

Twickenham & Richmond TRIBUNE

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12th March 2021

T&RT

TickerTape - News in Brief

Twickenham Green Vigil May Not Be Allowed To Proceed

The organisers (Reclaim These Streets) of a vigil planned for Sarah Everard on Clapham Common have lost their legal challenge against a police ban on the event, due to coronavirus restrictions. The BBC reported that a High Court judge refused to intervene in the case after a hearing on 12th March.

As well as the vigil on Clapham Common events have been planned in other areas including Cardiff, Leeds and Liverpool.

Twickenham Green was included in the list for a vigil on 13th March citing the murder of Amélie Delagrange on Twickenham Green in 2004 by Levi Bellfield, who was also convicted of the murders Milly Dowler in 2002, Marsha McDonnell, 2003 and the attempted murder of Kate Sheedy in Isleworth in 2004.

However, it was pointed out that we are in the middle of a pandemic (the current lockdown aims to avoid spreading the virus).

The organisers were informed that the vigil would be illegal and hands were tied by Covid-19 regulations; organisers would be liable to be issued with £10,000 fixed penalty notices and could also be arrested.

The judge said that there may be further consultation between the claimants and the police. There will be updates from the organisers and police on Saturday morning.

Teddington Lock Body Identified

A body found in the Thames near Teddington lock area on Tuesday, 9th March has been positively identified as John O'Reilly (68) of Kingston. This is not being treated as suspicious. Our thoughts are with his friends and family at this time.

South Twickenham Ward Panel Survey

Here's your chance to have a say about how South Twickenham Safer Neighbourhoods Team are doing. Complete the survey [HERE](#)

[Visit the News page for more stories](#)



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TwickerSeal is looking forward to this after what has been a very difficult year for most of us. But he can't help but worry that we will return to the Anti-Social Behaviour and public urination we suffered last year.

Despite last year's public outcry, petitions and council Zoom meetings the council have not put forward their plans to tackle this problem. In just over two weeks up to six people will be able to gather in groups outdoors and in a month pub gardens will reopen, no doubt with the off-sales that contributed to last year's problems.

But the problems are already starting. This week a man was seen climbing into the grounds of Holy Trinity Church (Twickenham Green) to relieve himself, a couple of weeks ago someone was seen urinating in the listed red telephone box on First Cross Road and before that a Twickenham Green resident complained about a man urinating against a tree on the Green opposite her house.

So, will the council let us know what their plans are and when they are going to be implemented? Or will we be discussing this in August again?



Borough View By Graeme Stoten

First blossom...

Cherry blossom is now breaking into flower across the borough and whilst is clearly identifiable from afar as a great mass of pink and white hue, up close it shows off it's very delicate and intricate flower: most cherry blossoms originate from Japan and hold an important place in their culture. Primrose Jasmine provide a gentle contrast.



World Health Organization (12 March 2021)

“WHO’s Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety systematically reviews safety signals, and is carefully assessing the current reports on the AstraZeneca vaccine.

More than 335 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered globally so far, and no deaths have been found to have been caused by COVID-19 vaccines. But at least 2.6 million people have been killed by the virus.

Today, WHO gave emergency use listing to Johnson & Johnson’s COVID-19 vaccine, making it the fourth vaccine to receive WHO’s approval. Emergency use listing is the green light for a vaccine to be procured and rolled out by COVAX. The COVAX Facility has booked 500 million doses of the J&J vaccine, and we look forward to receiving them as soon as possible.”

Overview From the World Health Organization 9th March 2021:

“Over 2.7 million new COVID-19 cases were reported last week, a 2% increase compared to the previous week. The global case increase was driven by increases in the Eastern Mediterranean (10%), African Region (10%), and Europe (4%), while small declines were seen in the Americas (-2%), South-East Asia (-2%) and Western Pacific regions (-6%).”

In the News: 12 March 2021

- German officials back AstraZeneca vaccine after clot concerns.
- Italy announces a national lockdown over the Easter weekend.
- Kenya extends nationwide COVID-19 curfew for two months.
- In Brazil hospitals are pushed to the limit as Covid-19 deaths soar. (Reuters)

COVID-19

Avoid places where the three Cs come together
Crowds, Closed spaces, Close contact

Follow strict personal hygiene advice, wear a mask
and keep indoor areas well ventilated

DO IT ALL

www.twickenhamtribune.com

Cases of COVID-19

Total cases to 12 March 2021

10,513 Richmond upon Thames

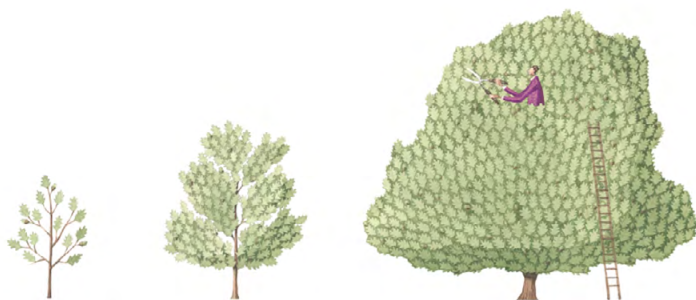
11,889 Kingston upon Thames

24,047 Hounslow

Countries with High Numbers of Deaths Recorded by the World Health Organization

Deaths Worldwide 2,621,046

USA	525,495	Peru	48,323
Brazil	270,656	Poland	46,373
Mexico	192,488	Indonesia	38,049
India	158,306	Turkey	29,227
The United Kingdom	124,987	Ukraine	27,685
Italy	100,811	Czechia	22,624
Russian Federation	90,734	Belgium	22,347
France	89,077	Canada	22,335
Germany	72,810	Chile	21,362
Spain	71,961	Romania	21,156
Iran	61,016	Portugal	16,617
Colombia	60,773	Hungary	16,497
Argentina	53,493	Ecuador	16,105
South Africa	51,015	Netherlands	15,948



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The Tree Agency

Some old fashioned Gaiety

By Simon Fowler

Twickenham's first cinemas came a decade after moving films were first shown in the town. The earliest film shows locally were held in the old Town Hall in King Street in the late 1890s showing scenes from Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee procession through London and short comic skits. The largest of the early cinemas was the Gaiety Picture Playhouse in Richmond Road, St Margarets, which opened in 1912. It claimed to be the 'most elaborate and well-appointed Theatre in the Kingdom'.

Local newspapers described the 600-seat auditorium when it opened as being richly decorated in Watteau style and illuminated by concealed lights, but Fred Windsor – a life-long cinema enthusiast – never remembered 'the main lights ever going up and by the end of the [Twenties] the place was beginning to show signs of wear.'

The Gaiety's poor condition was perhaps not helped by raucous Saturday morning children's matinees. Windsor said that when there was a showing of 'The Kid' starring Charlie Chaplin and Jackie Coogan: 'I shall never forget the noise from the audience including the shouts of warning to Charlie when the Kid was about to be taken away.'



Courtesy Richmond Archives and Local Studies (LCF 13206)

There was always a battle about taste. In 1916, the cinema was proud to show films: 'which are funny without being vulgar.' A decade later 'Two Women' was advertised as being 'For adults only' with a mildly suggestive picture of a young woman undressing.

During the Spanish Flu Pandemic, the cinema admitted that 'the influenza has been down on here. We kept the Gaiety well aired and open as usual because it was best for the public to have a warm cheerful place to which it could go – but you would be astonished to know how much money we've lost in these two weeks.'

