

Twickenham & Richmond TRIBUNE



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- World InfoZone
- Deep Patel
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- St Mary's University
- Brentford FC
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- HM Treasury
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- St John Ambulance
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- LBRuT

Editors

Berkley Driscoll
Teresa Read



14th April 2023



TickerTape - News in Brief

Strawberry Hill Level Crossing Closure

Track renewal on the Down Shepperton Spur will take place 22:00 Monday 1st May to 06:00 Friday 30th June. Most work will be overnight, except the following.

Strawberry Hill Level Crossing will be closed from **23:00 Saturday 6th May to 05:00 Tuesday 9th May**. There will be no passenger trains during this time, so check rail enquiries for details.

Transport disruption

District line, Sunday 16 April

No service between Turnham Green and Richmond
A rail replacement bus service will run.

London Overground, Sunday 16 April

No service between Willesden Junction and Richmond
A rail replacement bus service will run.

Hampton Road planning permission refused

Planning permission to build three properties behind Hampton Road (between First Cross Road and Second Cross Road) has been refused.

There had been concerns of overdevelopment, lack of biodiversity and damage to trees.

View the planning application at [22/2417/FUL](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/applications/22/2417/FUL)



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COVID 19 IN THE NEWS

Teresa Read

Channel News Asia: SINGAPORE: India is experiencing a surge in COVID-19 cases, believed to be driven by the Omicron subvariant XBB.1.16 known as Arcturus. "The Arcturus subvariant has been detected in more than 20 other countries, including Singapore, India, Nepal, the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom."

The Straits Times: WHO monitoring new Covid-19 sub-variant Arcturus, which is driving surge of cases in India "The symptoms of XBB.1.16 are reportedly the same as previous variants ... However, many of those infected are also reporting conjunctivitis and sticky eyes. A study by the University of Tokyo showed that Arcturus is nearly 1.2 times as transmissible as XBB.1.5 the ... most infectious sub-variant until now."

BBC: XBB.1.16: India hospitals on alert as Covid-19 cases rise.

Daily Express: 'Arcturus' Covid variant to see face masks to return to India.

University of Stirling: Health researchers launch 'first' Long Covid resource for patients and health care professionals.

Imperial College London: COVID-19 spread in households linked to virus on hands and surfaces. "Our real-life study in London households provides the first empirical evidence to show that the presence of SARS-CoV-2 on people's hands and surfaces contributes significantly to spread of COVID-19. Since we didn't systematically sample household air, we cannot rule out airborne transmission occurring in parallel."

World Health Organization

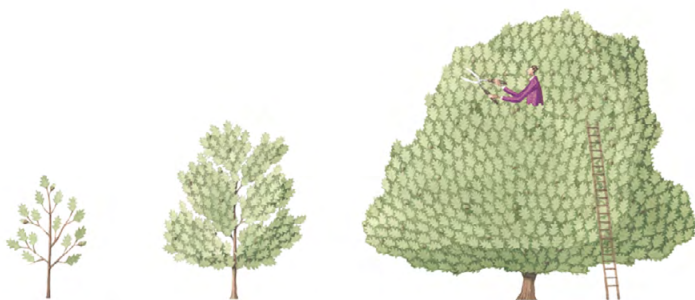
COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiological Update

At the country level, the highest numbers of new 28-day cases were reported from the United States of America (455,939), the Russian Federation (291,895), the Republic of Korea (275,126), Brazil (233,734), and France (213,308).

The highest numbers of new 28-day deaths were reported from the United States of America (5,571), the United Kingdom (2,708), Brazil (1,246), the Russian Federation (984), and Germany (903).

The European Region reported over one million new cases. Seventeen of the 61 countries for which data are available reported increases in new cases of 20% or greater, with the highest proportional increases observed in Ukraine (72,948), Azerbaijan (1,395) and Monaco (52).

The number of new 28-day deaths in the Region decreased by 12% as compared to the previous 28-day period, with 9,844 new deaths reported. The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from the United Kingdom (2,708), the Russian Federation (984), and Germany (903).



The Tree Agency

darryl parkin

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info@thetreeagency.co.uk
www.thetreeagency.co.uk



The Tree Agency

EASTER CELEBRATIONS

Pictures and report by Doug Goodman

The Revd. Jeff Hopkin Williams conducted the Easter service at St. Mary's Church Twickenham, which was attended by over 200 local parishioners and visitors. A team of flower arrangers decorated the church with the theme of white and yellow using daffodils, lilies and tulips.



Progress update: New Elleray Hall Community Centre

Works on the construction of the new Elleray Hall community centre in Teddington have unfortunately been delayed, as the contractor appointed is no longer able to deliver the project.

Cllr Nancy Baldwin,
Spokesperson for
Communities, Equalities
and the Voluntary Sector,
said:

“We feel residents’
frustration at this
unexpected delay – we’re
as excited as anyone
about work getting
underway and to see the
new community centre
starting to take shape.
We remain 100 per cent
committed to delivering
this vital new space for
Teddington residents
and are beginning the
process right away to find a new contractor. I want to thank residents for their patience and understanding.”



Richmond Council will now be running a procurement process to find a new contractor, with the expectation that construction work will start later this year and that the community centre will be completed by the end of 2024. Once the new community centre is complete, demolition of the existing Elleray Hall building will commence and the Council’s housing partner for the scheme, RHP, will start work to deliver the new affordable housing element on the existing Elleray Hall site.

The Council is proceeding with the erection of hoarding, around the North Lane East Car Park site, where the new centre will be built. This is to allow for preparatory works, including archaeological investigations, to go ahead over the summer. The car park has been closed to the public since January this year.

If residents have any questions about the scheme and progress of works, please contact Ellerayreprovision@richmond.gov.uk.

More information about the Elleray Hall reprovion is available on Richmond Council’s [Elleray Hall page](#).

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Local Community Comes Together for Turkiye Earthquake Relief Fund

The earthquake in Turkiye and Syria on the 6th of February left a devastating impact on the affected communities, with many losing their homes and loved ones. The news deeply affected the local community, prompting a group of over 60 women and their families to come together and organize a successful fundraising event in support of the Disasters Emergency Committee Turkiye-Syria Earthquake Appeal. The children made 1000 origami cranes in the hope that their wishes for the earthquake survivors would be granted. The event, which was held on 26/02/2023 at St Stephen's Church of England Primary School, raised over £10000 in support of the appeal.



The fundraising efforts of the group did not go unnoticed, catching the attention of The Royal Family, and resulting in an invitation for the group to meet with The Prince and The Princess of Wales.

In light of the success of the previous event, the community is now planning another fundraising event at Diamond Jubilee Gardens in Twickenham on April 23rd, which coincides with Children's Day in Turkiye. The event is set to feature a variety of fun activities for kids, including art and craft activities, face painting, tattoos, a Turkish folk dance show, backgammon tournaments and a selection of delicious Turkish food. Additionally, there will be gently used books and toy sales.

The aim of the event is to raise funds in support of the Turkey Mozaik Foundation (Registered Charity Number: 1174968) Turkiye Earthquake Relief Fund.

The local community's effort to support those affected by the earthquake is a testament to the compassion and generosity of the community. The community hopes that the event will be a huge success and make a meaningful impact on the lives of those affected by the earthquake.



Twickenham Conservation Area Appraisals drop-in to be held

Join our Urban Design and Conservation teams to find out more about the Conservation Areas for Twickenham Riverside, Twickenham Green and Queen's Road.

The Urban Design and Conservation teams are in the process of updating the Conservation Area Appraisals. Conservation areas are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

The drop-in event is taking place on Wednesday 19 April 2023 from 6 to 8pm at York House in Twickenham.

The event will:

- Outline the impact of conservation areas for your homes
Explain the changes we are proposing to the existing Conservation Area Appraisals for Mays Road
Explain how we are looking to protect and enhance the architectural quality of the area

Urban Design and Conservation officers will be on hand to answer any questions. Refreshments will be provided.

[Reserve a spot](#)

If you have any questions or would like any further information, email urban.design@richmond.gov.uk.

You can find out more about Conservation Area Appraisals by reading the [FAQ's on our website](#).

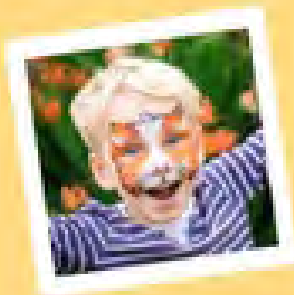


CHILDREN'S DAY

SUNDAY 23rd APRIL
12.00 - 17.00pm

No ticket required

DIAMOND JUBILEE GARDENS
Twickenham Riverside, TW1 3DX



**Join us on a day of fun-filled activities, games,
a Turkish folk dance show,
a preloved books and toys sale and
delicious Turkish food.**



This event will support the TURKEY MOZAIK FOUNDATION's Turkey Earthquake Relief.

Teddington in Flower event returns for 2023

Teddington Society will be holding its popular Teddington in Flower event on Sunday 23 April 2023.

12 lovely and unique private gardens across Teddington will be open to the public, from walled gardens to wildlife gardens and cottage gardens to artist gardens. The gardens open between 2 and 6pm.

The afternoon will include plants for sale, floral art displays, performances of handbell ringing and an opportunity to find out more about local projects.

Event details:

- **Date:** Sunday 23 April 2023
- **Time:** From 2 to 6pm
- **Location:** Landmark Arts Centre, Ferry Road, Teddington
- **Price:**
 - Early Bird tickets - £10
 - On the day - £12
 - Accompanied under 16s free

Funds raised will support local charities including the Landmark Art Centre, Ferry Road, for continued development of the woodland gardens, and Kingston Samaritans.

Visit [The Teddington Society website](#) for more information and to buy early bird tickets.



Funding For Palewell Beverley Brook Restoration

In partnership with LBRuT, we were successful in an application for funding from the Rewild London Fund to improve the habitat along 1.25km of the Beverley Brook.

The project area runs from where the Brook leaves Richmond Park and then goes under the Upper Richmond Road [here](#). Working with landowners and all user groups, and led by Barnes Conservation (part of Barnes Common Limited), the project aims to create a diverse mix of flow types, depths, velocities, widths, and cover in this stretch of the brook. This will be achieved by:



- Redefining and creating a more natural meandering channel with brush berms. The densely packed brush slows the flow of water through the berm, causing any suspended sediment to be deposited within the berm, aiding in the scour of the riverbed, exposing previously covered gravels. With time, the berms will fill with silt and create a fantastic substrate for riparian plants to grow.
- Installing brushwood faggots at certain areas to reduce the level of bank erosion – many of these will be made from hazel coppiced on Barnes Common.
- Carrying out tree work along the length of the project area to improve light conditions to the banks. This will encourage the understory to develop a diverse range of native plant species and structural heterogeneity, supporting a wider array of wildlife. Invasive species will be removed along with numerous ‘garden escapes’ that are dominating certain areas.
- Installing Large Woody Debris (LWD) at relevant points to create varying flow speeds, scour and to expose areas of gravels currently covered by silt, which will provide important spawning areas and habitats for fish & invertebrates.
- Improve the habitat and food provision for bats that forage and roost along the Beverley Brook. Bat boxes will be installed under three concrete pedestrian bridges. Cavities and crevices will be carved directly into the trees with a chainsaw.
- Creation and enhancement of riffles, exposing underlying gravels and creating suitable spawning habitat for fish.
- Where light levels permit, establish Reed within berms placed around the outfalls to reduce the impact of effluent from outfalls.

