

TickerTape - News in Brief

Upcoming strike action

Network Rail strikes

The RMT has announced industrial action Tuesday 13 December - Sunday 18 December 2023.

How services are impacted:

Tuesday 13, Wednesday 14, Friday 16, Saturday 17 December

A severely reduced service will run between 0730 and 1830 only, with large parts of our network closed.

Thursday 15 and Sunday 18 December

First services will start much later than usual and will be very busy – please avoid them if you can.

Only use rail if absolutely necessary. If you must travel during this period, please check train times before setting off or seek alternative forms of transport.

Further industrial action is planned for the rest of the month and into the new year, from Sunday 18 December through until Sunday 8 January. We will update you once we have more info.

For the latest information on strike plans, service map, and detailed Q&As on ticketing options, please visit www.southwesternrailway.com/strike

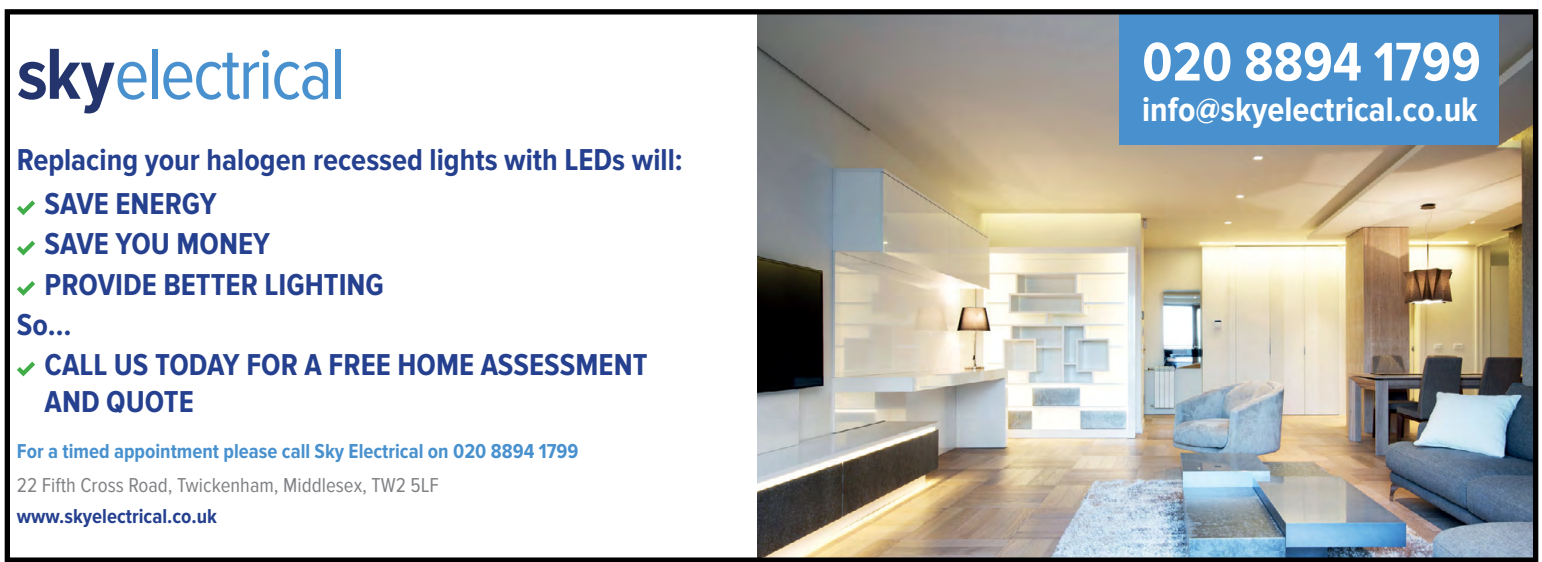
Bus strikes

Strike action is planned by Abellio bus drivers on the following days:

- Friday 9 December
- Saturday 10 December
- Thursday 15 December
- Friday 16 December

Routes affected by the Abellio strike action are mostly in west and south London.

Visit the [strike page](#) to check if your bus route is affected.



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COVID-19

Teresa Read

Weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19

Data as at 7 December 2022

At the regional level, the number of newly reported weekly cases decreased or remained stable across five of the six WHO regions: the African Region (-78%), the South-East Asia Region (-27%), the European Region (<1%), the Western Pacific Region (-10%), and the Eastern Mediterranean Region (-4%); while case numbers increased in one WHO region: the Region of the Americas (+14%). The number of newly reported weekly deaths decreased or remained stable across all six regions: the African Region (-83%), the Eastern Mediterranean Region (-33%), the Region of the Americas (-22%), the European Region (-19%), the Western Pacific Region (-5%), and the South-East Asia Region (+3%).

At the country level, the highest numbers of new weekly cases were reported from Japan (749,895 new cases; +7%), France (385,716 new cases; +38%), the Republic of Korea (370,574 new cases; -2%), the United States of America (296,333 new cases; -1%), and Brazil (188,043 new cases; +25%). The highest numbers of new weekly deaths were reported from the United States of America (1,744 new deaths; -33%), Japan (1,063 new deaths; +6%), Brazil (632 new deaths; +18%), Italy (462 new deaths; -22%), and France (424 new deaths; +2%).

The European Region reported over 955,000 new cases, which is similar to the figure reported during the previous week. Eleven (18%) 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 Romania (2,387 vs 382 new cases; +525%), Gibraltar (14 vs nine new cases; +56%), and Denmark (6,266 vs 4,089 new cases; +53%). The highest numbers of new cases were reported from France (385,716 new cases; 593.1 new cases per 100,000; +38%), Germany (165,996 new cases; 199.6 new cases per 100,000; -2%), and Italy (160,416 new cases; 269 new cases per 100,000; -30%).

The number of new weekly deaths in the region decreased by 19% as compared to the previous week, with 2,348 new deaths reported. The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from Italy (462 new deaths; <1 new death per 100,000; -22%), France (424 new deaths; <1 new death per 100,000; +2%), and the Russian Federation (391 new deaths; <1 new death per 100,000; +1%).

IN THE NEWS THIS WEEK

EuroNews: Lax approach to COVID-19 pandemic could create a deadly strain - WHO chief

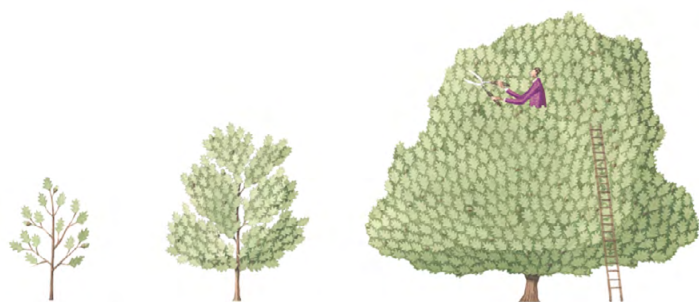
Sky News: COVID infections in England rise for second week in row as postal strikes 'possibly' impact estimates

NBC News: Fauci criticizes 'extreme' ideological divide that has led to disproportionate Covid deaths among Republicans

The New York Times: As Covid Cases Rise in a Weary Los Angeles, So Does Apathy

Inews: Bring back Covid hand washing advice to prevent more Strep A deaths, urges public health expert
The call comes as 15 children in the UK have now died after invasive Strep A infections

Aljazeera: Confusion and anxiety in China as draconian COVID curbs eased



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The Tree Agency

On the buses

By Simon Fowler

Travelling by London bus today is very safe, but back in 1913 it was somewhat different.