During the 1920s the Gaiety showed movies which recreated heroic events from the Great War. For 'Mons', showing the British Army's retreat from Mons in September 1914, copies of specially commissioned music could be purchased in the foyer. The tagline for the film proclaimed: 'You will want to stand up and shout, "Thank God I'm British," when you see this super British production.'

The arrival of the Talkies in 1929 was the final straw for the cinema. And Fred Windsor found that: 'the synchronisation of disc and film was all that good which resulted at times in some curious and hilarious effects.'

After the Gaiety's closure in March 1930 the building became a temperance billiard hall. Remarkably it survives as Richmond Bridge House, although it takes some imagination to see what it had once been.

For more about the cinema visit: www.twickenhampark.co.uk/gaiety%20cinema%20twickenham.html

Dear Editor,

Twickenham Green toilets

As spring and fine weather approach, I'm sure the Council will appreciate TwickerSeal's timely reminder that they must address the essential need for public toilets on Twickenham Green.

I recollect that last year the Council mooted the idea of opening the toilets in the cricket pavilion for general use. I hope this no longer forms part of their thinking.

First, it is impractical. Turning private toilets with limited use into public toilets with unrestricted use would demand a cleaning regime on a much greater scale. Not least, as some members of the public, after taking a drink, are less than careful or clean in their toilet habits. Do the Council expect that the volunteer members of the cricket club would be willing and able take on this pleasant task?

Second, it is potentially dangerous. The cricket club numbers amongst its members a large number of children, some of a young age. Is it not possible that these children would be put at risk if adults, who are strangers, were given free access to the premises? Is it not possible that some of these adults would be 'worse for wear' and free in their use of language and disrespectful in their behaviour? Is it also not possible that some of these adults would be drug users or dealers? Again, do the Council expect that the volunteer members of the cricket club would be willing or able to assume a supervisory role to protect their children from these dangers?

In short, it is blindingly obvious that the use of the pavilion toilets as a public facility would be reprehensible and irresponsible.

Can we be sure that the Council will not pursue this option as a means of shirking their own responsibility to provide clean, modern and well maintained facilities for public use.?

Yours

W Stewart, Richmond



Rhubarb

It is still too early for the stalks of rhubarb to be harvested from the kitchen garden. They might not even appear in Marble Hill Park until the early days of May. Yet the days have become milder as the vernal equinox slowly approaches and there is, perhaps, no other plant that I await with more zeal than this herald of the spring.

The roots of *rheum rhabarbum* - or the common rhubarb - are native to the highlands of western China. Other wild varieties, which are considered to be of less medicinal value, have also occurred in the Himalayas and Tibet. The plant belongs to the Polygonaceae family, to whom we also owe the wild mountain sorrel and the Japanese knotweed. On the British Isles, their roots have shown the ability to withstand long-enduring rain and the pollution of smoke.

It was not until the early nineteenth century that small bundles of rhubarb first appeared on the markets of the city of London. Their dried roots, or so I have read, might have been originally brought towards the Levant from China via long caravan carriages that would have travelled overland. Those that had been conveyed from Samarkand were once as valuable as musk or saffron. Jean de Joinville, who compiled *The Chronicles of Crusades*, reported that they must have come from some earthly paradise and would have floated on the Nile.

The roots of rhubarb may be cultivated in a field, which would have previously been fertilised with the discarded fibres of wool and night-soil. Another method of cultivation, said to have originated in the county of Yorkshire, is the forcing of their stalks. After an initial exposure to the frost, their roots are transported to a shed devoid of sunlight. The shed itself would have been lit by merely the light of several candles, which were evenly distributed so that the farmers could still find their way in the dark.



One of the most joyous prospects of the spring might be the large array of colours it will bring to the kitchen garden. The humble rhubarb, grown in a corner, will be amongst the first to appear. This year, I will celebrate the sun by baking a tart from their stalks with some buckwheat flour and some ginger. Perhaps with the thought in my mind that many ancient botanists have long sought for their enigmatic stalks in distant lands.

RICHMOND PASSES GO!

Congrats to Richmond-upon-Thames!

You are 'Passing GO' – as Winning Moves announce they are making an official MONOPOLY game for the borough.

The game will be out in October but first, they need your help!

We want you to vote for which LBRT landmarks should be featured on the board.

The squares like Mayfair and Park Lane from the classic London original will take on a Richmond-upon-Thames theme. So it's likely to be a case of Advance to Ham House and Garden. And collect some MONOPOLY dollars!

You can suggest landmarks for squares - and ideas for cards on their Facebook page [HERE](#) .. or by email to: richmond@winningmoves.co.uk

Polls are open now. They close at 23.59pm on 24th March.



Call out to EU residents – get help applying for British nationality

EU nationals living in the borough are invited to attend an online webinar to help them understand how to apply for British nationality.

The virtual event will be held on Wednesday 31 March 2021 at 2.30pm. Attendees will be able to find out who is eligible to apply for British nationality and cover the application process, both for adults and children.

The event is delivered by Citizens Advice Richmond as part of a package of support, funded by the Council, aimed at enabling EU residents to get impartial, expert advice on nationality matters and options available for them.

Although the event is free you do need to [register to attend](#). You can also [sign up for updates](#) from Citizens Advice Richmond.

The Council is urging all residents from EU countries and eligible non-EEA nationals who want to stay in the UK to [apply to the EU Settlement Scheme](#) as soon as possible. The deadline to apply is **Wednesday 30 June 2021**.



The Royal Parks' traffic reduction measures to remain in place for another year

Public support sees car-free spaces retained in the parks

The Royal Parks charity will retain measures to reduce the impact of cut-through traffic for another year. This follows the completion of traffic-related trials across five parks to create new car-free spaces for people to enjoy.

The six-month trials, which concluded in February 2021, incorporated widespread public consultation which received almost 18,000 responses.

While the consultation responses results varied across the parks, overall, they indicated support and a desire to see less cut-through traffic in the parks.

The consultations, which took place over eight weeks between November and December 2020, invited views from across a broad range of groups who use the parks, as well as feedback from local residents, businesses and interest groups. The Royal Parks received a total of 17,850 online survey responses, carried out 447 face-to-face park visitor surveys and received 397 email submissions.

The Royal Parks will keep the measures to reduce cut-through traffic in place until March 2022 and will collect additional data to ensure a clear picture of the impact of the schemes, before determining whether they should be made permanent.

The measures include closing sections of roads to cut-through traffic to create new park spaces for visitors to enjoy. This includes making The Mall in St James's Park car-free on weekends during daylight hours, and creating a car-free space on Chestnut Avenue in the centre of Bushy Park.

Andrew Scattergood, The Royal Parks' Chief Executive, said: "London's green spaces are vital refuges where people can come to escape from the busy city, and never has this been more apparent than over the past 12 months. These trials have proved that there is support from park visitors to limit cut-through traffic and create car-free spaces, where people can enjoy spending time in the natural environment to boost their health and happiness. We've had an enormous response to the consultation, and we want to thank everyone for their participation and for sharing their views. We'll continue to work with our neighbours to monitor these projects and their impact and continue to listen to the views of park visitors."

Over the next 12 months, The Royal Parks will continue to make proactive changes to keep the parks safe and further enhance the park visitor experience, for example by providing improved signage.

These trials follow the launch of The Royal Parks' Movement Strategy in July 2020, which set a coherent framework to help shape how park visitors can access, experience and move within the parks. This incorporated an earlier wide-ranging consultation across thousands of members of the public, transport partners and local boroughs.

The Royal Parks' Movement Strategy

The Royal Parks' Movement Trials



In August 2020, The Royal Parks launched a series of traffic-related trials across five parks to reduce the impact of cut-through traffic, improve the park visitor experience and open new spaces for park visitors to enjoy.