We will be organising numerous volunteer work party sessions to assist with this work so please keep your eyes peeled for dates.

This project is supported by the Mayor of London, in partnership with the London Wildlife Trust.

Barnes
Conservation

River Crane Walk celebrating 20 years of FORCE

Friends of the River Crane Environment

We still have a few places left on our two guided walks through the park next week, celebrating the contributions made by supporters and volunteers and visiting the carved benches along the way. The walks are free, but places can be booked via our website.

This year we are happy to be celebrating the 20th Anniversary of FORCE! To mark the occasion we are holding three walks to visit the paths and enjoy the green locale. Over these 20 years 20 benches have been installed by FORCE along the river banks and parks so we shall take this opportunity to visit each bench and chat about the area. This is also to celebrate all the help given by members, volunteers and trustees to grow the River Crane into a place that so many people now enjoy.



This is a gentle convivial walk from the new Willow bench in Willow Way in Crane Park beside Hospital Bridge Road, taking in the orchard bench, jumping fish and Shot Tower amongst others. We shall end this loop walk near Ellerman Avenue in Twickenham.

[Booking here](#) is essential so we know how many folk to cater for. We shall meet at the Willow bench : **Willow Way** section of the park lies on the south of the river immediately upstream of Hospital Bridge Road and is accessible from Willow Way off Hospital Bridge Road. The What3words location is [open.chains.blend](#)

Do wear sturdy footwear, and in clothing suitable for the weather on that day. Due to [safeguarding needs](#) all children under 18 must be accompanied by a responsible adult. We are a very sociable group and look forward to meeting you.

*Don't miss
the deadline!*

**Apply for a Fuel Grant
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**by 28 April for help to pay
your gas and electricity bills**



**Hampton
Fund**

Hampton Court Palace Tulip Festival

Discover the UK's biggest tulip display

14 April - 01 May, 10.00-17.30



Be astonished as over 110,000 tulip bulbs erupt in colour in the UK's biggest display of planted tulips.

Celebrate the start of spring with a visit, as our tulips emerge to herald warmer days to come. Relax in 60 acres of colourful royal gardens as you immerse yourself in Henry VIII's famous grounds with friends and loved ones.



Stroll through the courtyards and admire the blooming display pouring out of our Tudor wine fountain, wander through the gardens to see the floating tulip vases, and see our rare, historic and specialist varieties inspired by Mary II's famous 17th century collection. Finish off your visit by treating yourself to a delicious hand-crafted coffee and indulgent cake from [our café](#).

With blooming periods subject to weather, our expert gardeners predict our displays will look their finest in mid-April. [Become a member](#) and return for free to see our flower beds evolve as different varieties bloom.

Tulip Talks
11.00 and 14.00 daily

Join our Palace Hosts in the Stone Hall as they talk all things tulips. From the origins of tulips and their fashionable status to their links to William III and Mary II, Tulipmania, and more. The talks last approximately 15 minutes.

Ticketing and information [HERE](#)



Take part in Transform Work Life programme

Back for a second year, Transform Work Life is a collaboration between a Careers Development Institute registered practitioner and mentor, and Richmond Libraries.

The programme will deliver a series of interactive seminars aimed at developing knowledge and understanding of your personal and professional skills, to enhance employability and to encourage potential transformation in your work and life situation.

Whether you are looking for your first job or a career change, the sessions are designed for everyone.

They may challenge the way you think about yourself and, through reflective discussion, enable you to embark on a personal journey of discovery and change of your own design.

The three sessions will take place at Richmond Old Town Hall from April until June and are free to Richmond residents.

Participants are welcome to join one or multiple sessions.

Session timetable:

- Networking and the hidden job market - Tuesday 25 April, 10am to 12pm
- CVs and cover letters - Tuesday 30 May, 10am to 12pm
- Applications and interviews - Tuesday 27 June, 10am to 12pm

Our [Transform Work Life page](#) has more information about each of the sessions.

All are welcome – we do not expect group sessions to exceed 12 participants so please sign up early to avoid disappointment.

For queries or to register your interest, email nickysmithcareers@gmail.com.



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By **West Twickenham SNT**

Date **Sunday 16th April 2023**

Time **11:00 am onwards**

Location **Kneller Gardens**

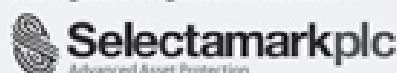
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VESUVIO - A GREAT NEW ITALIAN EXPERIENCE

I've got some great news for those of you who live fairly near the Squires Garden Centre junction in Twickenham: you're lucky enough to have a lovely new Italian restaurant on your doorstep! But the rest of us need not fret: there's a bus stop right outside, so you can relax and not worry about parking or driving home.

I'd heard from foodie friends that they really rated Vesuvio, so I thought I should head over there to check it out. It's only been open for about a year, and is run by Anisa and Beni, a lovely couple who live locally with their small daughter. It's a family business through and through - even the sous chef's a family member. Anisa certainly knows her way around Italian food; she's honed her craft at the stove of some iconic Italian restaurants, most recently as head chef in a central London branch of Carluccio's.



Vesuvio is on Hampton Road, in the small parade of shops opposite Brouge Gastropub. Anisa and Beni spent a considerable amount of time and money refurbishing, and the result is modern, sleek and stylish. It could have been noisy, as there are lots of hard surfaces, but the fabric inlay on all the chairs seems to absorb sound well, and the tables are well spaced. There is also an area in front of the restaurant for al fresco dining...when our weather allows.

While my friend and I perused the menu, Beni brought us an Aperol Spritz and a Negroni to enjoy. A tray with homemade focaccia, olives and dipping oil was brought to whet our appetites. The starters offered a range of the classic Italian options, and I chose fried calamari, served with a light mayonnaise, while my friend Satu chose burrata and prosciutto. My calamari

was piping hot, deliciously tender and sweet. Satu's starter was extremely generous and could, in itself, make a lovely light lunch dish. The Seafood Linguine tempted me as a main course - with clams, mussels, squid, prawns and a gentle hint of chilli in a deliciously fresh tomato and white wine sauce. It was served in a small, deep bowl with a large flat rim, so it stayed piping hot until I had enjoyed the last strands of linguine. It was really delicious and I'm salivating at the memory of it! Satu had homemade fresh ravioli filled with ricotta and spinach, served in a butter sauce and declared it excellent too. We shared a green salad - topped with shavings of Parmesan cheese and drizzled with a balsamic reduction (in just the right proportions, as so often the balsamic drowns the dish).



Our meal was washed down with a bottle of Ramarro Sicilian Cattarrato - the house white wine. It was delicate, with light notes of blossom and citrus, and amazingly good value at £21 a bottle (but also available by the glass from £5.95).

Pretty jolly replete, we were encouraged though, to try a dessert, so we shared a portion of panna cotta: homemade, of course, and fabulous.

The menu at Vesuvio is well priced, with starters around £7/8, pasta dishes from £11.50 and mains from £16.50. Having had a brief chat with Anisa and Beni, we spotted a 281 bus outside so thanked them and bade them farewell.

And, of course, "Arrivederci" - as we will be returning soon!

A VIRTUAL VISIT TO AMALFI

It's been quite a few years now since I've been to the Amalfi Coast, but I have fond memories of fabulous scenery, sunny days, and amazing food and wine. The air is rich with the scent of herbs and the scenery is breathtaking. I was transported back there recently, with the launch of a superb new cookbook, one that captures the very essence of this beautiful part of Southern Italy so well, you can almost smell those lemons and herbs when browsing through its pages! **Ursula Ferrigno** has taken the very best cuisine of this sun-drenched, magical coastline for **CUCINA di AMALFI**, a seductive collection of recipes, published last month by **Ryland, Peters & Small** at £20 for a lovely hardback, with great photography.



An acclaimed food writer and chef. Ursula Ferrigno trained at the Auguste Escoffier School of the Culinary Arts and has taught at leading cookery schools in both the UK and Italy, including Leith's School of Food and Wine. She has made many appearances on BBC TV and is author of more than 18 cookery books.

It really is a fabulous book, and these recipes below will surely tempt you to buy a copy in order to indulge in the full Amalfi experience!

SCALLOPS WITH LEMON, BAY LEAVES & ROSEMARY OIL - Serves 4 CAPESANTE CON LIMONE, ALLORO E OLIO DI ROSMARINO

This recipe is so simple that it hardly needs a method. It's from the Naples area, where many of the best fish and shellfish recipes are to be found. Rosemary – used here as a skewer – grows in profusion all over Italy and enhances fish dishes wonderfully.

- 2 unwaxed lemons
- 12 fat, fresh scallops, coral removed (which can be frozen and kept for stock)
- 4 tough rosemary stalks, leaves removed and retained
- 12 fresh bay leaves
- 1½ tablespoons olive oil
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C fan/200°C/400°F/gas 6.

2. Pare the zest from the lemons and cut into 12 pieces.



3. Thread 3 scallops onto each rosemary stalk, alternating with 3 pieces of lemon zest and 3 bay leaves.
4. Pound the rosemary leaves and oil together in a mortar and pestle until fine, then pour this over the scallops. Squeeze over the lemon juice and leave to marinate for 20 minutes.
5. Place the rosemary and scallop skewers in a roasting tin and season well. Bake in the preheated oven for 8 minutes until the scallops are no longer opaque and have a nutty brown coating.

SPAGHETTI WITH LEMON & CREAM

SPAGHETTI AL LIMONE - Serves 6

This is an iconic dish from the Amalfi coast, with at least a thousand different variations – in essence though, just 5 ingredients and only 15 minutes to prepare.

- 600 g spaghetti
- 300 ml double cream
- freshly squeezed juice of 1 lemon
- grated zest of 3 lemons
- 90 g unsalted butter, at room temperature
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Boil the pasta in a large pan of boiling, salted water (only salt the water when the water starts to boil) and cook until al dente. This will very much depend on personal preference, so taste as you are cooking and stop when the pasta is cooked to your liking.
2. Drain the pasta, reserving 240 ml of the cooking water. Add the cream, lemon juice, zest and butter and mix very well indeed. Add some of the reserved pasta cooking water to slacken the sauce if needed. Season to taste and enjoy straightaway.



