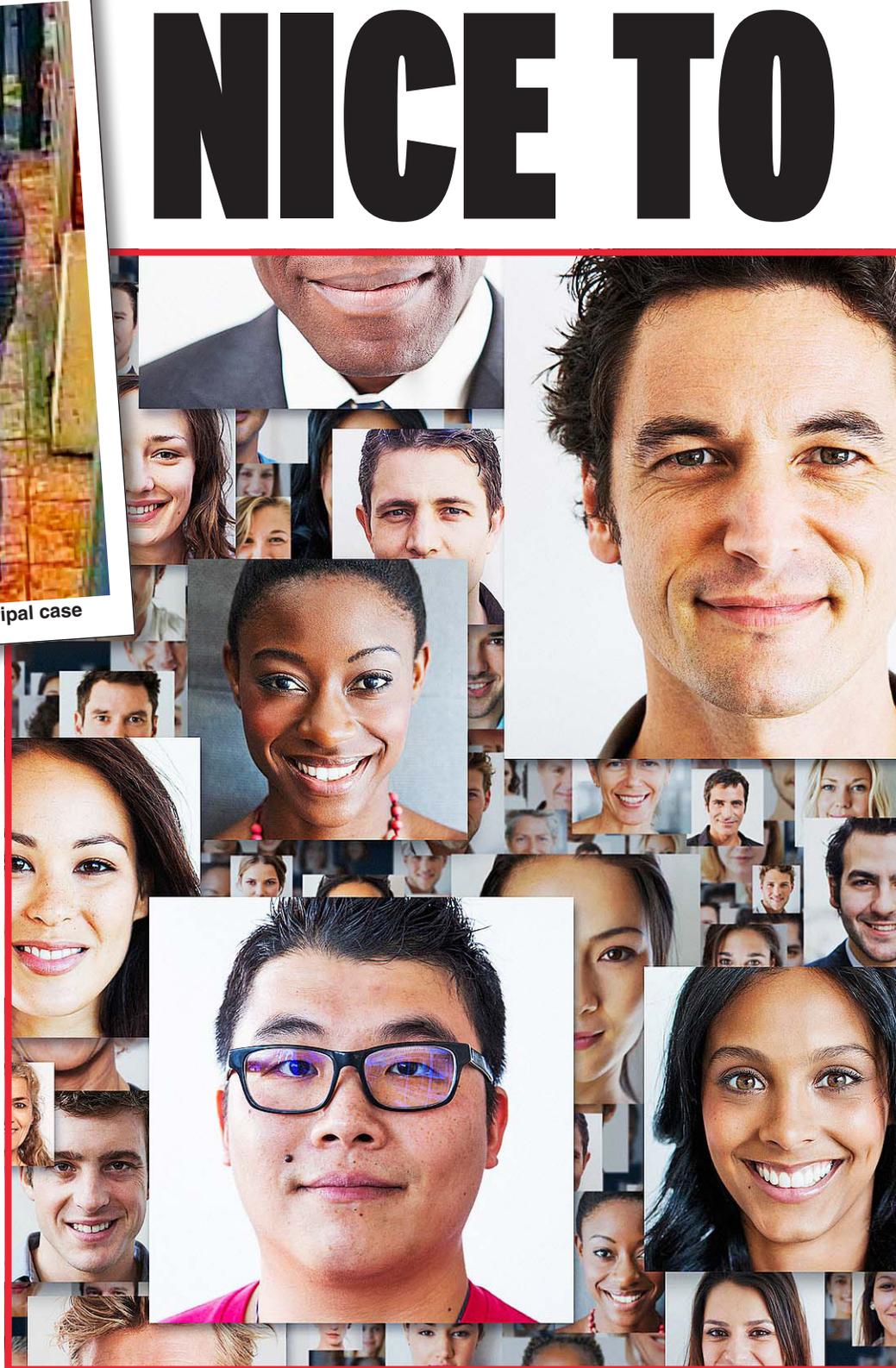
But she knows at once it's a "spot".

"You just have this gut feeling when you identify someone," Emma says. "And it's usually a holistic thing. Although I've only seen the front of someone's face in a photo, I build up a 3D picture of them in my mind and can often identify a target from just the side or even the back of their head."

"And it's such a relief when you do make a spot. Your brain's been working overtime, taking screenshots, scanning faces like a robot, storing information. At the end of a shift I'm totally shattered."

"But I have this skill and I really want to get out there and use it - otherwise it's just wasted."

Emma's "skill" is akin to a super power. She has a preternatural ability to remember faces and works as a "super recogniser", a term coined by a Harvard professor in 2009 to describe an estimated one per cent of the population who have Emma's extraordinary



and little-known gift. In scientific terms, it's the complete opposite of "prosopagnosia", or facial blindness, a condition in which sufferers cannot remember a face.

Super recognisers can never forget one. "It's a blessing but it can also be a curse," Emma smiles. "I might go up to someone at the school gates, smiling because I recognise them from when they once served me in the supermarket five years ago, and they just look back at me blankly. It's a bit embarrassing."