In January that year, George Streatfield a sanitary inspector was tragically killed in a collision with a bus on Cross Deep. 31-year-old Streatfield, a married man with a small child, was on his way to disinfect a house in Denton Road. His bike skidded on a very greasy road and Streatfield was thrown right in front of an oncoming bus. Mr Streatfield died a few hours later. The bus was travelling at no more than six miles an hour. The driver, Percy Chatting, told the coroner he was going slowly because of the condition of the road. Mr Chatting was a careful driver who told reporters that he had never had an accident.

Coincidentally a Parliamentary committee was investigating London's traffic congestion. They interviewed several bus drivers, including a local man John Henry Pope. Originally buses had been horse-drawn but by 1910 they had been replaced by motor busses. The driver sat in an open cab. Mr Pope told the enquiry that: 'I would rather sit on the front of a motor bus for twelve hours than stand on the front of a tramcar for ten. I should not get so tired.'

By today's standards, the streets were very dangerous. Street urchins dashed in and out of the traffic. Meanwhile pedestrians crossed busy roads 'without looking round, as if there was nothing about.'



Bus brakes were very poor, particularly when the roads were even slightly greasy, when: 'it does not do to jam the brakes on.' Drivers took particular care to look after them. It was not uncommon for drivers to stand their bus 'on Richmond Bridge on a slope and if the brake does not hold you get down and adjust it.'

Henry Pope received a shilling a week for every day he went without an accident, and additional bonus of ten shillings every quarter: 'I do not think the bonus is necessary, but it comes in very nice if you get it.'

Days were long, but there were occasional breaks. At Twickenham garage there was often a ten minute break between journeys: 'If a man chooses to get a glass of bitter he can, or he can go into the coffee shops.' It was certainly a better arrangement, then when Pope worked on the electric trams: 'I worked fifteen hours and had to have my dinner going along.'

Mr Pope's shifts varied between six hours and eleven hours per day. To an extent he could chose when he worked, although all the drivers had to take one Sunday in three off. He, himself, worked six days a week, but reported that some men drove every day: 'Well, the greedy ones do – men who are very greedy.'

Licensing Act 2003 Notice of application for Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that Mr Reza Karimi has applied to the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames for the grant of a premises licence to allow the use the premises The Java Bistro situated at 224 Upper Richmond Rd W, London SW14 8AH, London, application to permit the sale of alcohol for consumption on the premises, Monday to Saturday 10:00 to 22:30 and Sunday 11:00 to 21:30.

Any person who wishes to make a representation in relation to this application must give notice in writing no later than 27 December 2022 stating the grounds for the representation to the: London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames Licensing Authority, Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham, TW1 3BZ Or online at www.richmond.gov.uk.

The register of applications can be viewed online by visiting www.richmond.gov.uk. Members of the public who do not have access to the Internet can view the applications at the above address.

It is an offence, under section 158 of the Licensing Act 2003, to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with an application for a premises licence and the maximum fine on being convicted of such an offence is £5000.



As an emergency humanitarian response, all people who find themselves rough sleeping are offered emergency accommodation with the aim to preserve life.

Here at SPEAR, our Outreach Teams are working **additional shifts** to ensure all rough sleepers are supported at this critical time. We are working closely with Local Authorities to find suitable and safe provision.

Working extra shifts means we are able to spend more time on the streets, supporting those who are most vulnerable and liaising with local authorities to secure emergency accommodation. We are also providing vital goods and facilitating transport so people can get to the accommodation provided.

Concerned about someone rough sleeping?

Making an Outreach team aware of a rough sleeper is simple, and can change a life.

The best way to refer anyone whom you see rough sleeping in is through Streetlink.

Once referrals are made, Streetlink alerts the Outreach Team covering that borough so they can directly respond to the referral. Report a rough sleeper [HERE](#)

Alternatively, you can go to www.streetlink.org.uk, call 0300 500 0914, or download the Streetlink App

SPEAR
homelessness to independence

Transport for London to expand ULEZ across all London boroughs

The Mayor of London has announced that the [Ultra Low Emission Zone \(ULEZ\) will be expanded](#) across all London boroughs from 29 August 2023.

The new boundary will in most cases follow the edge of the Greater London Authority Area. View a [detailed zoomable map of the new boundary](#).

This means that from 29 August 2023, the ULEZ will expand to include the whole of Richmond upon Thames; all areas of the borough will be subject to the ULEZ emissions standards, and any non-compliant vehicles will be charged £12.50 a day.

The ULEZ was first introduced in central London by TfL in 2019, with the aim of reducing air pollution in the capital. It has since been expanded up to the North and South Circular roads and currently includes areas in Barnes, Mortlake, East Sheen, North Richmond, and Kew.



The current ULEZ standards are not changing, which means to meet the ULEZ emissions standard your vehicles must meet the required Euro emissions standard for your vehicle and emission type.

You can [check if your vehicle meets emissions and safety standards](#) required to drive in London.

To help disabled and low-income Londoners, charities, and micro businesses replace or retrofit an existing more polluting vehicle, the Mayor of London is introducing a £110 million new scrappage scheme. Drivers of vehicles registered under the disabled and disabled passenger tax classes and drivers of wheelchair adapted PHVs (such as minicabs) are eligible for a grace period until 24 October 2027.

Eligible vehicles and drivers will be required to apply to TfL for the grace period in order to benefit. Applications are open from 30 January 2023. You must apply as you will not be automatically enrolled.

Learn more about the [ULEZ](#).

Sir,

Twickenham Riverside

I can understand the Liberal Democrats desire to “get the Riverside done” after so many years of failed schemes by both the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats. Those who have lived in the Borough for years well know Councils have been voted OUT because of their controversial plans.

It didn't go unnoticed how prior to the Planning Meeting, the Leader of the Council took to Twitter to rally the Troops and the LBRuT broadcast of the planning meeting conveniently stopped working as Councillors gave their views. It also did not go unnoticed how the Green Party representative voted in favour of 68 largely healthy and prospering trees being felled. Time and time again we see flora and fauna swept away. It will take a decade before any replacement trees have a meaningful effect on the environment.

It was the Liberal Democrat Party who devised a Policy to exclude social rented aka affordable housing on the Riverside and these homes have actually been built elsewhere, so there was no obligation, other than a moral one, to build any houses on the Riverside. Other means could have been explored to pay for the demolition of or restoration of the old buildings. The toilets could have been brought back into use and a far simpler scheme created. We certainly don't need any more pubs or shops on the Riverside.

The Trust who manage the Diamond Jubilee Gardens and the public have been betrayed, with a Compulsory Purchase Order slapped on the gardens which were bequeathed to the public many years ago, for recreational use. We are told that the new garden will actually be even bigger. It will need to be as the site for the overbearing luxury flats that are to be built on it! The actual amount of “new” public space is questionable.