Cucina di Amalfi by Ursula Ferrigno, published by Ryland Peters & Small (£20)

Photography by Nassima Rothacker © Ryland Peters & Small



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(no session on 30th May)

Where: Melville Room, St Mary's
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- Improved cognition and memory through writing and remembering lyrics
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or call 07856 876968 for more information and to sign up



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Carer's Afternoon Tea

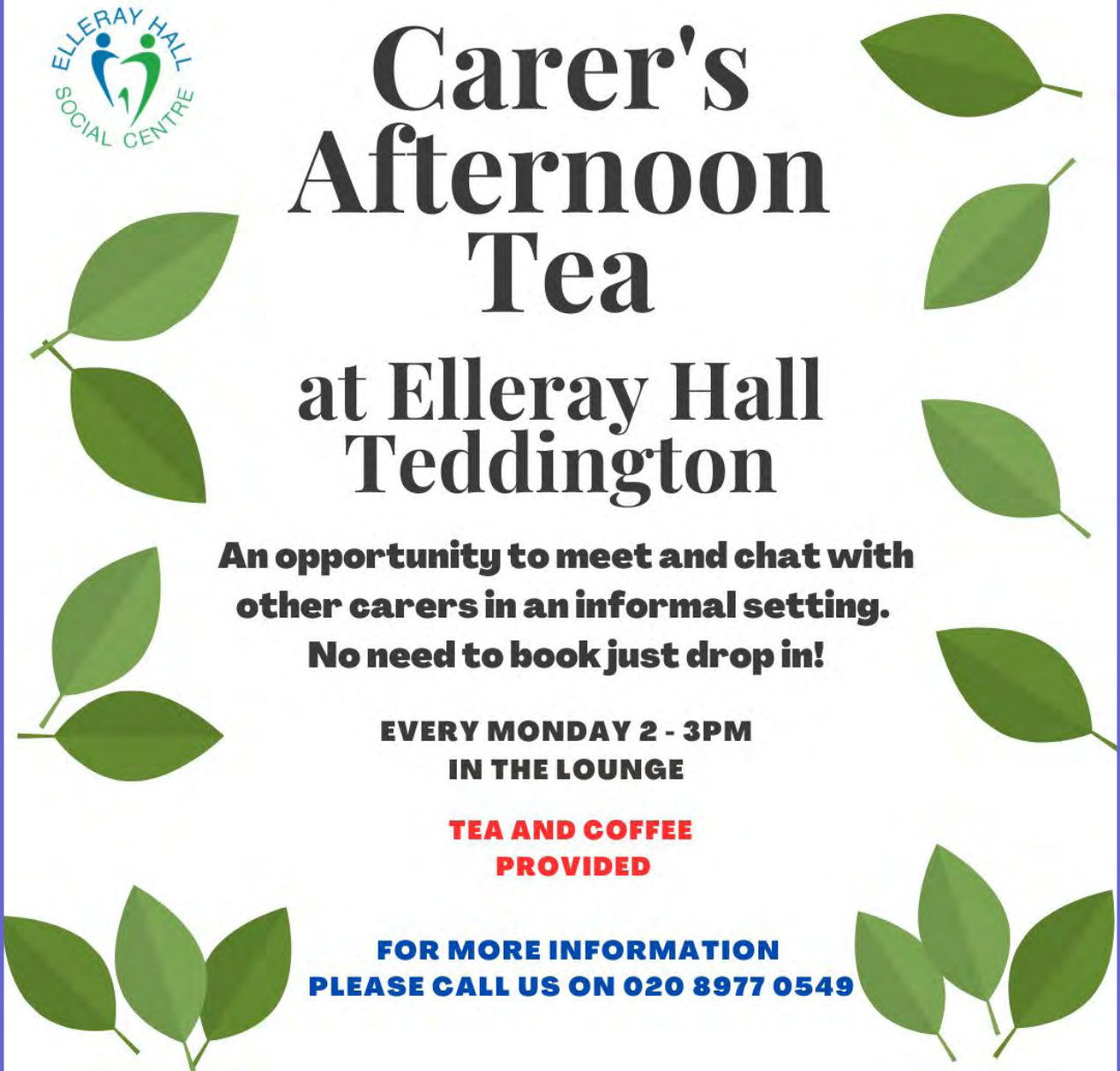
at Elleray Hall Teddington

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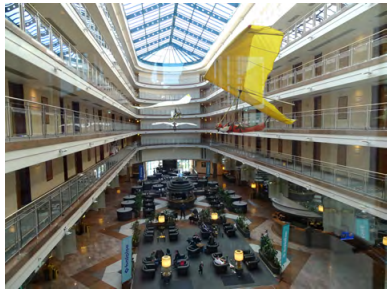
TRAVELLER'S TALES 144

CITIES OF LOWER SAXONY

Doug Goodman visits Hanover



Hanover airport – uncrowded and quiet, was such a contrast to a noisy, busy Terminal 5 at Heathrow. But then Hanover airport is a small regional airport in Lower Saxony serving a number of historic cities. The Hotel Maritim, reached in about 20 minutes after leaving the aircraft, was a delight. With an open-plan interior, large well-appointed rooms, several bars and restaurants, recreational and conference facilities, it was home for six days during a visit to six of the area's nine popular tourist spots.



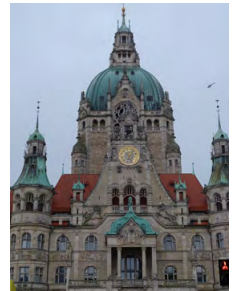
Maritim Hotel



S Bahn



Hanover City



City Hall

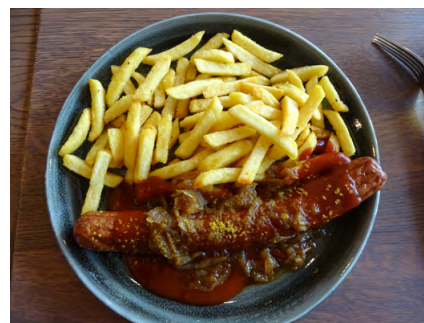
In 1636 the Welf dukes chose Hanover as their residence and built the Leine Palace and the summer palace of Herrenhausen. When Europe was reorganised at the Congress of Vienna in 1814 Hanover became a sovereign state. Hanover, the capital of Lower Saxony, has a well-planned public transport system where buses, U Bahn and S Bahn trains connect at Kropcke in the city centre. Near total destruction in bombing raids during WW2 allowed the planners to recreate the old town and many of the most important buildings, while providing extensive pedestrian areas. Traffic is kept away from the centre. Just before Easter George Street in the centre was thronged with people enjoying music, entertainment and drinking in the traditional bars. A Marathon was almost underway as I negotiated the barriers to reach the New Town Hall. Completed in 1913 this imposing building resembles a Baroque chateau. Visitors can take a curious, arched lift, ascending at a slope of 17 degrees, to the viewpoint in the dome. The city looked clean and green and the Harz Mountains can be seen on a sunny day. A walk along the banks of the Leine takes you past the old city walls and into the old town full of half-timbered houses. The Broyhan House, a wonderfully atmospheric inn was built in the late 14th century and is one of Hanover's oldest town houses. Local draft beer in very tall thin glasses went down very well with currywurst there.



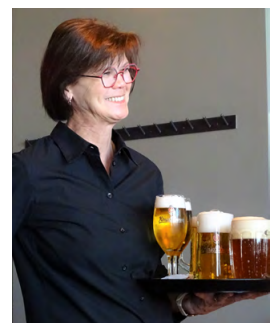
City Wall



Old Town



Traditional Dish



Bier Bitte

Follow the Red Line

A red line over 4 kms long painted on the pavement leads you to many of the key sites of the city. The stately Opera House, the State Parliament Building, the Aegidienkirche- the shell of a 10th century church destroyed in 1943, art galleries and parks are just a few of the fascinating places to see. Highlights of the all too short visit to Hanover were the Royal Gardens of Herrenhausen and the aviation museum. In late spring and even during a snow storm the gardens were impressive. Between 1679 and 1714 the Electress Sophia of the Palitinate had the gardens laid out in the French style inspired by Louis X1V. Formal areas are dotted with fountains, sculptures and a vast array of golden figures. The botanical garden has 12,000 different plant species in its greenhouses. In summer the palace forms the backdrop for concerts, cabaret, illuminations and firework displays.



Herrenhausen Palace



Palace Gardens



Palace Garden Golden Statues

AIR WAYS

I could have spent all day at the Hanover Air Museum especially in the company of two curators – both former pilots. The first hall covered the history of aviation, the evolution of the flying machine, WW1 fighters, the Zeppelin, early passenger planes and a full-size reconstruction of 'The Spirit of St. Louis'. This display was breath-taking but the second hall was a real treasure trove. Over 4,500 items were displayed including several jet engines, 38 original aircraft such as the Messerschmitt, Focke Wulf, Spitfire and Russian and German airforce jets. I inspected an Antonov 2 in which I had made several internal flights in the Soviet Union and photographed some of the 800 models. Another fascinating plane was the Star Fighter which had a tragic safety record. The Lockheed F104 was introduced in 1954 and bought by 15 airforces. Of the 916 bought by Germany's Luftwaffe 292 crashed killing 116 pilots.



Air Museum Star Fighter



Hanover Air Museum

Hanover is a great place for a short city break and the perfect location for exploring the other cities in Lower Saxony.

Next time Hamelin and the Pied Piper.

Teresa Read



Research has recently been published by the Natural History Museum concerning the fear that many native plants in Mauritius are under threat because of a significant break in the chain of seed dispersal.

We will all know the expression “As Dead As A Dodo”, a flightless bird – now extinct - that lived in Mauritius, and if we do not heed this warning there will be implications for our way of life.

The report states that because of the loss of wildlife there are not animals large enough to swallow the seeds of native plants and thus disperse them; larger introduced animal species tend to break open seeds rather than spread them. There is concern that many of the plants in Mauritius are endangered with only the Mauritian bulbul and flying fox the two most important seed dispersers remaining.

This report only goes to show, once again, the interdependence of plant life and animals with the natural environment, and, ultimately, our way of life: “The extinction of native plants could ignite a cascade of extinctions, taking other species with them in the downfall.”



The Battle of Grand Port between French and British naval forces, 20–27 August 1810



British forces seizing the Isle of France on 2 December 1810



The famous Edwards's Dodo, painted by Roelant Savery in 1626



Elizabeth II was Queen of Mauritius from 1968 to 1992

More photos on Mauritius: <https://worldinfozone.com/gallery.php?country=Mauritius>

Different faiths... but are we one?

By Deep Patel

~ Through the Eyes of a Twickenham Shopkeeper ~

We have just passed a period of time which is possibly the “holy-est” of all times as the period I am referring to spanned 3 major religious occasions from 3 of the world’s major religions...ALL AT THE EXACT SAME TIME...is God maybe trying to tell us something?...

Christians have just enjoyed the period of Lent, and Muslims have been taking part in Ramadan, whereas Hindus have been celebrating the spring nine night festival devoted to the Mother Goddess Durga who removes negativity from our lives. Is it any coincidence that despite ALL of these periods happening at the same time, despite having different calendars for each faith, some based on the moon and others based on the sun...these periods STILL happened at the EXACT same time...



Something else to consider is that ALL of these periods of what are arguably 3 of the World’s largest religions, all are dedicated to some sort of act of sacrifice...Christians sacrifice something they enjoy eating during Lent, Muslims eat or drink absolutely nothing between sunrise and sunset during the period of Ramadan and Hindus eat only one meal through the whole day during the period of Spring Navratri (the nine night festival dedicated to the Mother Goddess).

Yet another similarity is that ALL of these periods of sacrifice culminate in a celebration of some kind involving lavish gifts and meals for all those involved, together with their friends and families. Christians have Easter Sunday for sharing gifts and family meals at the end of the period of Lent, Muslims have EID, when they give away and enjoy delicious foods of all kinds with family and friends, Hindus have Ramnavmi, the tenth day when they enjoy culinary delights and sweet treats of all kinds after offering them to the Hindu God Lord Rama.