Emma, who lives in Essex, used to work for the Metropolitan Police but it was after she left the force that she became a super recogniser, freelancing for an organisation called Super Recognisers International, which covertly deploys people like her at large public events such as concerts, football matches (Charlton Athletic, Crystal Palace) and, for the first time, the 2019 Wimbledon Tennis Championships.

She discovered her ability when she started to notice extras who popped up in different films.

Her husband used to joke that she pointed out random actors rather than the main stars. Like other super recognisers, she's also creative, working as a graphic designer. And she sees days of the week and people's names in terms of colours (Friday is blue, David is red), suggesting an element of synaesthesia, a neurological trait that merges senses and can aid memory. "Super

recognisers tend to peak in our 30s and 40s," she says. "It's not meant to develop when you're young, but I can already see it in my seven-year-old daughter, who's also started to recognise random faces on TV."

Since I co-wrote a book with the former world memory champion, Dominic O'Brien, back in 1993, I've always been interested in feats of memory.

He is brilliant at memorising decks of cards and we had a lot of fun playing blackjack in casinos in France, where he used his skill to count cards and beat the bank.

In my new thriller, The Other You, my main character, Kate, 34, is a former super recogniser who is slowly recovering her powers of recognition after a near-fatal car crash. To add to the mystery, her wealthy "techpreneur" boyfriend is himself inter-

NOW SEE IF YOU ALSO HAVE A SPECIAL TALENT

If you think you might be a super recogniser, you can take a simple test at superrecognisers.com. For more information about super recognisers, visit associationofsuperrecognisers.org, a regulatory body set up to represent those who possess super recogniser skills or superrecognisersinternational.com, specialists in CCTV investigation.

SEE YOU AGAIN...



FACE RECOGNITION PIONEER: Former Met Police detective Mike Neville, who set up Super Recognisers International

UK airports as well as known GRU agents, and matched them to suspects identified from 5,000 hours of CCTV footage shot in Salisbury.

It remains a mystery how Emma, below left, and other super recognisers remember faces, but their gift is the subject of ongoing scientific studies.

As part of my own research, I went to visit Dr Josh Davis, reader in applied psychology at the University of Greenwich. He works with the Met and other police forces around the world, helping to identify super recognisers using a battery of face recognition tests.

One involves asking people if they can identify celebrities from photos of them taken when they were very young.

"Super recognisers display significantly higher levels of brain activity, far more quickly than controls, when asked to recognise faces first encountered a few minutes previously," says Dr Davis. "This initial spike of activity, within about 100 milliseconds, may link to efficient brain processing and could be the neural driver of their enhanced abilities."

In the modern digital world of the selfie and deepfake apps such as Zao, it's very easy to find your Doppelgänger online, as so many millions of human faces have been uploaded to the internet.

It's also much easier for your Doppelgänger to find you. To meet them once is said to be bad luck. To meet them twice is a portent of death...

● *The Other You* by J.S. Monroe (Head of Zeus, £18.99) is published today. For free UK delivery, call Express Bookshop on 01872 562310, or visit expressbookshop.co.uk

ested in facial recognition software, which is being used more and more widely in the UK and around the world, particularly China, with varying degrees of success.

In fact, I was quite shocked by what I discovered during my research for the book.

WHEN South Wales Police deployed facial recognition software at the UEFA Champions League Final in Cardiff in 2017, for example, more than 2,000 people were wrongly identified as criminals – a failure rate of 92 per cent. The software's algorithms have since improved and achieve much higher results at airports, where passengers' faces can be scanned cleanly in well-lit conditions. But success remains patchy in the field, particularly if the lighting is poor and the targets are on the move or disguised.

"Super recognisers have proved to be far superior to computer recognition systems," says Mike Neville, a former Metropolitan Police detective who set up Super Recognisers International.

"They've become an invaluable asset to law enforcement agencies and can help them catch more criminals."

Neville is an unashamed champion of the super recognisers' cause, arguing that their results put them on a par with other forensic

tools such as DNA testing and fingerprinting.

He cites the London riots in 2011, when 200,000 hours of CCTV footage was analysed by facial recognition software and only one criminal was identified. The same footage was passed over to the Met's new super recogniser unit, set up by Neville, and his team spotted 609 criminals. One officer alone, PC Gary Collins, identified 180.

Neville retired from the Met in 2017 to set up SRI, but the Met's super recogniser unit is still going strong today and operates out of a forensics laboratory in Lambeth.

Successes include helping to catch the killer of schoolgirl Alice Gross in west London in 2014 and working with police in the German city of Cologne a year later to hunt down hundreds of New Year's Eve sex attackers.

More recently, the unit identified the two Russian GRU officers who are accused of poisoning Sergei Skripal and his daughter Julia with the nerve agent novichok.

Super recognisers memorised airline passenger faces from