Despite awarding itself Planning Permission, the Council cannot do anything until the Bristol Planning Inspectorate has made a judgement on the CPO next June. So the best part of a year will pass with the status quo. Whilst we wait, perhaps the Council might like to open the boarded up car park area behind the former Santander for parking, as Holly Road car park is already full to bursting and on Saturdays with the Farmer's Market it is impossible to find a space by 09:00. I wish residents who parked on the Riverside all the luck in the world finding spaces.

Yours faithfully

Twickenham Resident
(Name and address supplied)

Dear Sir,

“The Safest Borough in London?”

Reading the latest issue of the Tribune, I was prompted to write to you regarding the letter(s) about the safety of the area. I agree that we are all seeing an increase in the reported occurrence of violent crime of which being the “best of a bad bunch” is no solace to people impacted or those who do not feel safe in the local area. We all want more to be done both locally and broadly across London / the country.

However, it is not just the reports of stabbings and other violent crimes which is troubling but also an increase in leading indicators of organised crime operating in the area. The number of exploited street beggars is increasing as is the number of obvious and unchallenged exchanges of controlled substances which can be seen on the streets all throughout the day. It is clear that the reduction in preventative measures previously called out in your letters section is enabling these organisations to take hold in the area. More needs to be done to understand why we are observing this and what can be done to address these issues. Macro issues such as widening inequality and reduced public services are one concern, as is the growing demand for these services from people in the area.

It would be interesting to see if, as a community, we are able to determine why this is happening and what can be done to help alleviate the issue

Many thanks

Chris
Twickenham (Name and address supplied)

The Barnes Fund is recruiting a volunteer Trustee Treasurer

The Barnes Fund is currently looking to recruit a voluntary Treasurer Trustee to their Board.

The Barnes Fund provides grants to people living in Barnes as well as to organisations that support these people. In addition, the charity provides sheltered housing for older and disabled people at Walsingham Lodge.



The Barnes Fund
SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY OF BARNES

Find out [how to apply for the role](#)

Richmond upon Thames to become a Borough of Sanctuary for refugees

Richmond Council has confirmed its commitment to Richmond upon Thames becoming a Borough of Sanctuary for those who have been forced to flee their homes.

The City of Sanctuary movement is part of a national initiative to create a network of towns and cities throughout the UK that are proud to be places of safety and inclusion for people seeking sanctuary. At a meeting of the Full Council on Thursday evening (Thursday 8 December 2022), councillors voted to support becoming a Borough of Sanctuary.

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

“Richmond Council has committed to being a place of sanctuary on many separate occasions – most recently to Afghan, Syrian, Hong Kong and Ukrainian refugees. This is a place where people can find a safe home, amongst strong and supportive communities who will help them thrive for as long as they call the UK home.



“We also recognise and celebrate the valued contribution that refugees make to the country and to our own communities, so going forward we pledge to work with local groups, migrants and sanctuary seekers to develop policies and actions which strengthen the Council’s support for migrants and refugees. We will also lobby the Government to adopt a more humanitarian approach and introduce a compassionate asylum policy.

“I have spent a lot of time getting to know our Ukrainian guests this year and seeing the way our communities have come together to support them has been inspiring. I am looking forward to the work we will do together as a borough to achieve this status, and to celebrating and empowering people who seek sanctuary here.”

Formal Borough of Sanctuary status is awarded by City of Sanctuary UK, a registered charity which advocates for refugees and supports and coordinates groups and organisations which work with refugees.

Local authorities are asked to demonstrate they can meet [nine specific criteria across three themes](#), when making an application for Borough of Sanctuary status.



Emergency works on Broad Street in Teddington

There are emergency Thames Water works on Broad Street, Teddington outside number 25.

Thames Water are carrying out urgent repairs to a leaking valve for key locations in the carriageway. The estimated completion date is 13 December 2022.



If you would like to contact Thames Water, you can call 0800 316 9800

COVID-19 and flu vaccine pop-up returning to Twickenham

Residents in and around Twickenham will be able to access a COVID-19 or flu jab ahead of Christmas and New Year celebrations on Wednesday 14 December 2022 at a pop-up vaccine clinic at York House, Twickenham.

Cold weather can make some health problems worse and even lead to serious complications, especially if you are 65 or older, or if you have a long-term health condition. Having a flu and/or COVID-19 jab can help make sure you and those you care for are well protected as we enter into the winter months.

The pop-up vaccine clinic will take place from 10.30am to 4pm. The address is The Salon, York House, Richmond Road, Twickenham, TW1 3AA. York House is a short walk from Twickenham train station and bus stops with links to all parts of the borough.



Anyone aged 12+ who is due their first, second, or booster vaccinations will be able to have their COVID-19 jab. The seasonal (autumn) booster is only available for those aged 50+ or those considered clinically vulnerable. Flu jabs are available for those aged 50+ or anyone typically eligible for a free flu jab. More information on the eligibility for COVID-19 and flu jabs can be found on NHS website. All other services are open for all ages.

No appointments are required, and people can just walk in. If you have recently tested positive for COVID-19, you need to wait before getting any dose of the vaccine and the number of weeks depends on how old you are. Find out [who is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine](#).

If anyone is hesitant about the vaccine or has any questions, the pop-up clinics are an opportunity to speak to experts from the NHS in a private and confidential environment.

Visit the East Sheen Christmas market

Time to roast, toast, and host at the East Sheen Christmas market!

On Sunday 11 December between 11am to 6pm, come along to the East Sheen Christmas market, taking place outside East Sheen Library on Sheen Lane.

Treat yourself and your loved ones to unique locally made arts and crafts from the stalls. Indulge in street food and dance and sing along to the live music on stage. The Christmas tree switch on will take place at 4.30pm.

There will be lots of entertainment for children and performances from The Barnes Choir and many more musical guests.



So come along for a festive day out, toasting the season with friends and family!

Richmond Community Choir Christmas concert

Join Richmond Community Choir on Sunday 11 December at 6.30pm for their annual Christmas concert.

Taking place at All Hallows Church, Erncroft Way, Twickenham, TW1 1DA, guests will be welcome to join in and celebrate Christmas with seasonal songs and carols. There will be an interval bar and mince pies to get you in the festive spirit.

Tickets are £5 and can be purchased on the door. Children go free.



Richmond Youth Service - winter warm spaces

Richmond Youth Service will provide warm spaces for young people across the borough this winter.

With support from the Richmond Warm Spaces funding, the service will open its buildings more often and for longer, including at weekends.

Young people will be able to get together, take part in activities, and do their homework in safe and warm spaces. Cooked nutritious meals will also be provided for free.

There are centres in Ham, Twickenham, Mortlake, Hampton, and Whitton. You can [find out more and check opening times](#).



GREAT SCOTT, LUCKY RICHMOND!