It is also interesting to note that although very different in practice and their concept of Gods, all of these 3 major religions also focus even more on compassionate qualities during these times, qualities such as kindness towards others, charity and selflessness. To add to this, within all of these 3 major very different religions, women of holy nature are meant to cover their heads with a veil of some type, and men also cover their heads.

So to answer the original question and headline of this article...“different faiths...but are we one”...I would like to conclude “yes”...we are one indeed...just as there can be many varying paths to the same destination, there can be many varying paths to God...I think that perhaps even “God” wants us to understand this...otherwise why would all of the festivals that came about in completely different geographical locations, with completely different practices and totally different calendars all seem to have so much in common as this article has shown? Perhaps if each of us from our own individual faiths (as well as those who have no faith at all) chose to focus on the SIMILARITIES we all share rather than be stuck on the DIFFERENCES between us...the World would truly become a nicer place to live in...for all of us...

Those who follow my articles will know what I am about to say about kindness towards little lives (another of my passions)...but just in case you are a first-time reader; I always like to share these little good-karma gems. We are not the only inhabitants of this beautiful planet and there is a kind way for everything...If you have rodent issues, consider live capture traps where you can catch the rodents alive and release them in woodland or parkland areas far from homes. Try electronic high-frequency sound deterrents (check online for ones with good reviews and ones that are safe for your pets if you have any). Put empty jam jar lids filled with white vinegar all around areas where you don’t want them to stop them without harming them (they HATE the smell of white vinegar). This also works for foxes, squirrels, mice and rabbits. Just picking up a slug off a pavement with a leaf and moving it over a wall counts as a good deed... choosing a kind way to stop ants (like talcum powder around where they come but not on them) counts as a good deed. Avoid sweeping/washing the garden patio too often to help save countless tiny almost invisible little lives that live there (particularly under large pots in the garden, hence I say gently lift the pots if you need to move them rather than dragging them to avoid crushing little lives).

As I always say, the true key to our own happiness lies in the happiness of others...be they big or small life forms...until the next time...have a lovely week ahead and look after the smaller life forms and the universe will look after you. For further tips, check out my Facebook page “Kind World”. As always...Peace, love and good karma to all xx

Remember..

“We may choose to focus on our differences...but if we really look... we are one..”



Constellations

OHADS at Hampton Hill Theatre, 18th – 22nd April

Preview: Drama critic Thomas Forsythe discusses OHADS' forthcoming production of Nick Payne's acclaimed play *Constellations* with director, Wesley Henderson Roe

TF: *Constellations* had Olivier Award nominations a decade ago. Aren't its characters a beekeeper and physicist, rather like Charlotte Jones' *Humble Boy*?

WHR: Yes, but *Constellations* is deeper and more complex. When I saw the revival at the Vaudeville, I immediately bought the script! It is essentially a love story between the two, who meet by chance at a barbecue ... in several different universes. Their relationship plays out across universes, sometimes well, sometimes not so well. Moreover, their story also tells how they cope with the devastating news of a cancer diagnosis.

TF: My, you said it is complex. How do you represent a multiverse in only three dimensions? How do the actors know which of several universes they are in at any one time? Not an easy task, I think.



WHR: Each universe is represented by a hexagon on the floor, which creates a honeycomb, mirroring the home of bees. Each universe has a music theme, which alters as the actors move between universes. The lighting is hexagon-specific indicating each. There are no costume changes or props to assist them, the actors need to rely on their own skills to overcome this hurdle.

TF: It smacks of Michael Frayne's *Copenhagen*, physicists discussing theories of nuclear particles. But perhaps even more challenging than the intricacies of quantum physics are the personal issues addressed in areas that require very sensitive handling. I imagine you need to cast really skilled actors in such an intense two-hander.

WHR: Heather Stockwell has played many leading roles, most recently as Morticia in [The Addams Family](#) at Richmond Theatre. Brendan Leddy is a regular performer and was one of the award-winning pairing in [Stones in His Pockets](#) for TTC. Both have brought their skillsets to this production and have achieved a collective greater than the sum of their parts, in presenting this extraordinary play with its comic highs and tragic lows.

TF: I'll be along to Hampton Hill Theatre when *Constellations* opens on Tuesday 18th April. With only a five-day run it is sure to be a hot ticket.

WHR: We have certainly found it a very engaging production, and we hope you all will too.

Read the full discussion at www.markaspen.com/2023/04/10/constellations-prev

Photography Sarah J Carter



Home, I'm Darling

by Laura Wade

Bill Kenwright Productions at Richmond Theatre, then on tour until 13th May

Home, I'm Darling tells of a relationship in crisis, and heightens it through their eccentric decision to adopt a 1950s lifestyle. A married couple have decided to embrace the stereotypical gender roles of the 1950s. Former finance professional Judy (Jessica Ransom, who leads the production with wonderful flair as a charming, but frequently brittle housewife as her lifestyle begins to fray at the edges) is a proud housewife keeping an immaculate home, while estate agent Johnny (Neil McDermott in a great performance that builds new layers to his character in every scene) goes out to work, only to be presented with his slippers and a cocktail when he returns home each evening.



It takes Judy's mother Sylvia (Diane Keen, on barnstorming form) to point out the elephant in the room in an impassioned speech: that the 1950s were a hard time, and that many people were cold, miserable, and still living on rations. Judy is living in a cartoon. Cracks swiftly appear and one of the first cracks is when Johnny refers to their marriage as "an arrangement".

When Johnny's new boss, Alex (Shanez Pattni, who blazes with energy in both scenes), quizzes Judy on the details, she hits a raw nerve when she asks if she would accept modern medical treatment, or whether she would rely on medicines from the 1950s. "We'd go to the hospital," Judy snaps, "this isn't a religious cult." But while it might not be a religious cult, it soon becomes clear that Judy's fixation on the 1950s is rooted deeper than it first appears, and is causing problems for Johnny, and for Judy herself.

Tamara Harvey directs the snappy dialogue with great pace and energy, and the scene changes twinkle with Charlotte Bloom's smooth choreography, with the cast sweeping gracefully around the set changing the scenery with a flourish. The familiar background songs complete the 1950s illusion of this very modern and timely play looking at gender roles and relationships in the 21st century.



Read Andrew Lawston's review at www.markaspen.com/2023/04/05/home-darling

Photography courtesy of BK Ltd



Quality Street

by J.M. Barrie

Northern Broadsides at Richmond Theatre until 15th April, then on tour until 7th July

Old-fashioned, cheaply packaged, gaudily wrapped, and entirely lacking in nutritional value, Quality Street toffees were named after a well and truly forgotten play of J.M. Barrie's, now imaginatively disinterred and taken on tour.

Barrie's play was hugely popular in its day and used by a Halifax toffee manufacturer as a marketing ploy. Now the well-known sweets – which retain a place in the nation's affections, and, for reasons not entirely clear to me, are seen as a great treat at Christmas – are used to sell a play that nobody has heard of.



Quality Street gives a Victorian view on the Napoleonic Wars. Valentine Brown (dashinglly played by Aron Julius) is expected to propose marriage to Phoebe Throssel (Paula Lane, who has a tendency to overact and go shrill). Instead, he has enlisted to fight in the Napoleonic wars. When he returns ten years later, economic pressures have forced her into teaching and she has retreated into 'old maid' mode. She reacts to what she thinks is his disappointment by recreating herself as Miss Livvy – a younger more flirtatious cousin – and is inwardly furious when he seems to respond.

Northern Broadsides invited some of the workers from the Halifax toffee factory to join rehearsals and give their take on the play. This encourages speculation about the quality of the original dialogue that had to be cut to make room. My suspicion, based on what was left, is that this surgery was necessary to make the play viable.

Laurie Sansom's direction does quite a lot of work to keep things lively and not utterly predictable. He gives it a very *Bridgerton* vibe, with casting that is not only ethnically diverse, but gender blind too. The climax is the ball, where the women's dresses are designed to look like the quality street wrappers, with dancing that is half Jane Austen and half disco.

But all this post-modern ingenuity, dolloped on top of Barrie's play, does end up feeling disproportionate, rather like one of those gigantic American cupcakes where the DayGlo icing dwarfs the cake.



Read Patrick Shorrock's review at www.markaspen.com/2023/04/13/quality-st

Photography by Andrew Billington



Peter Pan

by Chris Cuming, adapted from J.M.Barrie

The Rep Company at Reading Rep Theatre until 29th April

Curtain up and the music starts, and I thought this is going to be great. The music mixed sinister with magical to just the right degree. Anything by J.M.Barrie is sure to be good, and I remember being enthralled from a young age by the world he creates in *Peter Pan*. Being with a selection of grandchildren, I was keen to find out if they reacted the way I did. All I got when I asked was a dutiful 'good!', so maybe I didn't ask the right questions.



Marley Lockhart's performance as Peter Pan is extremely convincing. Having played in BBC shows, he brings a wealth of experience to the child role. Holly Burns, making her professional debut playing Wendy, is ideal as the big sister thrust into a maternal role by the boys. Maybe the casting of Jak Ford Lane as Mr Darling and Joe Swift as his son Michael wasn't the best decision. For one thing, Swift is taller and had a beard! He would have made a great Hook, but Hook is played by Amy Ambrose, who gives a kids TV feel to the role.



However, it is unclear what this adaptation is trying to be. Is it panto or a play? Is it for kids, or for grown-ups? There is a lack of self-confidence from the narration, which is overdone and feels a bit preachy. Director Chris Cuming has a hard path to navigate between the demands of the story, elements of which might be considered inappropriate these days, and modern theatre constraints. Maybe remembering that kids actually like to be frightened to some degree, might have helped.

All that said, there are some truly magical moments. Tinkerbell becomes pin torches choreographed so that it looks as if she is flitting across the stage. They all light up when she is revived by everyone's belief in fairies, sending a few shivers down my spine.

It's fitting that Reading Rep ends its ten-year anniversary season with a play about a ten-year old boy. Oh, and, in spite of everything, it was a good night out for the grandchildren.



Read Nick Swyft's review at www.markaspen.com/2023/04/12/peter-pan-rrt

Photography by Harry Elletson

HISTORIC FARTING ABOUT ON THE RIVER



Mark Aspen

www.markaspen.wordpress.com

Expressing the art of the theatre critic

Terrible Thames

by Terry Deary and Neal Foster

Birmingham Stage Company at Tower Bridge Quay until 29th October

“Sir, when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.” Thus quoth Dr. Samuel Johnson in 1777 and it has remained true ever since. One of the current opportunities London affords is *Terrible Thames*. As a life-long London lover, your intrepid correspondent will always leap to the challenge of a new experience in the great city, and theatre on a riverboat, courtesy of Wood’s Silver Fleet, felt like one to land.



The company lists a team of actors in their rather neat fold-out programme. This performance was given by Roger Parkins and Harriet Munday, and, if the energy they produced was anything to go by, I think it would be fair to presume that they need to rotate the cast fairly regularly. The performance itself is intended as a one-act tour-de-force of selected historical events, sites, and characters, aimed at primary schoolchildren. There are lots of references to poo. There is also lots of audience interaction and participation, with songs to keep everyone occupied and involved. What comes across is a

highly engaging mash of pantomime and comic guided tour, using the historically rich stretch of the Thames between Tower Bridge and the Houses of Parliament as both back-drop and prompt. The script provides an impressive amount of well-researched information wrapped up in some really corny gags and is delivered with gusto and considerable physicality by the duo.