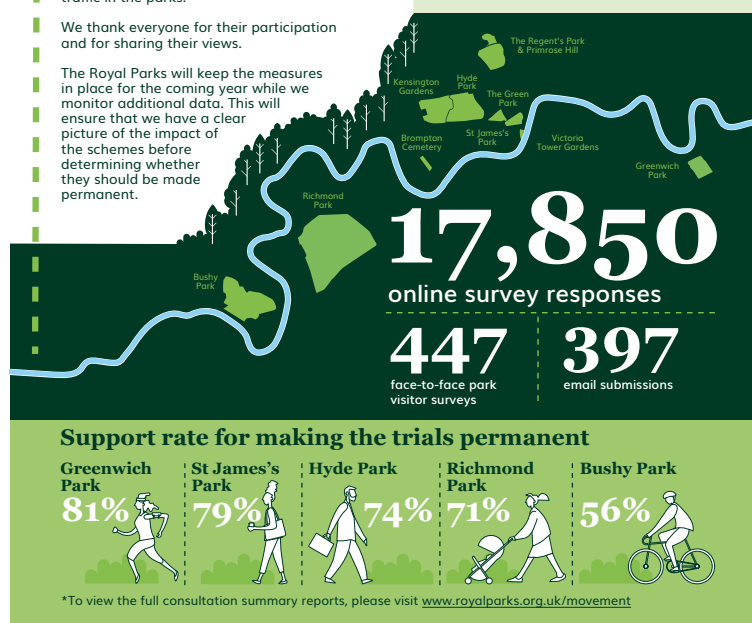
In November and December, we undertook widespread public consultation seeking views on these schemes and received almost 18,000 responses. While the consultation results varied across the parks, overall they indicate support and a desire to see less cut-through traffic in the parks.

We thank everyone for their participation and for sharing their views.

The Royal Parks will keep the measures in place for the coming year while we monitor additional data. This will ensure that we have a clear picture of the impact of the schemes before determining whether they should be made permanent.

We will continue to:

- Work with our neighbours to monitor these projects and their impact
- Make the necessary changes to ensure these spaces operate in a safe way
- Provide welcoming and clear signage to encourage positive use of the parks
- Listen to and consider the views of park visitors



Have your say on the new Community Centre and affordable housing scheme for Teddington

Local residents and users of Elleray Hall can now have their say on the latest plans for a new community centre and affordable housing scheme in Teddington.

On Wednesday 10 March, the latest proposals for a new fit for purpose centre on the North Lane East Car Park and former depot site, and 100% affordable housing on the existing site were published, and the community are now being invited to have their say on the plans.

Elleray Hall in Teddington is a popular daytime social centre for residents across the borough. The current building has reached the end of its useful life and is too costly to maintain. The vision for the new Community Centre is for it to be at the heart of the local community. It will continue to offer core services for older residents, but also allowing and encouraging a wider range of groups and individuals to use the centre, enabled by a more flexible design. In addition, the Council is proposing to work with a social housing provider to build a small 100% affordable housing development on the current Elleray site once the new building is up and running.



The Council is keen to update residents on the latest plans and hear their ideas for the future community centre building and the affordable housing scheme, before a planning application is submitted in the summer. On Wednesday 10th March, a virtual question and answer session was held, presenting the proposals to members of the public. A video of the presentation, exhibition boards and questionnaire are now [available online](#). In addition, another online session will be held on **Saturday 20 March at 11am to 1.30pm**, where the architect will present the designs to members of the public followed by a question and answer session.

Register for the event [HERE](#)

Many residents oppose council's Elleray Hall proposals

The Tribune understands that many Teddington residents, particularly those in the Elleray Road area, oppose the council's proposed development of the Elleray Hall and North Lane East Car Park.

When consulted many local residents asked that Elleray Hall be rebuilt (or refurbished) on the existing site and the North Lane East Car Park be retained. Concern has been raised about the impact of losing the car park in conjunction with the new CPZ's.

BOXING CLEVER WITH MEAL KITS

I don't know about you, but for me, the idea of someone offering me choices for our evening meals, and then 'miraculously' providing us with all the ingredients needed, plus instructions on preparing it, seems like a great idea! In essence, that's what many of the meal subscription kits are, and as I have tried some different ones now, I thought I would share my experience.

For someone who isn't used to cooking, or isn't that experimental in the kitchen, these are fabulous! There is usually a wide choice of recipes to suit most diets, and often they are calorie counted, and have an approximate prep/ cooking time, so you really know where you are



time-wise. It's also a great way of sampling different ingredients - such as spices – before investing in a full sized pack. And for some dishes – Asian recipes for example – it's great to be sent just the one chilli and piece of fresh ginger needed, so you don't waste food. Step by step instructions are provided too, and the meals are labelled and arrive carefully packed in bags. When selecting your meals, you can see what equipment you need, the approximate preparation time and cooking times. I quite like choosing the 'one pot' recipes so that I can prep them, and then just leave them to cook! An example was the oven baked

Normandy Chicken & Apple casserole (Gousto) - very easy and scrumptious.

A word of caution: when you first order, you are usually then automatically subscribed, so keep an eye on your settings and delivery schedules otherwise you might find they have selected your meals for you, based on a previous order. You could come back from holiday to find a couple of boxes with the contents rotting away near your doorstep! I jest though, as they are normally good at confirming your orders by email to remind you.

Let's start with **Gousto** – currently heavily promoted with TV and press advertising. It promises a wide range of recipes to suit most diets, and the recipe choice varies each week. You can choose two to four meals, for two or four people, and whether to have weekly, fortnightly or monthly deliveries. The boxes arrive on the day you select when signing up, and they claim to source carefully, using British meat and seasonal British produce where possible. There is also a range of recipes developed with Joe Wicks using lean proteins and lots of fruit and veg. We were tempted by the discounted offer on the first month's deliveries and – like the proverbial curate's egg – it was good in parts. The ingredients are good quality and for anyone who has a caravan, boat or plans a self-catering holiday, it's a great way of stocking up with 'travel cooking supplies'. As I already had full sized packs of



many sauces and spices supplied, I have been happily stashing away lots of the pre-portioned packs to take on the boat trips we plan to make this summer, lockdown permitting. And it's definitely good value for money and avoids wasted ingredients. Conversely, there is quite a bit of faffing around with small packages, mostly plastic (but they are trying to reduce plastic use). But after a full month of Gousto deliveries, I have to admit I felt relieved at the prospect of being able to decide for myself what to cook that day, so have adjusted our subscription to just once a month for my 'lazy week'. Gousto is very good value (from £2.98 to £6.25 per serving, depending on number of people and meals per week).



Before I tried Gousto, I tried **Mindful Chef**. More expensive than Gousto (£6 – £9.50 per person per meal), I found the ingredients excellent, but on occasions I became frustrated at the cooking methods that, to me, had some unnecessary steps. For example: peeling and dicing butternut squash, then boiling it, draining and then frying. Helloo? Surely much easier just to roast in small cubes? Another recipe - for a stroganoff - suggested taking the cooked mince and making meatballs. Another strange step, I thought. so ignored. And the resulting dish was still really delicious! These companies offer

an introductory incentive, so if this type of delivery appeals, you'd be wise to try each one for a while, to see which you prefer. But these two are both good and offer a range of styles and dietary options.