I dread to think how much money was spent on the refurbishment of the old Revolution site on Richmond Riverside by Caprice Holdings when opening the recently launched Scott's Richmond. All I can say is that they did a fantastic job; it really is the most stunningly beautiful restaurant. We arrived on a bitterly cold evening to find a celestial gathering of top-hatted characters alighted on the windowsills, like happy ghosts of Christmas past, and strings of shimmering white lights giving a sparkling welcome. Comfortably seated and enjoying



a glass of Nyetimber Classic Cuvee while perusing the menu, we marvelled at the decor, the fabulous artwork, and the troupe of smartly dressed staff busily going about their respective roles. It was like watching 'a well-oiled machine' according to my husband. The noise level for such a busy restaurant was also good - high ceilings and soft upholstery seem to absorb noise well.

The menu is seriously fishy (not surprising as Scott's is renowned for its seafood) but there are also lots of options for vegetarians and meat eaters. My husband couldn't resist trying the wild mushroom risotto with truffled burrata to start, and the baked



spiced crab with garlic and herb toast, had captured me at first glance! The crab was delicately spiced, but not overwhelming the flavour of the crab itself. Needless to say, I scraped the shell clean! Both starters were excellent, and the Nyetimber paired surprisingly well with them. My only slight criticism was the wine was served in rather heavy flutes, with a particularly thick rim that, in my opinion, didn't do justice to the delicacy of the contents!



Grilled sea bass, fried shrimp and garlic, chosen by my husband, was pronounced superb. I

managed to sneak a few shrimps off his plate and they were crispy little bursts of fishy deliciousness. If they are planning to offer a bar snacks menu in the future, a bowl of these will go down a treat with a nice glass of white wine! The skin of the bass was beautifully seasoned and crispy too, and the fish itself was perfectly cooked.



Monkfish and tiger prawn masala, pilaf rice, coriander yogurt and crispy onions was my chosen main, and again, it paired well with the Nyetimber (by this time we were on our second glass). Subtly spiced, with a gentle heat, but I didn't think it actually needed the coriander yogurt at all.

While we were enjoying our meal it was interesting to watch Will, the GM, moving around the room, constantly checking tables and being very 'hands on' helping clear and serve too. It is refreshing to see someone who obviously revels in his job, steering the front of house team with such cool professionalism. He stopped by our table for a chat, and told us that Scott's is open up until, and including, Christmas Eve, then reopening after Boxing Day, and through New Year.



Not that we actually needed anything else, but the lure of the special Christmas desserts was too much to resist, so we shared a baked Christmas pudding fondant with Bailey's custard and a clementine bauble. Oh wow! Both were sensationally good; the Christmas pud was surprisingly light and chocolatey, while the clementine bauble was so delicate and refreshing.

Scott's isn't cheap, I admit, but it is extremely special. It's brought a taste of West End glamour and luxury to Richmond that other restaurants have attempted, but not triumphed over, in quite the same way. It's a very special place for a celebratory meal and I was pleased to hear that they will be introducing a set lunch menu in January (Mon-Wed £29.50 for two or £34.50 for three courses).

Richmond is lucky to have Scott's make such a significant investment in the Riverside - let's hope folk appreciate it.

HAVE FUN FILLING THOSE FOODIE STOCKINGS

Foodie stocking fillers are always great fun to choose, especially if you think you're likely to be in with a chance of sharing the contents! Whether filling a stocking, pillow slip, or festive carrier bag, here are just a few of my suggestions for indulging your loved ones this Christmas:



Coffee on Christmas morning will be all the more special if you give a pack of specially blended 'Christmas' coffee. This lovely tin of Whittards Festive Coffee containing its iconic ground coffee with warming spices and a chocolatey depth is £12. If tea's more to your liking, look no further than the intensely flavoured Christmas tea at £6.50 (for 25 individually wrapped tea bags) from Whittards stores or online [here](#). Or hedge your bets and give both!



A trial pack of different gins given to me in my stocking a few years ago introduced me to one of my favourite gins, one I'd never have bought without having tried it. So indulge a spirits and cocktail lover with a selection box like this Boatyard Distillery tasting collection, or a fabulous range of classic miniatures from the iconic vermouth brand Cocchi. Available at £14.99 from Master of Malt and £27.95 from



The Whisky Exchange or Drink Spirited, respectively.

Revive that old tradition of playing games over Christmas with **Tension Foodies**, a new game from the interestingly-named brand **Cheatwell**. Can you name 10 types of pasta in 60 seconds? What about 10 items on a full English breakfast? You'll know the answers, but can you shout them quickly enough? With 200 different naming challenges, **Tension Foodies** offers hours of family fun. It doesn't matter if you're twelve or eighty, the gameplay is the same: correctly name as many of the examples on the card before the timer runs out, then use your score to progress around the board. The handy slide scorer records correct answers and prevents arguments during the game! To make things more interesting, only answers on the game card count, causing debate as the most common food item isn't always included. £7.99 from [The Range](#)



I recently discovered a great new botanic juniper liqueur from Italy, **Kranebet** Italian botanic juniper liqueur. Produced by **Rossi d'Asiago** distillers since 1924, this award-winning aromatic liqueur has strong juniper notes. Originally a popular pharmaceutical elixir, it's delicious on the rocks, in a sophisticated version of a G&T, or a decadent home-made Negroni. **Kranebet** is an ideal stocking filler for a gin lover, and very reasonably priced at around £19 for a 70cl bottle from [Amazon](#)

Panettone is now becoming synonymous with a British Christmas, as many of us prefer it to traditional Christmas cake. **Crosta & Mollica** panettone is, as to be expected by a company producing such authentic Italian fare, excellent, and available from Ocado at £8.50 (500g). But if short of space, you might like to include one of the mini versions - just £1.55 and also available from Waitrose.



Another delicious Italian import that will be most welcome over Christmas is panforte, and this one from **Seggiano** is a winner. Fig and walnut panforte is a variation on the traditional mediaeval recipe and is packed with walnuts, figs and honey. Serve thin slices with cheese or desserts, or just enjoy on its own. A snip at £6.60 for this beautifully packaged bundle of deliciousness from seggiano.com



At the Spirit of Christmas fair last month, I encountered another amazing new Christmas drink - the **Winter Gin Liqueur** from The **Reverend Hubert**. It's handcrafted in the Cotswolds using "the most divine real fruit and spices: from Amalfi Lemons and Sri Lankan spices to English rhubarb." It was originally made in 1904 by the great-grandfather of the inspiring chap who launched the company. The Rev used fruit from the vicarage garden for the congregation's Christmas party. It's bursting with aromatic wintery notes of spices, orange and dried fruit and will make a lovely late night festive snifter. Apparently one can use it in cocktails, but to be honest, I'd just serve neat or on the rocks to appreciate it. £36 for 50cl from reverendhubert.com



But let's not forget that traditional drink that's often left out for Santa to enjoy on his travels! Make Santa's morning though, with a bottle of good whisky in his stocking, like this one from **Talisker** that makes a fabulous Christmas gift - either a bottle, or better still, instead of a stocking at all, this lovely dry bag filled with a bottle of 10 year-old malt. This **Talisker 10 Year Old Malt Whisky** has been paired with a custom, reusable dry bag featuring a roll closure, ensuring splash-proof protection. Whether on foot, on the water, or on a bike, it will protect your belongings. The stalwart of the Talisker family, this is a superb, powerful single malt. It has a sea-salty nose, spicy complexity, a smoky-sweet character and a delicious peppery finish to give you a warm afterglow on a cold winter evening. £47 for the special dry pack or £38 for a signed 70 cl bottle on its own from malts.com (also with a facility for a personal gift message if you want to send directly to the recipient)



And don't forget those other little extras including the chocolate coins and the ubiquitous orange - whether it be a chocolate one or a fresh one!