For parents with children in the target age range, this is a recommended addition to a day out in town. It’s great fun and takes up just enough time. It seemed to fit the bill for the children, too. After all, what’s not to like about cruising around the Thames on a boat, looking at castles and battleships whilst being regaled with tales of historic farting?



Read Vince Francis’ review at www.markaspen.com/2023/04/13/terrible-thames

Images courtesy of Birmingham Stage Co

Richmond Shakespeare Society to perform Henry V

The Richmond Shakespeare Society is performing Henry V, one of Shakespeare's most renowned history plays from Saturday 22 to Saturday 29 April at the Mary Wallace Theatre.

The irresponsible and dissolute Prince Hal is now King Henry. He has a divided country to rule, and his leadership and courage are shortly to be tested at the battles of Harfleur and Agincourt.

The Sunday 23 April at 3.15pm matinee performance will also be a celebration of Shakespeare's birthday.

[Book your tickets](#)



Richmond Shakespeare Society
RSS
at the Mary Wallace Theatre

Spring Art Fair to open at Landmark Arts Centre

Landmark Arts Centre is hosting a Spring Art Fair in May 2023, showcasing the works from over 60 artists.

The event will be taking place between Friday 19 and Sunday 21 May 2023 at Landmark Arts Centre, Ferry Road, Teddington, TW11 9NN, allowing guests to discover a variety of art.

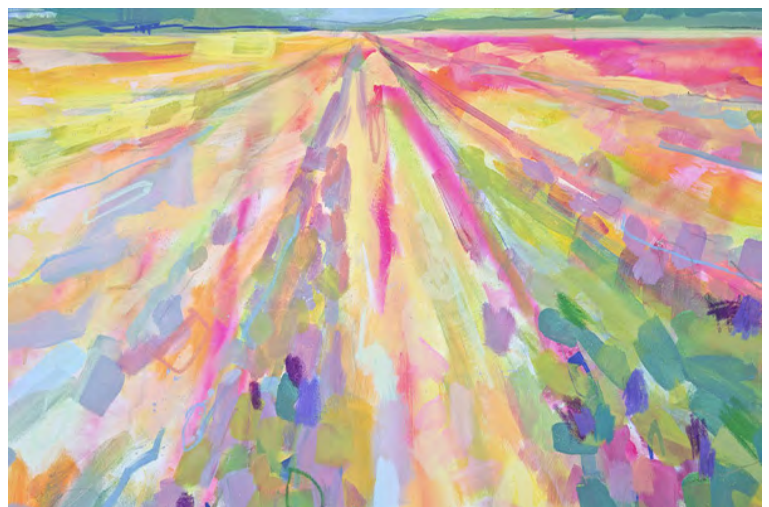
Opening times:

- Friday 19 May: From 4 to 8.30pm
- Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 May: From 10am to 5pm

From prints to paintings to photography and more, the fair will have art for everyone and every budget.

The list of exhibitors will be available soon and tickets can be purchased online.

For more details, visit the [Landmark Arts Centre website](#).



Ham House and Garden Open-Air Cinema



We're hosting open air cinema this summer.

Enjoy a captivating evening of cinema within the formal gardens, with its manicured lawns, fragrant delights and a magnificent mansion as the backdrop.

Book now for screenings of Top Gun: Maverick, Mamma Mia & The Greatest Showman: Sing-along on 18-20 Aug.

<https://www.adventurecinema.co.uk/venues/ham-house-and-garden>



Plumbing students train with ADEY at the Octillion Training Centre

On 22nd March, Richmond upon Thames College (RuTC) level 2 plumbing students enjoyed a hands-on training experience day with ADEY, the world's first magnetic boiler filter company. ADEY is based in the Octillion Training Centre, Uxbridge.

ADEY's mission is to prolong the world's boilers by protecting the world's heating from the damaging effects of poor water quality.

With the recent growing media attention surrounding net zero and carbon emissions, the students were invited to attend a training session event with ADEY at the Octillion Training Centre.

At the training centre, students were given the opportunity to see how ADEY's water treatment solutions (magnetic filters) are used by thousands of heating engineers to help customers save money on their energy bills and protect their boilers from breaking down and reducing carbon emissions from homes and buildings.



ADEY have recently been mentioned in the Houses of Parliament by MP Siobhan Baillie speaking in the Household Energy Efficiency Measures debate, Siobhan asked the government to consider advising households on technology like that developed by ADEY to help with ever increasing energy bill costs.

The students had a great day learning a lot from ADEY's team and the company's research into the effects poor water quality has on our heating systems.

Raj Johal, Assistant Head of Construction and Engineering at RuTC was delighted by how much the students enjoyed the trip, saying "The students learnt so much, ADEY is a world leader in water treatment products and there is a huge chance that in their careers they will come across ADEY products.

"In this economic climate, it is important for students to learn how to protect and maintain heating systems as opposed to replacing them, this is the way the industry is heading and it's vital our students are up to date with industry developments. A huge thank you to ADEY for having us."

Learn about studying Construction and Engineering at RuTC [here](#).



St Mary's University

St Mary's Brings Home West London Varsity 2023 Win

The West London Varsity returned to St Mary's University, Twickenham for the first time in five years this spring, with St Mary's making the most of the home advantage and taking the win for 2023.



With teams from a multitude of sports – representing all levels – competing on the day, and a total of 30 fixtures, the

first team to score 16 would see themselves as successors of the day. The result came down to the last few fixtures, with the overall score seeing St Mary's finish on 17 points to Brunel's 13.

The West London Varsity is a core part of the St Mary's Students' Union's annual series of fixtures against the Union of Brunel Students. It's an opportunity for students from both Universities to compete in a variety of sports including cricket, badminton, netball, football, weightlifting, rugby league, futsal, lacrosse, athletics, table tennis, volleyball, tennis, cheerleading, basketball and rugby union.

At the end of the event, St Mary's Students' Union's Caitlin Finn lifted the trophy, and echoed her gratitude and appreciation to all staff involved in the event, and appreciation for the sportsmanship and honest gameplay displayed throughout the day by both Universities.

Caitlin commented: "Varsity 2023 was a huge success all round. Our first varsity on St Mary's campus and our first Varsity win since 2018. Varsity is one of SMSU's biggest events of the year, and it was amazing to see our work alongside the Sport St Mary's team pay off! We are so proud of all of our Simmies. Win lose or draw, each and every player, spectator and volunteer made the day as wonderful as it was!"

Varsity 2023 – The journey to 16 to win!

- Fixtures began with **Indoor Cricket** and a St Mary's win, starting the total score at 1-0

to St Mary's

- Men's & Women's **Badminton** fixtures shared one a piece, leaving St Mary's 2-1 up at 10:00
- **Men's Rugby Union** saw Brunel deliver a well fought win to make things 2-2
- St Mary's **Men's Lacrosse** picked up the first points off campus with a win, a close fought win for Brunel in the **Women's Basketball** brought them back to an event score of 3-3
- **Women's Lacrosse** finishes in shortly after, taking St Mary's back into the lead, 3-4
- In **Football**, Men's 1s, 2s & 5s delivered a round of 3 draws, taking scores to a close 5.5 – 4.5
- Victory in **Weightlifting** and **Powerlifting** for St Mary's saw the lead open up to 7.5 - 4.5
- **Men's Basketball** saw a victory taking St Mary's to 8.5-5
- Brunel were victorious in **Women's Volleyball**, closing the gap to 8.5 – 5.5.
- The **Netball** 1s delivered a convincing victory for St Mary's, taking the score to 9.5 – 5.5.
- The second round of **football** fixtures brought drama and tension, and a hopeful lead of 11.5-6.5 to St Mary's
- **Dance** & Women's Rugby didn't deliver points for St Mary's, and Brunel's 'level 3' **Cheer** stunt group, proved themselves more than worthy opponents being awarded the win from the judging panel, narrowing the gap to 11.5 – 7.5 to St Mary's
- Brunel picked up all 3 available points in the **Tennis** and **Table Tennis** taking the gap to just one point, at 11.5-10.5
- **Men's Hockey**, **Netball 2s** and **Rugby League** all delivered wins for St Mary's, increasing the score to 14.5-10.5.
- Brunel took points for **Men's Volleyball**, taking the score to 14.5-11.5 ahead of the final few fixtures of the day
- A 0-0 draw in **Women's Hockey** left the scores at 15-12
- **Netball 3s** went to Brunel, and tensions heightened, with the score moving to 15-13
- **Men's Futsal** and **Women's Futsal** wins took the final score to 17-13 to St Mary's



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Match Preview: Wolves v Brentford

Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know ahead of Brentford's Premier League game against Wolverhampton Wanderers

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford return to action this weekend as they make the trip up the M40 to take on a Wolverhampton Wanderers side still casting worried glances over their shoulders.

Defeat to Newcastle United last time out sends Thomas Frank's Bees into the game in ninth, while Wolves picked up a much-needed three points with a 1-0 home victory over Chelsea.

That victory, coming courtesy of Matheus Nunes' wonder strike, moved the Midlanders up to 13th, four points clear of the relegation zone.

The opposition
Wolves remain in relegation battle despite upturn under Lopetegui



Wolverhampton Wanderers are by no means safe, given the nature of this season's Premier League relegation battle, but they are in a far better position now than they were when Julen Lopetegui took charge at Molineux during the World Cup break.

One win in eight to begin with under Bruno Lage, and then just four points from seven games with Steve Davis in interim charge, left Wolves staring up the league table at everybody else when Lopetegui was appointed.

However, the experienced Spanish manager had Wolves out of the relegation zone three games into his tenure and they haven't been back since thanks to six wins and three draws from 15 matches.

The issue this season has been obvious: goals, or, more specifically, the lack of them.

Only Everton have registered fewer than Wolves' 24 Premier League strikes. They have scored one or fewer in 25 of their 30 Premier League games with five of their eight league wins coming 1-0. Daniel Podence (six) and Ruben Neves (five) are the only Wolves players with more than two league goals to their name.

While they haven't got more free-scoring under Lopetegui, they have become much more solid defensively. After conceding 24 times in their 15 games before the World Cup, they've let in just

18 in the 15 since.

Of the six home goals they have conceded since Boxing Day, four came against Leeds United last month, while Liverpool, Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea all failed to score in defeats at Molineux in 2023.

Wolves don't tend to draw games at home this season. Only the bottom two, Leicester City and Southampton, have lost more home games than Wolves (seven) but their six home wins is the most of anyone outside the top nine.

With three different head coaches over the season, it's no surprise that they have struggled for consistent team selection. Only Nottingham Forest and Chelsea have used more players, with Jose Sa, Max Kilman and Ruben Neves alone in starting more than 23 of Wolves' league games this term.

That team selection hasn't been helped by a league-high six red cards this season as well.

Lopetegui has been fluid with his formations since taking over. When he has been able to call on the services of Diego Costa or Raul Jimenez, he has often partnered one of them alongside Brazilian youngster Matheus Cunha.