If you have the wherewithal, you might also like to try **Love Yourself**. This is the ultimate indulgence for a busy person, or a couple with hectic lifestyles and different diet choices. The company will deliver premium food for each day, freshly prepared (and now available nationally). Each 'day' is three meals and two snacks (from £25 per person per day) and there are various themes such as Balanced 2000 or 1600, dairy free, vegetarian, keto or performance. Every meal is scannable via the MyFitness app to keep track of calories and macro-nutrients. The packs are biodegradable and when I tried a day's meals, some of them didn't look that appealing having moved around in their packs during transit, but I have to say that everything was delicious. It is quite expensive though, but the convenience of knowing you have all your meals sorted and ready to eat or heat through can be worth it. Also, this company sensibly offers you the option of a trial box for just £15, delivered.



To sum up, these services are a godsend for many people. They offer the chance to be more adventurous and experimental in your culinary repertoire, and avoid food waste. Do try them out – they can be a great time and money saver.



Virtual Fifth

Poetry Performance, On-Line, 7th March

Cast your minds back to October for just a moment. In a brief respite from the virus, Poetry Performance, the staunch troop of Teddington poets, who in the past performed in person at The Adelaide pub, settled with palpable comradery, into a new on-line home (recalled in [Virtual One](#) through to [Four](#)).

Everyone is welcome, and host Heather Montford offers encouragement to all brave enough to share. Tonight's featured poet, Eddie Chauncy, also has a few pearls of wisdom to offer to budding poets in his insightful interview with Keith Wait; a treat sandwiched between the two acts.



Terry Bedell's hot-off-the-press offering on the theme of 'Promises' *Giving it Up for Lent* is tightly controlled in structure and style, but light in tone. As the child who voices the poem runs through an itemised list of what they are giving up, he falls at each hurdle. Bedell's earnest and well-observed delivery is a pitch-perfect delight.

Fran Thurling's *Ode to Promise* tips its hat to Keats' poetry on the bicentenary of his death. Confessing her poem to owe a lot to his words, her own thoughtful phrases meld with his beautifully in a fitting tribute.

Bob Kimmerling in *Vineyard Passage* and Greg Freeman in *The Flowerpot Men* both reflect on Richmond in different guises. Good poetry can make us see the familiar with a new sense of awe or intrigue, and both succeed, whilst also filling me with the ache of nostalgia; it's been a long while since my last visit to where I grew up.



The poems Eddie Chauncy shares with us embody a more reflective quality. He likens crafting his poems to "sweeping up messy transactions into tidy piles", a metaphor encouraged by Keith Wait's questioning into Chauncy's former work in accountancy. His imagery shines all the brighter for being framed in such a clean, uncluttered framework. Now a psychologist, Chauncy practises as a therapist. Perhaps this is why his delivery is at once so arresting and yet soothing. He reaches out with his eyes from the paper, holds his audience's attention by keeping level and soft, drawing us into his world ...

Read Georgia Renwick's review at www.markaspen.com/2021/03/11/virtual-5th

Photography by Daniel Severn and David Howard

TRAVELLER'S TALES 92

CASTLES IN CATHAR COUNTRY

Doug Goodman travels in South West France



Carcassonne UNESCO City

My first view of Carcassonne was stunning. The walls and towers of the fortified city, bathed in sunlight and seen from across a valley, resembled a film set: in fact the castle starred in the 1991 film Robin Hood Prince of Thieves with Kevin Costner. But this is a real castle dating from Roman

Times, rebuilt during the middle ages and restored in 1853. It has two concentric walls with 13 towers on the outer wall and 26 along the inner wall. Inside there are steep cobbled streets, a central square dominated by the tower of St. Vincent's church, lots of tourist shops and, unsurprisingly, hordes of visitors. Carcassonne, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was the last of four castles on our tour in South-West France.

The Languedoc region between the Atlantic and Mediterranean to the North of the Pyrenees is known as Cathar Country. Over 200 miles in length, the Cathar Way takes you through fortified towns and villages, Romanesque abbeys and medieval sites which bear witness to the religious struggles 800 years ago between the Cathars and the Catholics. The Cathars were a heretic medieval Christian sect which aimed to achieve spiritual purity. They called themselves 'good Christians' and the Catholic Church, which they said had lost its way, was the church of wolves. Those who practiced Catharism suffered years of persecution for their beliefs: they were ruthlessly hunted down and burnt to death on pyres. Much of the knowledge of the period is found in the interrogation documents of the inquisition or treatises which were written to refute Cathar doctrine.



Like a Film Set



Carcassonne Fortified City



Tenth Century Foix Castle

FOOTHILLS OF THE PYRENEES

For several holidays in South-West France we used to drive from Twickenham taking two days. The 750 mile trip to Toulouse can be covered in about 11 hours non-stop using the auto routes but taking it slowly gives you the chance to see some beautiful countryside. After leaving the DFDS ferry at Calais and a drive around Paris, an overnight stop in Orleans or Bourges was made before heading south towards Clermont- Ferrand. On the 'castles' holiday we had

just a week so a flight to Toulouse and a hire- car saved much time. The TGV from Paris is another speedy method of reaching your starting point. First stop was at Foix some 50 miles north of Andorra. Foix, the capital of the Department of Ariège in the Occitaine region, has a magnificent fortress towering over the town. Built in the 10th century on the remains of a Roman fort it withstood several sieges between 1211 and 1217 by Simon de Montfort during the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathars. From the top of the twin towers and crenelated ramparts you get a wonderful view of the roof-tops of the old town and the surrounding countryside. The climb to the top on steep steps was quite exhausting. On the drive through deep valleys, mountain passes and vineyards we saw the Cathar fortress of Montsegur from a distance. Constructed atop a 3,000 foot high rocky peak in the Tabac Massif it looked forbidding and had a tragic history. Queribus almost 115 miles from Foix, near Perpignan, was well sited to control travel between France and Spain until 1659 when the Treaty of the Pyrenees moved the border to the south. From its massive tower the nearby castle of Peyrepertuse was clearly visible against the blue horizon. It's not easy to climb to the formidable rocky ridge on which the castle perches: the grounds are shaped like a ship's hull and extend for nearly 300 yards from east to west. After a three day siege in 1240 by the Royal Army led by Jean de Beaumont the defending Cathars were forced to surrender. I was the only visitor in the castle with the wind whistling through the battlements for company. I tried to imagine how hard the defenders must have fought to save themselves from a frightful death.



Queribus Castle



Peyrepertuse Castle



Foix Old Town



Foix

Leaving Peyrepertuse we headed back to Carcassonne through very fertile countryside. Local produce was on sale along the roadside and local wines were delicious –especially the fruity red Corbieres and the whites from Languedoc. A lunch of bread, cheese and olives with a glass of wine at the edge of a field filled with brilliant yellow sunflowers was a treat. And then across a valley we got our first glimpse of the battlements of Carcassonne: the most memorable moment of the whole tour.

MANY RUINED SITES

Apart from Foix, Montsegur, Queribus, Peyrepertuse and Carcassonne there are many castles in varying states of preservation to explore in Cathar Country. Most may be in ruins but their history and religious struggles are preserved for the visitor to see. At least ten more fortresses are on the tourist itinerary along with churches and medieval towns and villages. For those who like hiking and camping the terrain can be hard going but the warm climate in summer, the clear skies and wonderful light make Cathar Country the perfect place for a holiday.

Another favourite region of South-West France is The Cevennes. It's an area with gorges, caves, strange flora and fauna, fast-flowing rivers and sudden storms. In the next Traveller's Tales we will visit this wild land.