TASTE KITCHEN ASIA

I somehow doubt there are many British chefs who have studied a Masters degree in Chemistry! Well, I can tell you of one: **Philli Armitage-Mattin**, and she was also the only female finalist in MasterChef: The Professionals 2020. Having studied a master's at Bristol University, (Philli was introduced to food science by the same research professor who worked with Heston Blumenthal), she then gained her professional cookery qualification at the University of West London, before training under Gordon Ramsay. Now Philli has just published her debut cookbook, and it's fabulous. After a life of researching, travelling and consuming Asian food, **Taste Kitchen: Asia** is the ultimate guide to mastering Asian flavours. It's published by Little Brown at £26 (hardback)



It demonstrates Philli's skill at connecting some of the most loved dishes not by region, as one would perhaps expect, but by flavour. Once we're able to understand our palates, we can tailor our cooking to our unique personalities, while tasting our way across the Asian continent. With stints at top restaurants in Tokyo and Hong Kong under her belt, Philli's mission is to get people to try new flavours, mainly using Asian ingredients such as miso and gochujang, and to make delicious dishes such as Xinjiang lamb kebabs, Korean fried chicken and okonomiyaki (a Japanese pizza). Philli certainly knows her stuff - and the book is a triumph. To give you a taste, here are a couple of recipes from the book:



Tamarind and Lime Glazed Salmon SERVES 4

“Eating fresh tamarind is an experience like no other. The seeds are super tart with naturally occurring tartaric acid (cream of tartar). This tangy flavour works beautifully with the fatty salmon. Fresh tamarind and tamarind concentrate are hard to come by in the supermarket, but if you have tamarind concentrate it's more acidic so halve the quantity in the recipe. You'll probably be able to find tamarind paste and tamarind sauce – please, please, please stay away from the sauce and pick up the paste. The sauce contains more sugar; the paste is straight blended tamarind, which is what we'll be using in this recipe.

This is the perfect dish to wow guests at a dinner party, it'll look and taste mega.”

Essential Equipment

Oven tray

1 Thai chilli, green or red, finely sliced

4 tbsp honey

6 tbsp soy sauce

1 tbsp fish sauce (optional)

2 garlic cloves, minced

5cm/2in piece of ginger, minced

4 x 200g/7oz salmon fillets

50g/1½ oz tamarind paste, or juice of 1 lime and 1 tbsp honey

Juice of 2 limes

Small handful of mint and coriander, chopped

2 tbsp roasted peanuts, chopped



TO SERVE

This goes great with Fennel and Cucumber Slaw and a cold glass of rosé

1. Mix the chilli, honey, soy sauce, fish sauce, garlic and ginger together.
2. Line a deep oven tray with baking parchment and place the salmon skin side down. Pour the dressing over the salmon and marinate at room temperature for between 20 and 30 minutes.
3. When you're ready to cook, preheat the oven to 230°C (210°C fan oven) Gas 8 and place the tray in the oven for 9 minutes. The fish will take on a deep caramel colour and it will start to smell super fragrant. Take out the fish and mix together the tamarind and lime juice. Glaze the fish with the tamarind dressing. Cover in loads of herbs and peanuts.

Taste and adjust as you eat; if you want more sourness, add lime.

BBBR: Brown Butter Basmati Rice SERVES 4

“To be clear, most food is better with butter, specifically brown butter. I love rice and the only thing I can think of to make it better is brown butter. Nutty, rich, indulgent, this is the best rice dish ever.”

Essential Equipment

Large pan with lid

50g/1½ oz unsalted butter

300g/10½ oz washed rice

½ tsp ground turmeric

1 tsp salt

Juice of ½ lemon

TO SERVE

Shop-bought crispy onions

1. Heat a saucepan over a medium heat, add the butter and cook until the butter is melted and starts to turn golden brown and smell nutty. Immediately take off the heat – if you cook too long you'll have burnt butter. Allow the butter to cool slightly.
2. Wash the rice in cold water in a large bowl, scrunching the grains with your hands to remove the starch. Then drain in a sieve until the water runs clear.
3. Add the washed rice, turmeric, salt and 500ml/18fl oz water to the brown butter. Heat over a high heat until just boiling.
4. Then put the lid on, lower the heat and cook for 10–12 minutes or until all the water is absorbed.
5. Once all the water has been absorbed and the rice is fully cooked, turn off the heat and leave the pan to fully cool down without removing the lid for 5–10 minutes. This is the secret to fluffy rice.
6. Squeeze over the lemon juice. **Taste** and **adjust**; if it's a little too comforting add a bit more lemon juice. Serve with Crispy Things (p. 246) scattered over the top.



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Goldilocks and the Three Bears

by Alan McHugh

Crossroads Pantomimes at Richmond Theatre until 31st December

A freezing cold evening, the roads around Richmond Green are beautifully adorned with twinkling seasonal lights, a Christmas card scene with a sprinkling of frost and real carol singers. However, this is where tradition ends. *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* is not your typical panto – there's no fairy tale plot and no audience sing-along. Directed by panto legend Matt Slack, this is a variety show extravaganza, with spectacular circus acts to completely blow you away.



Brilliant pyrotechnics set the circus scene with the high kicking, sequined and feathered ensemble, awesomely choreographed by Gerry Zuccarello. Phil Walker, as Ringo the Ring Master, provides a few risqué punchlines ... and priceless Benny Hill facial expressions.



Matt Baker heads the cast, as the good-natured and hugely genuine Joey the Clown, a bit Ronald MacDonald in his red, white and yellow costume. Multi-talented Matt's boundless energy delivers laugh-after-laugh, as he showcases his physicality with dance moves presumably learnt from his time on *Strictly*.

Seasoned panto aficionado Nigel Ellacott is Dame Betty Barnum, amazingly achieving his 48th year in panto (either he caught the stage bug young, or I want the name of his surgeon!). Ellacott designs his own magnificent costumes, which have been displayed at the V&A.

Goldilocks and Dame Betty's circus is under threat by Countess Von Winklebottom, a wonderfully wicked whip-cracking Jessica Martin. Goldilocks needs a new act to draw in the crowds (yes, the talking, dancing three bears) but the gang must save our cuddly friends from being cruelly

locked away by the villainous Countess.

The Magical Mysterioso, illusionist Phil Hitchcock, produces a mysterious floating fireball and doves appearing from thin air. El Mariachi Marquez, draws on his Latin-American musical roots, accompanying his juggling of clubs, hats, and illuminated balls. With such breath-taking turns, why-oh-why is Goldilocks on the lookout for crowd-pleasing acts?