Otherwise, it has been Cunha leading the line with Podence, Matheus Nunes, Adama Traore and Pablo Sarabia proving the attacking threat from midfield.

Team news

Jansson likely to miss remainder of the season

Pontus Jansson is unlikely to feature again this season. The defender was withdrawn in the 16th minute of [Brentford's 2-1 defeat to Newcastle United](#) last time out with a hamstring injury. It's a fresh setback for Jansson who has only featured in 12 games this term.

"It's a hamstring injury that will most likely keep him out for the rest of the season," Thomas Frank revealed at his press conference ahead of Saturday's trip to Wolverhampton Wanderers.

"It's bad news for us and for Pontus. There's a small chance [he returns], but it's a big one unfortunately. I would prefer to have Pontus, no doubt about that. He's our captain and a very important player for us. It's a setback, but it is what it is, and we have to deal with it."

Jansson joins Keane Lewis-Potter (knee), Frank Onyeka and Kristoffer Ajer (knee) in missing the game. Vitaly Janelt (knee) made his return to action at home to Newcastle after nearly a month out.

Wolves will be without the suspended duo of Ruben Neves and Jonny, while Daniel Podence has until Wednesday to respond to an FA charge of spitting. Sasa Kalajdzic and Chiquinho (both knee) are out while Boubacar Traore (groin) is still being assessed.



Red Roses side to face Wales in TikTok Women's Six Nations



Simon Middleton has named a 23-player Red Roses squad to take on Wales at Cardiff Arms Park on Saturday. Kick off at 2:15pm, live on BBC Two.

Marlie Packer captains the side from open-side flanker while Alex Matthews makes her first appearance of the tournament at No.8. Sadia Kabeya is named at blind-side flanker.

Emma Sing makes her first international start at full back with Jess Breach (right wing) and Abby Dow (left wing) forming the back three. Lucy Packer is at scrum half with Holly Aitchison and Tatyana Heard once again forming the 10-12 axis. Lagi Tuima makes her third consecutive start at outside centre.

Bristol Bears' Lark Davies is the starting hooker with Mackenzie Carson and Sarah Bern making up the front row. Vice-captain Zoe Aldcroft and Cath O'Donnell are the second row combination, while Saracens hooker May Campbell could earn her first international cap as she takes her place among the substitutes.

The trip to the Welsh capital also sees the return of Hannah Botterman, Maud Muir and Ellie Kildunne following injury lay-offs, they are named as finishers. Amy Cokayne is unavailable for selection as part of England Rugby's agreement with the Royal Air Force. The Red Roses hooker will be representing the Royal Air Force Senior Women in their Inter Service rugby union match against the British Army at Kingsholm on the same day.

"We're pleased to welcome back key personnel including Alex Matthews, Hannah Botterman, Maud Muir and Ellie Kildunne to the match day squad," said Middleton. "Our sports science team deserve great credit for their tireless efforts over the past few months and have yet again returned players safely ahead of schedule. "Emma Sing makes her first start in an England shirt. She's performed extremely well for Gloucester-Hartpury this season and has impressed us in camps and her international appearances to date. Although we have world class hookers in our squad, it's essential we continue to look to strengthen the depth in that position. May Campbell has been a standout player in the Allianz Premier 15s over the last couple of seasons and has been tremendous in camp for us. She's patiently bided her time and deservedly gets her opportunity this weekend."

Starting

15. Emma Sing (Gloucester-Hartpury)
14. Jess Breach (Saracens)
13. Lagi Tuima (Harlequins)
12. Tatyana Heard (Gloucester-Hartpury)
11. Abby Dow (Harlequins)
10. Holly Aitchison (Saracens)
9. Lucy Packer (Harlequins)

Finishers

16. May Campbell (Saracens)
17. Hannah Botterman (Saracens)
18. Maud Muir (Gloucester-Hartpury)
19. Delaney Burns (Bristol Bears)

1. Mackenzie Carson (Saracens)
2. Lark Davies (Bristol Bears)
3. Sarah Bern (Bristol Bears)
4. Zoe Aldcroft (VC; Gloucester Hartpury)
5. Cath O'Donnell (Loughborough Lightning)
6. Sadia Kabeya (Loughborough Lightning)
7. Marlie Packer (C; Saracens)
8. Alex Matthews (Gloucester-Hartpury)

20. Sarah Beckett (Gloucester-Hartpury)
21. Ella Wyrwas (Saracens)
22. Sarah McKenna (Saracens)
23. Ellie Kildunne (Harlequins)

ENGLAND WOMEN'S U20 TEAM ANNOUNCEMENT: ENGLAND v FRANCE

England women's U20 head coach Lou Meadows has named her side to take on France U20 this Saturday, 15 March (KO 16:00) in Tours, the second in the two-match series between the nations.



Maisy Allen and Lizzie Duffy co-captain the side from openside flanker and fly-half respectively.

Catherine Wells and Grace Clifford are the starting props, while Amy Dale will pack down at hooker.

In the second row Lilli Ives Champion and Niamh Orchard pair up, while Kendall Waudby (blindsided flanker) and Gabriella Nigrelli (No. 8) join Allen in the back row.

Worcester Warriors' Tori Sellors again dons the number 9 shirt, and Nancy McGillivray lines up outside Duffy to form the 10-12 axis. Pip Hendy moves into the centres, allowing Grace White to make her debut on the wing.

Loughborough Lightning's Fran Goldthorp moves to fullback and Katie Buchanan from Exeter Chiefs retains her shirt following a strong performance on the wing last Saturday. Niamh Swailes, Katherine Baverstock, Niamh Williams, Steph Else, Nicole Wythe, Lucy Weaver, April Ishida and Leah Brough are the finishers.

Meadows said: *"Last Saturday taught us some crucial lessons in how a well organised side will punish you if you give them too much possession. The French brought the physicality we expected and made us pay for our errors. After starting strong, with a notable improvement in our discipline from the Scotland game, we maintained control in the lineout and scored three well executed tries but this was not enough.*

"The squad's response this week has been really honest and we've trained really well on and off the pitch to ensure our decision making matches our intention to play and control possession. The two test series with France is a massive opportunity for these players to physically and mentally push themselves beyond what they would have experienced so far in their careers. I'm looking forward to seeing them embrace this head on and perform under the pressures of what I'm sure will be a large, passionate French crowd in Tours on Saturday."

England U20 team vs France U20

15. Francesca Goldthorp (Loughborough Lightning)
14. Katie Buchanan (Exeter Chiefs)
13. Phillipa Hendy (Gloucester-Hartpury)
12. Nancy McGillivray (Exeter Chiefs)
11. Grace White (Bristol Bears)
10. Lizzie Duffy (CC; Sale Sharks)
9. Tori Sellors (Worcester Warriors)

1. Catherine Wells (University Worcester Warriors Women)
2. Amy Dale (Gloucester-Hartpury)
3. Grace Clifford (Loughborough Lightning)
4. Lilli Ives Champion (Loughborough Lightning)
5. Niamh Orchard (Exeter Chiefs)
6. Kendall Waudby (Loughborough Lightning)
7. Maisy Allen (CC; Exeter Chiefs)
8. Gabriella Nigrelli (Bristol Bears)

Finishers

16. Niamh Swailes (Sale Sharks)
17. Katherine Baverstock (Loughborough Lightning)
18. Niamh Williams (Wasps FC)
19. Steph Else (Gloucester-Hartpury)

20. Nicole Wythe (Harlequins)
21. Lucy Weaver (Loughborough Lightning)
22. April Ishida (Darlington Mowden Park)
23. Leah Brough (University Worcester Warriors Women)

Time set for UK Emergency Alerts test

National test of Emergency Alerts will take place at 3pm on Sunday 23 April.

A UK-wide of the life-saving public Emergency Alerts system will take place at 3pm on Sunday 23 April.

Following successful pilots in East Suffolk and Reading, the test of the new Emergency Alerts system will see people receive a message on the home screen of their mobile phone, along with a sound and vibration for up to ten seconds.

For the test, the public does not need to take any action - the sound and vibration will stop automatically after ten seconds. All people need to do is swipe away the message or click 'OK' on their phone's home screen - just like for a 'low battery' warning or notification - and continue to use their phone as normal.

Emergency Alerts have already been used successfully in a number of other countries, including the US, Canada, the Netherlands and Japan, where it has been widely credited with saving lives, for example, during severe weather events. In the UK, alerts could be used to tell residents of villages being encroached by wildfires, or of severe flooding.

The Government has worked together with the emergency services and partners, including the Football Association and London Marathon, to make sure the national test has minimum impact on major events taking place on the day.



Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Oliver Dowden MP, said:

Put the date in your diaries - at 3pm on 23 April, we'll be testing our new national Emergency Alerts system.

Getting this system operational with the national test means we have another tool in our toolkit to keep the public safe in life-threatening emergencies. It could be the sound that saves your life.

Chair of The National Fire Chiefs Council, Mark Hardingham, said:

We must use every tool at our disposal to keep people safe, and we need everyone to play their part - and the new Emergency Alerts system is one way we can do this. For 10 seconds, the national test may be inconvenient for some, but please forgive us for the intrusion, because the next time you hear it - your life, and the life-saving actions of our emergency services, could depend on it.

National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Civil Contingencies, Assistant Chief Constable Owen Weatherill said:

Warning and informing the public at speed during times of crises can be vital. We look forward to further developing the use of the Emergency Alerts capability and how it can have real benefits for the public to protect and preserve life, as well as supporting policing's wider response to critical incidents with partner agencies. Alongside partners, we will continue to listen carefully to public feedback and ensure the use of Emergency Alerts has a positive impact.

Emergency Alerts will transform the UK's warning and informing capability; by working with mobile broadcasting technology it will provide a means to get urgent messages quickly to nearly 90 percent of mobile phones in a defined area when there is a risk to life, and provide clear instructions about how best to respond.

Best practice of Emergency Alerts in other countries have shown that they work more effectively in a real emergency if people have previously received a test, so they know what an alert looks and sounds like.

The system will be used very rarely - only being sent where there is an immediate risk to people's lives - so people may not receive an alert for months or years.

You can find out further information on Emergency Alerts, including what they look and sound like at [gov.uk/alerts](https://www.gov.uk/alerts)

“WE’LL DISRUPT THE GRAND NATIONAL”

Animal Rising plans to stage a protest at the Grand National race this weekend.

ANIMAL rights campaigners have vowed to disrupt tomorrow’s Grand National.

Speaking to GB News Alex Lockwood, from Animal Rising, said: “Tomorrow we’re going to be there from 9.30 in the morning. We’re going to ask everyone who cares about animals and wants to stop harm to come and join us down there. And we’re going to protest outside the front perfectly legally and peacefully. Then, from there, we’re going to see if we can disrupt the race because we really want to stop the harm.”

Asked if this ran the risk of causing distress to the animals, he continued: “No, not at all. Because if we’re going to do anything, we’re going to do it before the race gets started. That’s our plan. We believe that people in this country are rightly worried right now about the natural world and our treatment of it.

“That includes animals and the fact we are pumping sewage into our rivers. We are also failing to support farmers in transition to more sustainable methods. But this is about treating wonderful animals like horses, not as if they’re money making machines.

“There is going to be harm. We are saying to people to bear in mind that when you’re putting a bet on the Grand National, there are horses in that race that have got a better chance of dying than of winning.”