DISCOVER YOUR HERITAGE

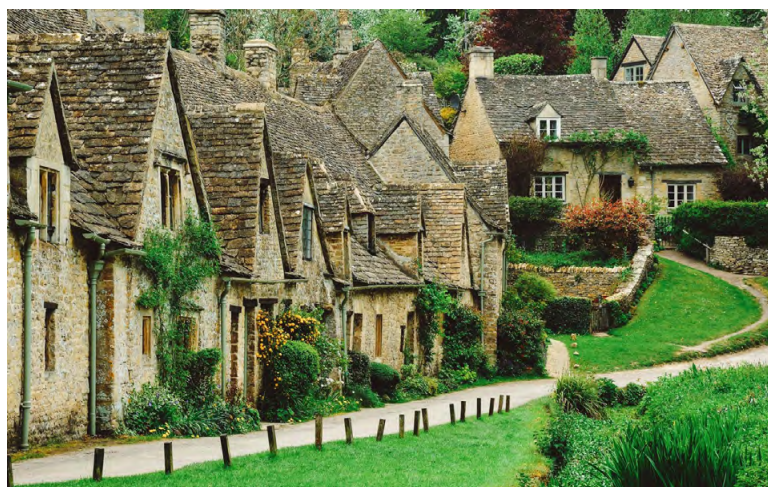
By Bruce Lyons

Make 2021 a year of Discovery. England is open from the 12th of April (last week of Easter School Break). That's right from 12th April you can rent houses from Hadrian's Wall in the North right down to The Lizard in the South.

A few weeks ago Doug Goodman wrote here in the Tribune about Lyme Regis ([Edition 197](#)) & last week on TV Kate Humble's featured this Historic Town & the Jurassic Coast in her Coastal Walks, Beaches, Fossils the Coastal Path and more -we found a house to let here But there are more! I mentioned Hadrian's Wall as you may have followed Robson Green's short series where he walked for the East Coast to the West and houses can be rented hereabouts as well as all over the Country . Indeed since last spring we have been tasked with many challenges Surf Boarding or Sup boarding in Cornwall (follow Rick Stein thru Cornwall), Mountain Biking in the Peak District, Canoeing in the Lakes.

And of course you can take your dogs- or budgerigar along with any other gear you need. Want to Row the Thames, Learn to Sail in the Solent- Hike in the National Parks? Last week, again on TV Sandy Toksvig and Pru Leith spent time in the Cotswolds, the very Heart of England.

Wherever you go in England there is Culture, History and Nature (when I rowed down the Thames the other Easter with a guide book alongside, it was like a trip thru the History of England and you were there – right in the middle of it) and we have the longest Coastline in Europe!



Don't delay give yourself a break this April - take a deep breath of sea air -true many essential shops will still be closed but PUBs and Restaurants are serving Al Fresco meals and drinks – bookings are limited to families of 6 adults and off-spring holidaying as a “Bubble” or two friends.

As it is still out of season prices are reasonable so seize the day – do something different. You can Golf, Row (the Thames maybe in a skiff camper- we have these available)

ON the 12th of April, if not before, the Government will confirm the next stage – It is expected to confirm from 17th of May that all UK Hospitality like Hotels and B & B `s will open, pubs and restaurants will be able to serve inside, Coastal UK Cruises will operate from then as will coach tours and small escorted groups for walking and cycling along with self-guided tours. It is expected that by then Wales and Scotland and N. Ireland will all fall into line as well – and on the 17th of May they will tell us about overseas travel.

As it stands at present Greece and Cyprus, Iceland and Mallorca are all set to take UK visitors but the protocols have not been agreed with the UK government -and Turkey is waiting in the wings and at last there seems to be agreement on some sort of “passport”. Italy is not so well prepared but if they agree to regional policies (like Sardinia and Sicily- Balearics & Canary Islands – Azores and Cape Verde) but all will be revealed soon and in the meantime – it's self-catering and Master Chef – so get active! Send me an email and I will make you some proposals - bruce@crusadertravel.com

WIZ TALES

Cyprus -Thinking of Sun and Sea

Cyprus, said to be the birthplace of Aphrodite, is currently welcoming people from the UK to visit from 1st May, as long as they have had both COVID-19 vaccinations. However, those of us thinking of going abroad will need to wait until travel restrictions have been lifted at home.

As well as sun and sea, Cyprus has an interesting past and a number of historical sites.

In 1191 Richard I of England, the leader of the Third Crusade, conquered Cyprus.

Richard, known as the Lionheart, married his queen Berengaria of Navarre in Limassol Castle.

Britain annexed Cyprus at the beginning of the First World War. In 1925 the island became a British Colony gaining independence Britain in 1960.



Agianapa



Kolossi



Marina



Moufflons

More photographs of Cyprus:

<https://worldinfozone.com/gallery.php?country=Cyprus>

World InfoZone would like to thank the Cyprus Tourist Office for the photographs (2007)

St Mary's University

Winner of St Mary's Astronaut Mission Patch Competition Announced

The research team working on the High Frequency Impulse of Microgravity (HIFIm) jump sled project at St Mary's University Twickenham have announced the winner and runners-up of its schools' mission patch competition.

The competition saw school pupils from across the country send in their designs for the Mission Patch that the HIFIm team will use as they take their research to the next stages, including parabolic (micro-gravity) test flights.



The team are investigating the use of the HIFIm jump sled in microgravity, a machine that will allow astronauts in space to use jumping as part of their physical exercise routine. Led by HIFIm creator and engineer John Kennett and Dr Dan Cleather of St Mary's, the team will soon head to France to test the jump sled in microgravity during a parabolic flight campaign.

This is an important step in the research and will allow the team to see if the machine can create the same jump forces in microgravity as the jump force experienced on the Earth's surface.

As part of this research, the team has developed an outreach plan to encourage school children interested in science,

technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects to pursue a career in science. As part of this work, and to mark the occasion of team's first microgravity test campaign, the mission patch competition was launched, inviting entries from across the country.

Over 100 mission patches were entered into the competition with submissions coming from Primary School children all the way up to University level students.

Speaking of competition, John Kennett said, "Each submission showcased the wealth of talent here in the UK. There were so many colourful and creative mission patches that it was so hard to choose just one. It was great to see so many children get involved and show their passion for science and help us with our mission"

"The HIFIm research team want to congratulate everyone who entered the competition. Every entry was unique and displayed creativity and passion."

The winning entry was submitted by 9-year-old Jessica Barry from St Francis School in Pewsey. The team said of Jessica's design, 'This entry colourfully showed the key goal for the research team: investigating jump exercise in space'. For winning the competition, Jessica will be sent one of the mission patches featuring her design and a T-shirt, also with her design.

Jason added, "The HIFIm research team, the UK Space Agency, the European Space Agency, St Mary's University, and Physical Mind, London, all want to thank everyone who submitted a design. Your creativity and passion have inspired us all."



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London



RFS The Best of our Recent Historic Screenings

Issue 51 12th March 2021

EIGHT DAYS A WEEK – THE TOURING YEARS

A new series for those of you who are missing Richmond Film Society's screenings or, indeed, trips to the cinema generally as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Their committee is producing a number of weekly recommendations of films screened during the last 20 years that were extremely well received by their audiences. Should the notes reproduced below entice you to try and catch-up with this recommendation, then you should be able to do so, as it is available on streaming services and for purchase as DVD/Blu-Ray discs from the online retailers as indicated below.