Although hard-line purists miss out on major panto features, it's a great spectacle. When is a panto not a panto? When it's a circus!

Read Thea Diamond's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/12/08/goldilocks-3-bears

Photography by Craig Sugden



Legally Blonde, the Musical

by Laurence O'Keefe and Nell Benjamin

Dramacube at Esher Theatre, then tours to 21st December

Legally Blonde is a story with the classic social message of 'don't judge a book by its cover'.

Rosie Preedy, playing the lead role of Elle Woods, radiates confidence, leaving everyone with a smile. The positive energy of Rosie's character contrasts with Vivienne, a stuck up and catty Harvard Student. Isla Hickinson's performance as the spiteful antagonist is a brilliant contrast. However, at the end of the play, Vivienne and Elle unite through sisterhood and stand up together against the misogynistic society of the legal world.



The contrasting male leads of Elliot Wilson as Warner and Gael De Bonnières as Emmett are both very strong actors. Elliot and Rosie start the play in love, but Warner moves on because she is 'too blonde' for him. However, Emmett helps to find her full potential as a lawyer. Rosie becomes the "Valedictorian" of Harvard Law School and they end up happily engaged at the end of the play.



Paulette is an over-dramatic yet endearing hair-stylist who, with Elle's help, manages to gain confidence in herself. Florence Bastin portrays Paulette with humour and enthusiasm, never failing to raise a laugh.

Production designer's Hannah Calarco's wonderful pink set is filled with neon lights and balloons. The costumes are amazing, including Bruiser's hilarious dog costume, worn by Grace Young.

The performance is packed with brilliant musical numbers performed by the sorority girls, who bring energy and huge smiles to the scene. Their *Omigod You Guys* kick-starts the show with energy and enthusiasm, which is maintained throughout to the finale *Bend and Snap*, choreographed by Rory Cubin, and is filled with energetic dance moves and gymnastics.

Legally Blonde proves that 'looks and books' can coexist. It is a fun filled show to brighten your day.

Millie Stephens is one of our younger critics. Read her review at

read her review at

www.markaspen.com/2022/12/01/legal-blonde-orange

Photography by Simone Sutton



Cinderella

by Alan P Frayn

NTC at Network Theatre, Waterloo

Tucked in under Waterloo station is the little gem that is Network Theatre. This is the place to go for a refreshing and very welcome return to Traditional Pantomime. In recent years panto has been swamped with various modern agenda and has suffered as a result. *Cinderella* brings us back to the kind of uproarious uninhibited 'gender bending' entertainment that predates Ru Paul by hundreds of years. Even Dandini's (Gabriela Papievyte) thigh slapping was back! The audience loved it.



The cast did too, and although the unexpected occasionally happened, they rode over the bumps with a gusto that only enhanced the entertainment. All of them gave their best, but the star of the show was the hapless James. The 'star maker' was Grizelda (Andrew Hall), one of the man-hungry ugly sisters, who picked him out of the audience as the unfortunate object of 'her' affection. In getting there, she also picked me out, telling my wife ... (well!)

The scope for an over the top performance from the ugly sisters was brilliantly exploited. Both Grizelda and her sister Gertrude (Simon May) were delightfully horrible. In the same vein the two builders Bodgett (Alan Scott) and Leggett (Matthew Partridge) shared the one-liners that had the audience rolling in the aisles. One of the highlights was their beach ball routine, delightfully simple, that engaged everyone. Note that some of these jokes are a little risqué, but are unlikely to traumatise children ... until their parents explain them.

Another highlight was Cinderella's (Catherine Stevens) sad little rendition of Elton John's *Your Song* with only her horse Hagan (Kay Murray and Dom Thomson) to hear it. It brought a tear to the eye of this old cynic.

The Network Theatre has been providing great theatre since 1939 with musicals, comedy, tragedy, classical and new writing, and this perfectly potty panto adds another success to its repertoire.



Read Nick Swyft's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/12/03/cinderella-ntc

Photography by Paul Lunnon



Guardians of the Pantoverse

by Daniel Wain, lyrics by Nigel Cole and Lizzie Lattimore

Teddington Theatre Club at Hampton Hill Theatre until 11th December

What better way to start the Christmas season than to be immersed not only into the world of panto, but into the world of gaming. Directed by Nigel Cole, *Guardians of the Pantoverse* incorporates all aspects of this best loved festive tradition, but the tale has also been cleverly based in video games, as well as a mixture of songs old and new.



The kind fairy (Rachael Rajah), with cool fashion sense of sparkly tulle skirt and yellow trainers, speaks in rhyme until being banned by King Rat the CEO (Chief Evil Officer) of Mega Corp. Having been born in a dustbin and endured years of panto at the [Hackney Empire](http://HackneyEmpire.com), King Rat, played by Scott Tilley with enough villainous aplomb to get



the kiddies hiding under their Christmas jumpers, has captured Beauty, Prince Charming, Window Twanky, Muddles and Baron Hardup in a fiendishly complicated video game. Our hero Jack (a high-gusto thigh-slapping principal boy Molly Cole) has to gather the five iconic icons of panto iconography to free our friends and rescue Panto Land.

The whimsical countryside set, designed by Fiona Auty transforms into a video game, complete with animated montages of viral internet phenomena. Many were lost on me, but not on the groaning teenagers. Voiceovers included *Strictly's* Alan Dedicoat making a familiar sounding appearance.

There are technically precise dancing, brilliantly choreographed by Gita Singham-Willis, toe-tapping songs by musical director Lizzie Lattimore, and over ninety jaw-dropping costumes in amazing variety. Window Twanky (David Hannigan) not only has the best innuendos and double entendres, but also the best and most fab-ul-us costumes. The Carmen Miranda dress and tropical fruit headpiece are a sight to behold – congratulations to wardrobe again and again! But don't sit too close to the front if you want to avoid Twnky's flirtations!



Hampton Hill has a standout show to remember in this winter's panto-verse.

Read Thea Diamond's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/12/05/guard-pantoverse

Photography by Sarah J Carter



12:37

by Julia Pascal

Pascal Theatre Company at the Finborough Theatre, Earl's Court until 21st December

At 12.37 pm on 22nd July 1946, the King David Hotel in Jerusalem was bombed. Ninety-one people were killed. The bombing was carried out by Zionists targeting the headquarters of the British forces in Palestine. This event is the culmination of a perfectly crafted and gripping narrative that intertwines the struggles of Irish and Jewish nationalism with a visceral love story. The result is an absorbing and powerful piece of theatre.



The events leading to the attack begin in 1935, in Dublin, where two Irish Jewish brothers, Paul and Cecil Green, leave for a new start in England. We follow their lives and their loves over the next twenty-one years, from fighting antisemitism on the East End, via the Second World War, to the traumatic creation of the state of Israel. Underpinning this broad historical sweep is the relationship between the brothers, and crucially their love for Eileen O'Reilly and Rina Goldberg, all which frames and humanises the thrust of the dramatic narrative.

This is an ensemble piece that stands or falls by the quality and versatility of the actors, and the skill with which they create the many vignettes which power the story along. The cast are uniformly excellent and rise effortlessly to the challenge of creating a series of scenes which are believable, occasionally humorous, sometimes moving, but always engaging.