Chancellor response to February GDP statistics

Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt said:

“The economic outlook is looking brighter than expected - GDP grew in the three months to February and we are set to avoid recession thanks to the steps we have taken through a massive package of cost of living support for families and radical reforms to boost the jobs market and business investment.”

Additional information:

- The UK avoided recession in 2022, and is now expected to avoid recession this year.
- The UK was the fastest growing economy in the G7 last year. Since 2010, the UK has grown faster than Japan, France, and Italy, and at about the same rate as Germany.
- The IMF are predicting that around 90% of advanced economies will see a decline in growth in 2023.
- At Autumn Statement 2022, the government took difficult, but necessary, decisions across taxation and spending to restore economic stability.
- The OBR have said that the measures in the Budget caused them to revise potential output upwards by the largest amount ever in their forecasts.
- The government is maintaining record levels of capital investment - £600bn over the next 5 years – including investment in critical infrastructure like Northern Powerhouse Rail, HS2 and Sizewell C, and safeguarding the highest ever R&D budget.



HM Treasury

UK bolsters support for Ukraine and low-income countries

Today, Jeremy Hunt, Chancellor of the Exchequer, has confirmed the UK stands ready to provide an additional \$500m in UK guaranteed loans for Ukraine, taking this year's total to \$1bn and the total amount pledged by the UK in support of Ukraine to £6.5bn. This comes as he attends the International Monetary Fund's Spring Meetings in Washington D.C., alongside fellow supporters of Ukraine, and today took part in a roundtable on support for the country.

This new money will help to meet Ukraine's economic needs including covering the costs of vital government services, such as running hospitals and schools as well as supporting the most vulnerable Ukrainians.

The Chancellor has also committed a further \$670m to reduce poverty and drive growth, going above and beyond previous commitments to boost financial support for developing nations through the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust. With this pledge the UK has fulfilled the commitment made during its G7 Presidency to deliver multi-billion-dollar funding to fight poverty and boost growth.

This funding brings the total given by the UK to the Trust to \$2 billion and comes alongside the UK's delivery of a \$3.3 billion pledge to the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Trust, which provides affordable long-term financing to low-income countries and vulnerable middle-income countries to address challenges such as climate change, energy security and pandemic preparedness.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt said:

"The \$1bn of budget support we have committed to Ukraine this year will ensure that the country has the financing to keep the lights on, hospitals running and schools open. This, alongside UK military support, will help defeat Putin.

"But our efforts for a fairer world don't end there. We are also making good on our G7 Presidency commitments and delivering a multi-billion-pound package of support to reduce poverty and bolster energy security across developing countries."

The UK's financial commitment to Ukraine has helped unlock the IMF's provision of a \$15.6bn 4-year programme for the country.

In total, the UK has pledged £6.5bn in support of Ukraine, including \$1bn in loans guaranteed by the UK to support Ukraine's economy in 2023 – meaning that it can continue to pay pensions and public sector pay – and £2.3bn in military support for 2023. This June the UK will also host the Ukraine Recovery Conference, focussing on mobilising further private sector investment.

At the IMF Spring Meetings, the Chancellor will also highlight the impact of Russia's illegal war in Ukraine on the global economy and push for action in addressing developing country needs on debt. The economic impacts from Putin's illegal war in Ukraine are being felt across

the globe, with developing nations particularly affected by increases in food prices. The latest \$670m commitment to the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust adds to the UK's previous agreement to the fund of \$1.3bn, with the total now standing at \$2bn.

The Chancellor signed this commitment on Wednesday alongside IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva. In this meeting, he also finalised a \$3.3bn pledge on behalf of the UK to the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Trust. Funding for this Trust will play a vital role in providing financing to bolster energy and combat climate change, including for Ukraine and other countries worst affected by the war.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said:

“Russia continues to bombard Ukraine’s people and destroy Ukrainian infrastructure. The UK is resolute in its commitment to support Ukraine until peace is agreed on Ukrainian terms.

“This funding will boost Ukraine’s economic resilience and bolster its resistance against Russia. Working with the IMF and international partners, I am proud of the UK’s contribution to unlocking vital finance for Ukraine.

“Ensuring Ukraine’s fiscal, humanitarian and recovery needs is a core part of our long-term commitment to Ukraine. That’s why the UK is proud to be co-hosting – jointly with Ukraine – the Ukraine Recovery Conference.”

A challenging World Economic Outlook published by the IMF earlier this week predicted a ‘rocky road’ for global economies, including the U.K., however Britain is still forecast to see faster growth than Germany, France and Italy in each of years from 2025 to 2028. The UK avoided recession in 2022 and is now expected to avoid recession this year. According to the independent Office for Budget Responsibility, the UK is on track to more than halve inflation this year and reduce debt by the end of the forecast period.

The Chancellor is currently attending his first IMF meeting in Washington D.C., discussing how his Autumn Statement and Spring Budget have set the UK on a stable path to growth. He will attend IMF Committee meetings, G7 and G20 finance minister meetings and a series of bilateral engagements.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt said:

“Our support for other countries comes at a time when I am deeply focussed on getting the UK’s economy growing, and our plan for that is working as we’re on track to halve inflation this year.

“A strong UK economy, creating jobs and raising living standards for all will benefit citizens at home as well as having knock on positive impact around the world.”



HM Treasury

VAPE SCHEME RISKS PLAYING WITH FIRE ON SAFETY

British Metals Recycling Association warns the Government of safety concerns when disposing of the devices.

THE Government is “playing with fire” with its proposed vape swap to stop scheme, a leading trade association has warned.

Under new measures, councils and others are set to offer a million smokers across England a free vaping starter-kit in a bid to drive down cigarette use.

But the British Metals Recycling Association (BMRA) say the scheme poses a fire risk because the current regulations for disposal of both single-use and rechargeable vapes are often not being followed and are leading to an increasing number of blazes.

James Kelly, the CEO of the [BMRA](#), said:

“Vapes are essentially small electronic devices and are subject to regulations when no longer required. However, the reality is that not enough of the public are aware of this and often throw vapes and other electronic items containing lithium-ion batteries in a bin, which, when damaged, are causing fires and can even explode.

“That’s why the BMRA is concerned about this scheme.

We believe Ministers are playing with fire with this policy and that an awareness and education campaign is urgently needed.

“We are reiterating our call for lithium-ion batteries, alongside waste electrical and electronic equipment, to be able to be collected in a kerbside collection to ensure ease of disposal for householders.

“We also need to see a system for appropriate, on-the-go disposal of vapes being made available. This will help to protect workers from fires and explosions caused by these batteries and ensure all component parts can be safely and properly recycled.”

With 1.3 million single-use vapes thrown away every week, this scheme could add even more to that number requiring disposal.

Lithium-ion batteries, according to Material Focus, cause “three and half times more” fires in the waste stream.



Richmond upon Thames's smoking mortality rate is the 3rd lowest in the UK

The **top 10 UK areas with the lowest smoking mortality rates** have been revealed by a new study and **Richmond upon Thames** features in **3rd** place with **113 smoking-related deaths** per 100,000 residents.

The report, created by health experts at [Now Patient](#), has revealed the **UK locations with the highest and lowest number of smokers**, the locations with the most and least amount of smoking-related deaths.

You can view the full research here - <https://nowpatient.com/blog/health-news/uk-smoking-report>

Top UK 10 areas with the fewest smoking-related deaths

Rank	Local Authority	Country	Population	Smoking Mortality Rate (per 100,000 residents)
1	Harrow	England	260,987	103
2	Wokingham	England	178,169	108
3	Richmond upon Thames	England	195,232	113
4	Rutland	England	41,381	123
5	Redbridge	England	309,836	124
6	Lisburn and Castlereagh	Northern Ireland	149,272	124
7	Ealing	England	366,127	125
8	Kensington and Chelsea	England	143,940	130
9	Barnet	England	388,639	131
10	Westminster	England	205,087	135

The research also revealed:

- **Richmond upon Thames** has the **lowest proportion of smokers in the UK**, with just **5.90%** of the population currently smoking.
- **Glasgow** has the **highest** number of **smoking-related deaths** in the UK, with **509** deaths per 100,000 residents. Fellow Scottish city, **Dundee** has recorded **448** deaths per 100,000 residents which is the **second-highest** total of any UK area.
- **Harrow** has recorded the **fewest** number of **smoking-related deaths**, with **103** deaths per 100,000 residents. **Wokingham's** total of **108** smoking-related deaths per 100,000 residents is the **second** lowest total in the UK, whilst the **113** recorded deaths per 100,000 residents in **Richmond upon Thames** is the **third** lowest.
- **Seven** of the **top 10 UK areas** with the highest smoking mortality rate are located in **Scotland**, whilst only **two English cities**, Kingston upon Hull and Manchester feature. **No Welsh** areas feature in the top 10, with **Denbighshire** featuring in **11th** place.

You can view the comprehensive research again by [clicking here](#).

Young Responders street first aid programme goes live 15,000 to be trained by end of 2023

A street first aid programme for secondary school students and young adults aged up to 25 is being rolled out in areas of London, West Midlands and the North East with the goal of giving 15,000 young people street first aid skills.

Young Responders is a new St John Ambulance youth programme offering life-saving street first aid skills for some of the real-life situations young people may find themselves in. This programme was awarded £1 million through Recovery Fund, thanks to funds raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery, to help people learn traditional physical first aid skills such as how to put a person in recovery position, plus street first aid such as knife wounds, spiking and alcohol and drug intoxication, as well as tips on mental health awareness.

Raisa Stefanescu, 17, a youth volunteer with St John, from East London, [appears in a short film](#) to be shown in schools about the Young Responder Programme. In the film, she explains, "It is a sad reality, but St John is adapting to the ever-changing needs of communities. I live in Becton, which is safe in the day, but at night, like a lot of London, it can be unsafe. It can be hard to have a happy youth in Becton" she explains as she walks past a spot a 17-year-old boy was stabbed. She added, "If your best friend was stabbed or attacked in the street – would you know what to do? If their drink was spiked, or they'd had too much to drink, and had collapsed, having the skills to step in during those vital seconds makes all the difference – it saves lives."

Targeting young people in underrepresented areas, Young Responders is geared towards young people at risk of street violence, looked after young people, those who care for someone at home, and those at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET). As part of the pilot, the St John Young Responder programme team visited schools and colleges in the three target areas in London, West Midlands and the North East.

Gateshead College Academy pupil, Jacob Roberts, 18, who attended a Young Responder pilot session said, "I liked the session a lot and it would be relevant to people to keep them vigilant and on their toes at all times, this is because of the current rate of knife and drug crime at the minute. Different people will benefit from this because of the risks and some people may have friends or family members that has happened to them. I will remember the DR ABC the most which stands for D-Danger R-response A-Airway B-Breathing C-Circulation. This will be a very important life skill because it will help save lives."

Dominic Hood, 18, also a pupil at Gateshead College said, "The part of the session I will remember the most is the CPR as it is a very simple but very effective technique to help try to rescue someone from death." He added that 'knife crime problem and drugs are becoming a problem with more people supplying them to younger ages.'