RFS Context: EIGHT DAYS A WEEK - THE TOURING YEARS was 806th film screened by RFS on 21st March 2019. **Eight Days a Week - The Touring Years** was one of the four equal top ranked films of Season 56, which all got an approval mark of 95% from those attending; from season 56 we have already featured two of its equal top placed films **The Fencer** and **Truman** as **Issues 44 & 47** respectively; the third of the equal top films, yet to feature, is **Hidden Figures**. Obtaining the license to screen **Eight Days a Week**, owned by Studio Canal, was problematic as RFS had to sign-up to not portraying the **Beatles** in a bad light, protecting their rights, etc. prior to the screening. Permission being granted only a few days before! RFS screened this film as part of "**The Beatles in Twickenham**" event put on by The Exchange. **Eight Days a Week - The Touring Years** can be streamed from Amazon Prime plus the discs are available from Amazon and others.

EIGHT DAYS A WEEK - THE TOURING YEARS

Country: USA/UK 2016
Director: Ron Howard
Writing: Mark Monroe & P.G. Morgan
Editor: Paul Crowder
Cinematography: Caleb Deschanel et al.
Running Time: 106 min, B&W and Colour
Language: English

CAST

The Beatles and many others as themselves

The Touring Years is a 2016 documentary charting the Beatles career from their humble beginnings at the original Cavern Club Liverpool, not sure if you could even squeeze a 100 in there in 1962, thru' to their final concert at Candlestick Park seating capacity 42,500 San Francisco 1966. In 2017 it won the 59th Grammy Award for Best Music Film.

Is there really anything new to say about the Beatles ?...and did we really look like that ?...well, some of us did!

What could it be like to be inside the bubble of their skyrocketing fame? an experience that the four alone shared, and which only they fully understood.



In Paul's words 'By the end it became quite complicated, but at the beginning things were really simple'. It's that bubble that interested director Ron Howard (previous films include **Apollo 13, Beautiful People**), real people tested in the fire of publicity "They're in it together, they have each other, they know what their objective is but y'know it's a dangerous world out there, especially when the band became a worldwide cultural phenomena."

Neil Genzinger, film critic of The New York Times challenges us to try watching it without smiling !...for those of us around during Beatlemania...but will this film enthrall or just bore the audiences Ron Howard has said that he's particularly interested in... Millennials and whatever other generations weren't yet born when John, Paul, George and Ringo took the world by storm.

If viewers can get past their "enough already with the '60s gag reflex" they too will surely warm to this study of full force fame. They were crazy times thru' till Aug '66 after a run that left thousands of screaming fans with sore throats and Howard effectively conveys just how insane these years were. The Beatles weren't the first to make girls scream and faint, dial up footage of Frank Sinatra or Elvis Presley at his peak, but the pace and scale even astonish today. Paul and Ringo, the surviving Beatles provide fresh insights, and John and George are heard in clips, all of them reflecting on what it was like to 'ride the beast'.

The film is a project of Apple Corps, the Beatles co, so don't expect a 'warts and all' portrait, in this telling the band members never misbehaved significantly or had creative differences: the way to watch is to ignore the image burnishing and just feel the moment.

Whatever the Beatles did, they did first and did best, and where they led everyone else followed. **8 Days a Week acknowledges** all of that but reminds us that at the centre of it all, for 4 tumultuous years of live performance, it was all about being 4 boys in a band.

Annie Cartland

News from the Richmond Shakespeare Society

Busy as ever! We continue our programme of popular Zoom events with readings of THE MAGISTRATE by Arthur Wing Pinero on April 14th and OLD POSSUM'S BOOK OF PRACTICAL CATS by TS Eliot on May 15th. There will be a Zoom celebration of Shakespeare's Birthday on April 23rd - 24th with THE SEVEN AGES OF MANKIND - which we hope to be able to present live at Garrick's Temple later in the season. Also in preparation, a collaboration with the Lewis Carroll Society to devise and present a commemoration of the 100 years since the publication of THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS.

And, if Boris's road-map proves to be reliable, we expect to be live onstage at the Mary Wallace Theatre again with performances of SUMMERLAND (June 25th - July 3rd) and QUARTERMAINE'S TERMS (July 17th - 24th). Then, our annual Summer Show in York House Fountain Gardens - THE COMEDY of ERRORS - from August 9th - 13th.

For further details of these and other events please visit our website.

www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk



Petitions

Stop the introduction of parking charges in Richmond Park and Bushy Park

The Royal Parks intend to introduce car parking charges in Richmond Park and Bushy Park. This is an indefensible proposal, particularly at a time when the link between poverty, obesity and poor health has been so clearly highlighted by the impact of Covid 19.

Spending time in the park is one of the very few free and healthy options for families and individuals. It is essential for people's mental and physical well being that access to the parks is encouraged rather than restricted. If, as a society, we really want to fight obesity we must continue to provide spaces for free and healthy exercise.

During lockdown, a much more diverse and geographically widespread group of people discovered the joys of Bushy and Richmond Park; this is a cause for celebration and should be viewed as a positive and healthy development and encouraged as much as possible. The petition can be viewed [HERE](#)

Accept the proposal to reinstate a Lido on Twickenham Riverside

During consultations with local stakeholders it has become clear that there is a wish to bring back a Lido on Twickenham Riverside.

A Lido on Twickenham Riverside would provide a leisure and sport facility for the people of Twickenham and surrounding areas.

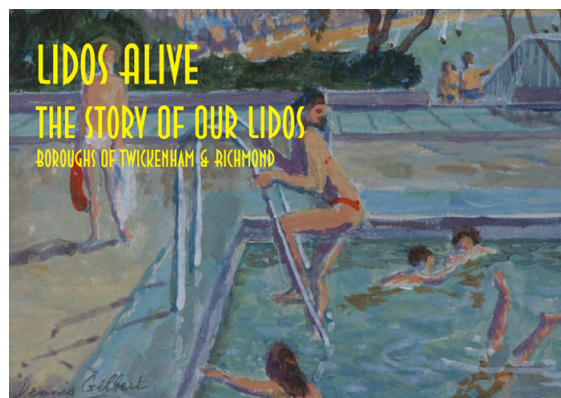
More importantly though, it provides the local people with an everyday escape from modern life, an accessible urban retreat.

Such a facility on Twickenham Riverside would act as a Magnet and contribute to the rejuvenation of the town. The petition can be viewed [HERE](#)

An Ideal Present for just £6

Lidos Alive – the Story of Our Lidos - is a 63-page A5 book with colour photos and illustrations full of interesting information about the history of outdoor swimming in the Borough and the rise of the lido. Contents include Mereway Bathing Place, pools in Bushy Park, Hampton Pool, Teddington Pool, Hampton Wick, Tagg's Island, Marble Hill, Twickenham Baths, Pools on the Park and other interesting stories.

To purchase a book contact info@TwickenhamTribune.com





BRENTFORD FC

Toney score from the spot to send Bees second

Blackburn Rovers 0 – 1 Brentford

Brentford moved back into second place in the Championship after a hard fought win at Ewood Park. The victory came courtesy of an early penalty from Ivan Toney which proved the only goal on the night as the Bees claimed all three points under the Friday night floodlights.



The Bees largely dominated the first-half in terms of chances and Tariqe Fosu in particular looked bright in the opening stages. Vitaly Janelt overhit a through ball to Bryan Mbeumo from a promising period early on but the away side soon took the lead inside the opening ten minutes.

A quick break up field saw Ivan Toney slip a pass through to Fosu on the left wing and, after a collision with Darragh Lenihan, the Brentford forward went down in the box and a penalty was awarded. Championship top scorer Toney made no mistake with the spot kick as he sent Thomas Kaminski the wrong way to give the Bees the lead inside ten minutes.