Alex Cartuson and Eoin O'Dubhghaill deliver powerful and utterly believable portrayals of brothers Paul and Cecil, with the mesmerising Lisa O'Connor as Eileen and Rina, captivating the hearts of the brothers at various stages of their journey. Ruth Lass and Danaan McAteer deliver beautifully observed characterisations in the other roles.



12.37 is an invigorating, fast paced evocation of a now largely forgotten event that always retains humanity and emotion at its core. A remarkable achievement, it weaves its spell effectively and memorably. It will stay with you long after you have left the theatre.

Read Harry Zimmerman's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/12/02/1237

Photography by Yaron Lapid

Christmas is a coming and the bells begin to ring, the holly's in the window and the birds begin to sing...

By Bruce Lyons



Here at Crusader Travel we've been busy bees getting the deck cleared, as they say, for our next challenge! We have seasonal decorations, Xmas lights and Trees and a lovely Xmas Welcome Mat given to us by our friend Romina at Corto Deli in Church Street (after I admired hers 😊)

We sent a load of personal cards to clients (with Fridge Magnets manufactured by Shona) & if you come by now we'll offer you Mince Pies and Coffee as well as some Xmas Cheer.

So, we are ready for whatever fate sends our way, be it the RMT or Baggage Handlers, Border Control Staff.

After 2 ½ years of Covid and its disciplines and protocols and all those abandoned travels closed borders and cancelled flights, all of which had to be sorted -one way or another. Then we had an incredibly busy Summer amongst all the airport and airline staff issues with its associated consolidations and cancellations, but by and large our clients all travelled, many on real adventures – as they had been starved of family experiences for 2 whole years! So, I think we are very travel challenge hardened now and just plan to see it through and find a way for our clients to have as seamless experience as possible.

True, with all these impediments to travel there are obstacles on the way and you need a bit of natural resilience (or is it patience) Strikes, shortages; virus's and more has been warned for the Christmas break, which is almost upon us. Nobody knows how it will affect transportation.

But, whatever happens we will be here – on the phones – looking at emails and when not in the office monitoring things from home.

So whatever you need or whatever problem arises contact us – leave a message on the email; info@crusadertravel.com; or call our emergency numbers are on the answerphone. Don't give up – we want to help and enjoy problem solving

As I said we've cleared the decks ready in case. We have just sorted our place on the Twickenham Map as well and Cornelius O'Brien tells me there are still a few places left too. They get printed next week – email conobrien68@gmail.com for more details – don't delay book today

From Merry Crusader and the Merry Elves

WIZ Tales: The Sultanate of Oman

The Earthshot Prize December 2022, Fix Our Climate



By Teresa Read

According to the UN, removing CO₂ is essential if we are to limit global warming.

An Oman-based company “44.01” – one of five winners of the Earthshot Prize - has developed a technique that permanently removes CO₂ by mineralising it in peridotite rock and storing it deep underground. The “44.01” team is led by a team of childhood friends; 44.01 is the molecular mass of Carbon Dioxide.

An article in Scientific American informs us that Oman’s exposed mantle rocks are absorbing and petrifying up to 100,000 metric tons of CO₂ every year.

Oman, in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, is a site of early human habitation. Once one of the richest countries in the world, the legendary city of Ubar controlled the Frankincense trade.

Sailing ships were built in Oman thousands of years ago, when the country’s wealth depended on trade; Sur still produces the traditional dhow.

In the highlands there are raised irrigation systems, carrying water from mountain streams, which are over two thousand years old; the Aflaj Irrigation Systems are on the World Heritage List.

Oman has an interesting landscape, and it seems that the Earthshot Prize has helped to highlight the ancient rocks of Oman and how they can help to fix climate change.



Traditional Dhow, Muscat



Palm tree farm



Prehistoric necropolis Al-Ayn in Ad Dhahirah



Traditional Khanjar dagger

More photographs of Oman: <https://worldinfozone.com/gallery.php?country=Oman>

ARE MOTHS EATING YOUR CLOTHES?

By Deep Patel

Ahhh we've all seen them...those golden coloured little moths that seem to turn to dust when we touch them. Well that gold dust (I like to call it fairy dust) is actually there to help them fly better, and they are pretty beautiful when you look at their metallic golden wings...but are they really stuffing their faces with your clothes for dinner?

The short answer is no. For years we have thought moths eat clothes so they deserve to die...strictly speaking that is wrong...you see, adult moths don't have a mouth!! Yes it's true...they have NO MOUTH so how can we blame the glittering little beauties for eating our clothes? Well we kind of still can... It's not the adult moths that are causing the damage...it's the larvae. Moths lay their eggs and then the larvae can cause damage to your clothes...but as I always say...there is ALWAYS a KIND way to stop any "pest" without being mean (and without damaging your own karma).



First of all, buy yourself some lavender, peppermint or citronella lemon pure essential oil. Has to be the pure 100% essential oil, not a diluted version, it's fairly cheap online. Mix 30n drops of the one you prefer the scent of into a cup of water and then pour it into an empty spray bottle. Lightly spray this mixture on all your natural fiber clothes once a week (wool, silk, cotton etc) and leave the synthetic ones (polyester etc) as moths do nothing to synthetic fibers. Next wrap up all your woolen and natural fabric clothes in carrier bags and tie a knot in the bags so the moths cannot get in to lay in the first place (prevention is always better than cure!). This will stop them laying as they HATE these scents, and not only will you be left with lovely clothes, you will also have good karma for choosing a kind way...you never know when a little good karma may come in handy for you!

We are not the only inhabitants of this beautiful planet and we should respectfully learn to live and let live...(then you will definitely have good karma).

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.

I always say, even 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).

The key to our own happiness lies in the happiness of other life forms...until the next time...have a lovely week 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

Richmond College Dance Students perform Gilded Gala shows to the public

On Tuesday and Wednesday this week (7th December) Richmond upon Thames College's (RuTC) Level 3 Dance students took to the stage to perform 'The Gilded Gala' in the college's new state of the art 120 seater auditorium.

£286 was raised from tickets that were sold across the three performances.

RuTC's Supported Learning department attended along with other students who enjoyed watching their peers' show.

'The Gilded Gala' highlights the importance of supporting one and other through different life struggles



The dancers wore a range of vibrant costumes and performed various dance styles to help spread the key messages.

Many of the pieces were choreographed by the dancers with guidance from their teachers.

A member of the audience commented how "the performance took my breath away and I am in awe of the talent of these students."

Dance teacher Claire Guntrip added, "I am really looking forward to seeing what the girls can achieve throughout the rest of the year, if this is the standard of performance after only four months of their dance course. They all worked extremely hard and it really paid off in the end. It's wonderful seeing them come into their own as performers."

Learn more about studying Dance at RuTC [here](#).



**Richmond upon
Thames College**

Three friendlies confirmed

Brentford will prepare for the resumption of the Premier League season with behind-closed-doors friendlies against Bordeaux, Celta Vigo and Wolfsburg

Written by Brentford Football Club



Brentford will play behind-closed-doors friendlies against Bordeaux, Celta Vigo and Wolfsburg this month.