A visit to James Brindley Academy in Birmingham as part of the pilot was also successful, with pupils keen to learn first aid skills. Health and Social Care teacher Iain Grant said, "I thought it was an excellent relevant experience for the students who were really engaged and keen to take part in the role play of knife crime, creating a tourniquet and the mental health activity. The pupils have gained valuable first aid skills from this session. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend inviting St John Ambulance to come and work with our students again. The skills they picked up in this session could one day save a life."

Bayley Breecher, 15, said, "It was useful. If I was in that position, I would feel more confident in dealing with the situation."

Currently being delivered in school and colleges, St John hopes to partner with existing groups supporting communities to deliver Young Responders in the community and where possible, involve existing Cadets to help deliver Young Responder sessions.

Director of Youth and Education at St John, Paul Evans said, "Young people aged 10-19 represent 11% of the total population of the UK, and 10-24 year-olds, make up 18% of the population. But not all of these young people get the same start in life, or opportunities. Young Responders will engage and empower young people from diverse communities to become active health citizens, learning practical physical and mental health first aid sessions relevant to the challenges they face."

Laura Chow, Head of Charities at People's Postcode Lottery, said: "It is fantastic to see young people across the UK learning first-aid skills through Young Responders. The Recovery Fund was created to help charities develop innovative solutions to the many issues affecting people since the Covid -19 pandemic. We look forward to seeing more communities benefiting from more young people being trained in vital life-saving skills."



Avian Influenza A(H3N8) – China

Situation at a glance

On 27 March 2023, the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China notified WHO of one confirmed case of human infection with an avian influenza A(H3N8) virus. This is the third reported case of human infection with an avian influenza A(H3N8) virus; all three cases have been reported from China.

Epidemiological investigation and close contact tracing have been carried out. There have been no other cases found among close contacts of the infected individual.

Based on available information, it appears that this virus does not have the ability to spread easily from person to person, and therefore the risk of it spreading among humans at the national, regional, and international levels is considered to be low. However, due to the constantly evolving nature of influenza viruses, WHO stresses the importance of global surveillance to detect virological, epidemiological and clinical changes associated with circulating influenza viruses which may affect human (or animal) health.

Description of the situation

On 27 March 2023, the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China notified WHO of one confirmed case of human infection with an avian influenza A(H3N8) virus. The patient was a 56-year-old female from Guangdong province with an onset of illness on 22 February 2023. She was hospitalized for severe pneumonia on 3 March 2023 and subsequently died on 16 March 2023.

The case was detected through the severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) surveillance system. The patient had multiple underlying conditions. She had a history of exposure to live poultry before the onset of the disease, and a history of wild bird presence around her home. No close contacts of the case developed an infection or symptoms of illness at the time of reporting.

Environmental samples were collected from the patient's residence and the wet market where the patient spent time before the onset of illness. The results of testing showed that the samples collected from the wet market were positive for influenza A(H3).

Epidemiology of the disease

Zoonotic influenza infections in humans may be asymptomatic or may cause disease. Depending on factors related to the specific virus and the infected host, disease can range from conjunctivitis or mild flu-like symptoms to severe acute respiratory disease or even death. Gastrointestinal or neurological symptoms have been reported but these are rare.

Human cases of infection with avian influenza viruses are usually the result of direct or indirect exposure to infected live or dead poultry or contaminated environments.

WHO risk assessment

Avian influenza A(H3N8) viruses are commonly detected globally in animals. Influenza A(H3N8) viruses are some of the most commonly found subtypes in birds, causing little to no sign of disease in either domestic poultry or wild birds. Cross-species transmission of A(H3N8) avian influenza viruses has been reported for various mammal species, including being endemic in dogs and horses.

This is the third reported human infection with A(H3N8) from China. Two previous cases were reported in April and May 2022. One of the previous cases developed a critical illness, while the other had a mild illness. Both cases likely acquired infection from direct or indirect exposure to infected poultry. So far, no additional cases linked with this case, nor the previous cases, have been reported. According to reports from health officials, the preliminary epidemiological investigation into this event suggests that exposure to a live poultry market may have been the cause of infection. However, it is still unclear what the exact source of this infection is and how this virus is related to other avian influenza A(H3N8) viruses that are circulating in animals. To better understand the current risk to public health, more information is needed from both human and animal investigation.

The transmission of avian influenza viruses from birds to humans is usually sporadic and happens in a specific context: most human infections with avian influenza viruses that have been reported previously were due to exposure to infected poultry or contaminated environments. Since avian influenza viruses continue to be detected in poultry populations, further sporadic human cases are expected in the future.

The available epidemiological and virological information suggests that avian influenza A(H3N8) viruses do not have the capacity for sustained transmission among humans. Therefore, the current assessment is that the likelihood of human-to-human spread is low. However, due to the constantly evolving nature of influenza viruses, WHO continues to stress the importance of global surveillance to detect virologic, epidemiologic and clinical changes associated with circulating influenza viruses which may affect human (or animal) health.

WHO advice

To minimize the risk of infection, countries should increase public awareness of the importance of avoiding contact with high-risk environments such as live animal markets/farms, live poultry, or surfaces that may be contaminated by poultry or bird faeces. It is recommended to maintain good hand hygiene by frequently washing hands or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer and wearing respiratory protection when in a risky environment.

Given the observed extent and frequency of avian influenza cases in wild birds and some wild mammals, the public should avoid contact with animals that are sick or dead from unknown causes and should report the occurrence to the authorities.

Travellers to countries with known outbreaks of animal influenza should avoid farms, contact with animals in live animal markets, entering areas where animals may be slaughtered, or contact with any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with animal faeces or other body fluids. Travellers should also wash their hands often with soap and water and follow good food safety and good food hygiene practices.

WHO advises against the application of travel or trade restrictions based on the information available at this time.

Influenza viruses are constantly evolving and large outbreaks occur among animal populations, which is why WHO stresses the importance of global surveillance to detect any changes in virology, epidemiology, and clinical patterns associated with emerging or circulating influenza viruses, which may pose a threat to human or animal health. Collaboration between the animal and human health sectors is essential. As the extent of influenza viruses circulation in animals is not clear, epidemiologic and virologic surveillance and the follow-up of suspected human cases should continue systematically. Timely sharing of information is critical for risk assessment.

The variety of zoonotic influenza viruses that have led to human infections is worrying and demands increased surveillance in both animal and human populations, as well as a comprehensive examination of each zoonotic infection, and planning for pandemics. To prevent a viral mutation that could make human-to-human transmission easier, poultry workers have been recommended to receive seasonal influenza vaccination.

If a human infection with a novel influenza virus that has pandemic potential, such as avian influenza, is confirmed or suspected, even before receiving confirmatory laboratory results, contact tracing should be immediately initiated. A thorough epidemiological investigation should be conducted, including a history of travel and exposure to animals. The investigation should also involve early identification of unusual clusters of respiratory disease that could indicate person-to-person transmission of the novel virus. Clinical samples collected from the time and place that the case occurred should be tested, and then sent to a WHO Collaborating Centre for further characterization.

Close analysis of the epidemiological situation, further characterization of the most recent viruses found in humans and poultry, and serological investigations, are critical to assess risk and to adjust risk management measures in a timely manner.

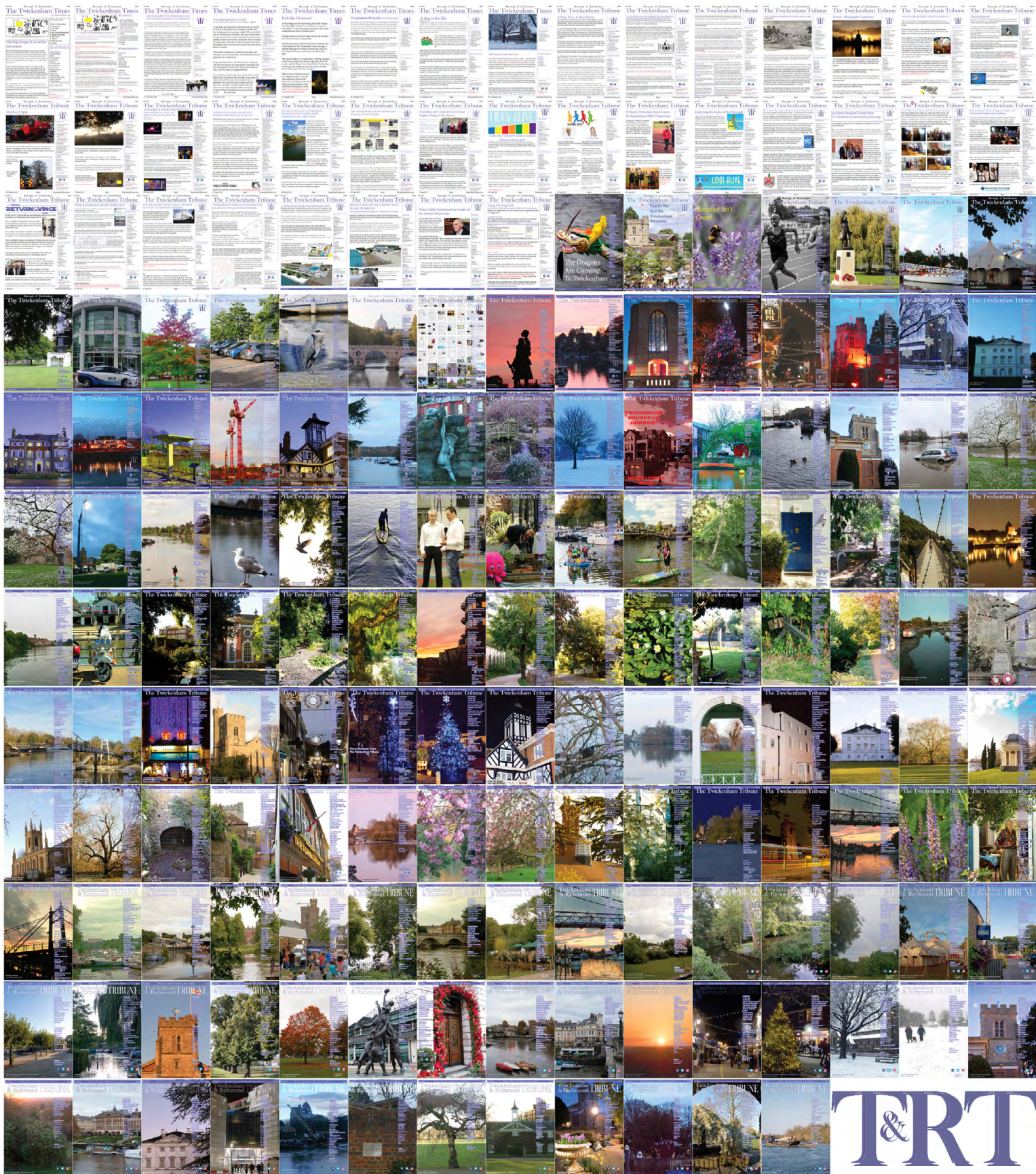
Under the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), States Parties are required to immediately notify WHO of any laboratory-confirmed case of human infection caused by a new subtype of influenza virus. Investigation, virus sharing, and genetic and antigenic characterization of every human infection are essential.

This event does not change the current recommendations from WHO for public health measures and surveillance of influenza.



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