At the other end a corner for Blackburn nearly ran for Taylor Howard-Bellis at the back post but Ethan Pinnock did well to slide in and put the ball out of a corner. From the resulting corner a dangerous delivery was sent in but Howard-Bellis was penalised for a handball to alleviate the danger.

Brentford looked the side most likely to score next and Christian Nørgaard on his return from injury was exchanging passes in midfield alongside Janelt. Janelt then almost played in Toney but he was unable to get onto the attempted through ball and Blackburn were able to clear through Lenihan.

The long throw from Mads Bech Sørensen also was causing problems at the back for the home side and after from one of these the ball broke for Mathias Jensen, who narrowly drove wide from the edge of the area.

The closest Rovers went was when Winston Reid misjudged the flight of a long ball over the top but his defensive colleague Henrik Dalsgaard was on hand to recover and slid in to make a block and deny Sam Gallagher.

The final chance of the half then came for the industrious Janelt. A long clearance from David Raya was flicked on by Toney onto Janelt but the German midfielder could only shoot wide from a promising position on the edge of the area.

At half-time Toney Mowbray introduce Harvey Elliot and Joe Rothwell and the two substitutes

combined early on in the second-half to release Bradley Dack, but Raya made a brilliant save to get a fingertip to divert the ball away.

Toney then showed no lack of confidence as he went close to doubling Brentford's lead. Playing with his head up he spotted Kaminski slightly off his line and from a quickly taken free-kick nearly chipped the keeper from just beyond the halfway line, only for the ball to land on the roof of the net with Kaminski hastily scurrying back.

The home side were playing much better in the second-half and Raya was called into action to make a couple of saves to keep them out. First he kept out Rothwell from range and then from inside the box Rothwell should have got more power on another attempt and he scuffed his strike and Raya was able to get down comfortably to save.

Toney flashed a shot wide after a brilliant reverse ball from Mbeumo to set him away but he lashed it wide as he couldn't pick out the far corner.

Brentford survived a strong penalty claim after Sørensen was caught on the wrong side of Ryan Nyambe but the referee was unmoved and Elliot at the back post sliced his volley wide.

Sergi Canós entered the pitch with just under 20 minutes to play and he tested Kaminski from range and he had to get down to push the ball when it had looked like he might lay the ball into the path of Toney.

Late on both sides had chances as Marcus Forss nearly scored with a header and at the other end Dack nearly capitalised on some hesitancy from Raya but in the end Brentford held out to claim a valuable three points and take advantage to move back into second place in the league.

UP NEXT FOR BRENTFORD

Opponent: Derby County (A) Tuesday 16th March 19:00 Pride Park

Nickname: The Rams

Competition: Championship - Matchday 35

Manager: Wayne Rooney

Opponent record: P35 W12 D8 L15 GF49 GA40 (14th in Championship)

Interesting fact: On the 8th September 1888, the first ever football league matches were played. Derby County were away to Bolton Wanderers for their first ever league game and came away 6-3 winners. Although no league table was ever actually published after the first ever league fixtures, based on goal difference Derby would have been the first ever league leaders.

Come on you Bees!

Brentford FC are looking for a new Board member to lead the way in community engagement

Unique opportunity to join the Brentford FC Board of Directors

Brentford FC are recruiting an Independent Non-Executive Director to sit on the Board of Directors. The Club is currently near the top of the Sky Bet Championship and has, in the past six months, moved in to a new stadium situated equidistant between London Heathrow airport and central London and at the heart of the West London community. Key Board objectives are based on our desire to become the most inclusive club in the country, growing and diversifying our supporter base, delivering outstanding fan and community engagement and increasing our revenues through purpose led commercial partnerships.

In order to realise our ambitions, we realise diversity must run through the entire organisation and must start from the top. We are looking for a new person to sit on our Board with the right mix of skills, knowledge and energy to help us do that. In order to complement the skills of our existing directors, we are looking for someone with demonstrable senior experience and skills in the areas of community, supporter or stakeholder engagement.

Whilst having proven strategic experience in a similar role would be advantageous, in line with our inclusive outlook and desire to increase diversity, we are willing to look more broadly at people with a different skill set, who may be able to effectively fulfil the same role. Our current board of eight contains gender and ethnic diversity but in line with our ambitions and clear evidence that more diverse boards make better decisions, we are casting our net more widely.

Whilst we are striving for diversity, we absolutely commit to selecting the best candidate for the job, who best performs throughout a fair and transparent selection process.

Brentford FC is a signatory to The FA's Diversity Code, and as such commits to shortlisting at least one person of ethnic or gender diversity for this role, in addition to any shortlisted candidates who may already have been considered if necessary. This additional candidate will still need to fulfil all of the requirements listed in the Role Description.

For more details and to apply for this role, please click [HERE](#).



England team announcement: England v France - Guinness Six Nations

Eddie Jones has named his side for this weekend's Guinness Six Nations match against France.

England will host Les Bleus at Twickenham Stadium, in their penultimate championship fixture, on Saturday 13 March (4.45pm KO).

Anthony Watson will make his 50th appearance for England at right wing. He made his debut in November 2014, against New Zealand. Max Malins will make his first start for England coming in at full back, with Jonny May on the left wing.

Captain Owen Farrell stays at inside centre, Henry Slade at outside centre and George Ford at fly half. The squad's most-capped player Ben Youngs continues at scrum half. In the front row Luke Cowan-Dickie is at hooker, with Mako Vunipola and Kyle Sinckler making up the front row.

Charlie Ewels is named at lock alongside Maro Itoje in the second row. Mark Wilson stays as blind-side flanker, Tom Curry is open-side flanker and Billy Vunipola continues at No. 8. Jamie George, Ellis Genge, Will Stuart, Jonny Hill, Ben Earl, Dan Robson, Ollie Lawrence and Elliot Daly are named as finishers, completing Jones' 23.

Eddie Jones said: *"This France game is one we are really looking forward to. We are of course disappointed that we can't defend the championship, but that makes this an even more important game. We want to show what we are capable of. The squad have competed really hard in training since Sunday. I believe this is the best 23 to really take the game to France and get us on the front foot."*

England's final game is against Ireland at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin on Saturday 20 March (4.45pm KO).

England v France is live on ITV 1 and BBC Radio 5 Live.

England XV Starters

- | | |
|---|---|
| 15. Max Malins (Bristol Bears, 6 caps) | 1. Mako Vunipola (Saracens, 65 caps) |
| 14. Anthony Watson (Bath Rugby, 49 caps) | 2. Luke Cowan-Dickie (Exeter Chiefs, 29 caps) |
| 13. Henry Slade (Exeter Chiefs, 37 caps) | 3. Kyle Sinckler (Bristol Bears, 42 caps) |
| 12. Owen Farrell (Saracens, 91 caps) (C) | 4. Maro Itoje (Saracens, 46 caps) |
| 11. Jonny May (Gloucester Rugby, 64 caps) | 5. Charlie Ewels (Bath Rugby, 19 caps) |
| 10. George Ford (Leicester Tigers, 75 caps) | 6. Mark Wilson (Newcastle Falcons, 21 caps) |
| 9. Ben Youngs (Leicester Tigers, 107 caps) | 7. Tom Curry (Sale Sharks, 31 caps) |
| | 8. Billy Vunipola (Saracens, 59 caps) |

Finishers

- | | |
|---|---|
| 16. Jamie George (Saracens, 57 caps) | 20. Ben Earl (Bristol Bears, 11 caps) |
| 17. Ellis Genge (Leicester Tigers, 26 caps) | 21. Dan Robson (Wasps, 10 caps) |
| 18. Will Stuart (Bath Rugby, 10 caps) | 22. Ollie Lawrence (Worcester Warriors, 4 caps) |
| 19. Jonny Hill (Exeter Chiefs, 7 caps) | 23. Elliot Daly (Saracens, 50 caps) |



Local government finance in the pandemic

Today's report from the National Audit Office (NAO) finds that while effective action from government has assisted local authorities in surviving financially during the COVID-19 pandemic, many authorities face significant funding gaps and the financial outlook for the sector is concerning.

Local authorities in England have made a major contribution to the nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, working to protect local communities and businesses, while continuing to deliver existing services. In the process, local authorities have reported combined cost pressures and income losses (excluding tax losses) of £9.7 billion, equal to 17.6% of their total spend in the year before.

Local authorities forecast that the COVID-19 pandemic will create £6.9 billion of additional costs in 2020-2021 because of the need to deliver new services and the increased cost of delivering some existing services. There have also been fewer opportunities to deliver savings programmes.

The pandemic has caused a forecast loss of £2.8 billion of income for local authorities in 2020-21, as a result of a reduction in their sales, fees and charges, commercial and other income streams. Authorities expect to lose £695 million alone from reduced car parking income, and £554 million income from facilities such as leisure centres, theatres and museums that they run. Further losses of £1.3 billion in council tax and £1.6 billion in business rates are expected but will not affect budgets until 2021-2022.

The sector needs to be able to absorb these pressures. System-wide financial failure would undermine the delivery of public services that many vulnerable people rely on.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has engaged extensively with local authorities to gather data on the financial impact of COVID-19. Alongside other departments, it has so far announced £7.9 billion in grant funding to address the pressures facing the sector. The NAO estimates that authorities will also receive £1.23 billion in compensation for lost sales, fees and charges income.

Despite this, 75% of local authorities have a reported gap between their financial pressures and the NAO's estimate of financial support from government. In some cases these gaps are substantial; 30% of authorities have reported funding gaps equivalent to more than 5% of their spending last year.

Many local authorities still need to take further steps to ensure that they fulfil their legal requirement of balancing their books in 2020-21. Some 26% of single tier and county councils (local authorities with social care responsibilities) that responded to a NAO survey said they were forecasting a year end material overspend relative to their budget. In most cases these authorities plan to use their reserves to balance their books. Overall, 46% of single tier and county councils had either used their reserves, or planned to, in response to COVID-19 pressures in 2020-21.

A combination of high funding gaps and low reserve levels means that some local authorities are at risk of financial failure. By 10 February 2021, MHCLG had provided exceptional financial support totalling £50.5 million to four authorities.

Local authorities will continue to be under serious financial pressure in 2021-22 and are setting their budgets with significant uncertainty, which risks poor value for money. The local government finance settlement only provided certainty on a short-term, time-limited basis, until the middle of the financial year. Many finance directors the NAO spoke to regretted that the settlement is not on a multi-year basis.

Overall, 94% of single tier and county councils and 81% of district councils who responded to the NAO's survey expected to reduce service budgets in 2021-2022. Examples, provided by local authorities, of how this could impact services included reviews of adult social care and special educational needs packages; the closure of, or restricting the opening hours, of libraries, information centres and theatres; and reductions in subsidies and grants. Some 53% of single tier and county councils do not expect their finances to recover to their pre-pandemic position until 2023-24.

The NAO recommends that MHCLG learns from 2020-2021 and clearly communicates whether the sector is likely to receive further funding or support. In addition, it should look for ways to reduce financial uncertainty in local authority budget-setting processes.

Gareth Davies, the head of the NAO, said:

"Government's support to local authorities during the COVID-19 pandemic has averted system-wide financial failure. Nonetheless, the financial position of the sector remains a concern and authorities are setting budgets for 2021-2022 with limited confidence. Authorities' finances have been scarred and won't simply bounce back quickly. Government needs a plan to help the sector recover from the pandemic and also to address the longstanding need for financial reform in the sector." View full report [HERE](#)



National Audit Office

Investigation into the Culture Recovery Fund

In July 2020, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (the Department) announced its £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund to help the UK's cultural, arts and heritage institutions survive the pandemic. Of the £830 million grants and loans funding awarded to the sector so far, £495 million has been paid out.

The UK's museums, galleries, cinemas, music venues, nightclubs, theatres, arts centres and heritage sites were required by law to close their doors to visitors on 23 March 2020 when the UK entered the first national lockdown. Some were able to reopen partially in the summer and autumn, but many have remained entirely or mostly closed for nearly a year. Without targeted support, the Department expected large scale financial failures across the sector as organisations ran out of money around the end of September 2020.

The Culture Recovery Fund (CRF) comprised a mixture of revenue grants, repayable loans and capital grants, targeted at different groups of organisations. The Department aimed to support the survival of 75% of the organisations in the sector at risk during 2020-21. To determine how much money would be available, the Department considered various scenarios. Its worst-case scenario assumed that social distancing would remain until the end of March 2021 and that demand would remain at 40% of pre-COVID-19 levels. The current situation exceeds this worst-case scenario.

From the £1.57 billion of overall funding, the Department gave responsibility for awarding £1 billion to four arm's-length bodies (ALBs) in a first phase of funding (which invited applications up to end of November 2020): Arts Council England (ACE), Historic England (HE), the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and the British Film Institute (BFI). The ALBs ran their own, mostly separate, competitions to award funding.



The criteria for awarding funding included that organisations were financially viable before COVID-19; had exhausted all other funding options; were 'culturally significant'; or were essential to the cultural fabric of a place or supported the government's wider 'levelling-up' agenda.

By 19 February 2021, the ALBs had awarded £830 million of the £1 billion funding, with £495 million paid out to recipients. The ALBs have until the end of March 2021 to award all funding although these can mostly be distributed and used by recipients beyond March 2021. Applications for both revenue and capital grants were oversubscribed in the first funding phase. Loans funding was undersubscribed.

The ALBs awarded funding to a diverse range of organisations. By December 2020, 85% of revenue grants had been awarded to the arts and 15% to heritage organisations. London

received 31% of total funding, followed by the North West and South East which each received 12%.

The Department has not yet paid out any funding from its second phase of funding, totalling £400 million, which it announced in December 2020, with decisions scheduled to be made in March 2021. This comprises funding not awarded in the first funding phase plus £258 million that it held back as contingency.

In common with other emergency COVID-19 funding, implementing the CRF has presented risks of fraud, error, duplication and overpayment, which the Department recognised from the outset. To minimise these risks the Department required ALBs to perform fraud risk assessments on applications and post-award checks. The Department also created the Culture Recovery Board in July 2020 to provide assurance to the Secretary of State over funding and approve loans over £3 million. By January 2021, three reports of fraud relating to two grants administered by ACE had been received through the COVID Fraud Hotline. The grants, totalling £473,000 were withheld by ACE and no funds were paid out.



National Audit Office

View the full report [HERE](#)

LGA responds to National Audit Office investigation into Culture Recovery Fund

Responding to the NAO's investigation into the Government's Culture Recovery Fund, Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the Local Government Association's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said:

“The Culture Recovery Fund is providing a much needed lifeline for arts, heritage and cultural organisations in a time of crisis.

“The arts and culture sector has an important role to play in our road to national economic recovery and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and its delivery agencies have done an excellent job in rapidly distributing the first part of the funding. However it's incredibly important that this funding is distributed widely so communities across all parts of the country, where crucial cultural organisations are struggling, can benefit.

“Government should work with local councils to identify key organisations within their communities that still need support to survive.”



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