The First Team squad are preparing for the return of the Premier League, with Tottenham Hotspur the visitors to the Gtech Community Stadium on Boxing Day.

The Bees will conclude [this week's training camp in Spain](#) with a game tomorrow, Saturday 10 December, against Ligue 2 side Bordeaux. The fixture, which will kick off at 12.30pm UK time, will be played at Girona's training ground.

Brentford will then welcome Celta Vigo, who currently sit 17th in LaLiga, to Jersey Road on Tuesday 13 December (12pm kick-off).

Wolfsburg, who finished the first half of the Bundesliga season with four straight victories, then travel to Jersey Road on Saturday 17 December (12pm kick-off).

Supporters will not be able to attend these fixtures. There will be live updates of all three games on the [Club's Twitter](#), with post-match content available here at www.brentfordfc.com

Any further details will be shared via the Club's social media channels.



RFU Statement - Eddie Jones

Following a review of the Autumn Nations Series, Eddie Jones has been dismissed from the position of England Head Coach.

The RFU will now conclude the long-term work it has been undertaking on coach succession planning with changes set to be announced in the near future. In the interim, Richard Cockerill will take over the day to day running of the men's performance team.

Speaking about the review, RFU CEO, Bill Sweeney said; "It is important to recognise the huge contribution Eddie has made to English rugby, winning three Six Nations Championships, one Grand Slam and taking us to a Rugby World Cup final. He has the highest win ratio of any previous England head coach and has helped develop the leadership skills of many players and coaches. I am grateful to Eddie for all he has done for England across many areas of the game and the professional way in which he has approached reviewing the performance of the team. He has provided the panel with astute insight and meaningful lessons that will support the team performance going forward."

Eddie Jones said; "I am pleased with much that we have achieved as an England team and I look forward to watching the team's performance in the future. Many of the players and I will no doubt keep in touch and I wish them all well in their future careers."

The decision for Eddie to leave was taken by the RFU board on Tuesday. Speaking about the decision, RFU Chair, Tom Ilube said; "The independent review panel regularly updates board on its discussions and findings. We are fully supportive of its process and recommendations."



RFU Statement - Wasps and Worcester Warriors

The administrators for both Wasps Holdings Limited (WHL), the main operating entity of Wasps RFC, and of WRFC Trading Limited, the main operating entity of Worcester Warriors RFC have made 'No Fault Insolvency' applications under RFU Regulation 5 which would have the effect of avoiding the automatic relegation of a club's most senior first XV team, therefore enabling that team to compete in the league in which it participated at the time the insolvency event occurred.

Both applications cited the impact of the Covid pandemic as the primary reason for entering administration.

The RFU's Club Financial Viability Group, having considered both applications made a recommendation to the RFU Board that both applications are not accepted, and the Board has ratified that decision.

The rationale for the decisions taken is outlined below:

Wasps Holding Limited

- As a result of analysis detailed, the RFU is of the view that insufficient evidence has been provided to enable the RFU to conclude that there has been "No Fault" on the part of the club or the directors, and equally insufficient evidence has been provided to say that the financial impact of Covid was the sole reason of WHL's entry into administration.

- The club's business plan ultimately lacked resilience and could not transform what was a loss-making and debt-funded business (specifically via the retail bond issued in April 2015) into a sustainable and self-serving operation. The business model clearly never managed to reach the level it was intended to via the cash generation envisaged by the subsidiaries controlling the CBS Arena, but equally the operation was immeasurably vulnerable to the lack of ability to refinance the bond, which ultimately was a key event that precipitated WHL's entry into administration.
- Another key event was the possibility of HMRC filing a winding-up petition (which was prevented by the Notice of Intention to Appoint Administrators and subsequent entry into administration) based on the inability of the club to meet its Time to Pay arrangement. Despite several requests, the RFU has not been provided with any correspondence between the club and HMRC in relation to this. Therefore, the RFU cannot be satisfied there is no fault by the club.
- While there may be possibility that the insolvency events may not have happened were it not for the Covid pandemic, that is not the same as to say there was no fault by the club. It is clear that the directors of the club had allowed the club to be in such a precarious position that a shock such as Covid, the challenging debt markets or another external event would have created a real and increased likelihood of an insolvency event happening.

Worcester (WRFC Trading Limited and WRFC Players Limited)

- As a result of the analysis detailed, the RFU is of the view that the club has not established on the balance of probabilities that there has been "No Fault" on the part of the club (which includes its officers).
- It is acknowledged that Covid did have a substantial financial effect on both WRFC Trading Limited and WRFC Players Limited (as it did on every club in England, and in particular the other Premiership clubs).
- The insolvency event in relation to WRFC Players Limited was a direct result, and the insolvency event of WRFC Trading Limited was at least indirectly a result of, winding up petitions filed by HMRC. These petitions resulted from a failure of the club to meet its Time to Pay arrangements with HMRC. Despite several requests, the RFU has not been provided with any correspondence between the club and HMRC in relation to this. Therefore, the RFU cannot be satisfied there is no fault by the club.
- More broadly, the evidence that has been provided demonstrates a business model which did appear to be perpetually funded by debt, with no apparent attempt (except anecdotally in the last months) to execute the wider business plan and develop the land around Sixways which would have ultimately improved the chances of creating a self-sustaining model. While there may be a possibility that the insolvency events may not have happened were it not for the Covid pandemic, that is not the same as to say there was no fault by the club. The directors of the club had allowed the club to be in such a precarious position that a shock such as Covid, the challenging debt markets or another external event would have created a real and increased likelihood of an insolvency event happening.

Bill Sweeney, RFU CEO said: "We are all deeply concerned by the insolvency of Worcester Warriors and Wasps rugby clubs. We appreciate this decision will be disappointing for the clubs and their fans but it's clear from the Club Financial Viability Group's investigation that there were factors beyond Covid that resulted in the clubs entering insolvency. This has reinforced the need for greater financial transparency between clubs, Premiership Rugby and the RFU to enable both organisations to have better visibility of how these businesses are run. We are already working on plans with Premiership Rugby to explore how to improve the structure, governance and business model of rugby union in England and support the clubs in becoming more sustainable. We are pleased that both clubs' women's teams have been able to continue and that the academy pathway in the midlands continues to give opportunities to young players."

The RFU would like to place on record its sincere thanks to the administrators of both clubs, particularly in light of the deadlines that have needed to be set in relation to the application, given the substantial amount of work that has been ongoing concurrently to secure the future of each club.



Harry and Meghan are facing a huge backlash in the wake of their controversial Netflix documentary, a new poll reveals today

A survey by People's Polling for GB News found one in four Brits are so angry they'd even be in favour of the pair being banned from attending the King's Coronation next year.

More than half of the country think William and Catherine "best represent the values" of Britain - compared to only 7% for Harry and Meghan.

Meanwhile less than half of those polled say they believe Lady Susan Hussey should have resigned over the racism row which has seen her leave her role as a Lady In Waiting.

The poll* of more than 1200 people conducted by People's Polling, shows:

- When asked to choose the couple that best represents the values of Britain, a majority of the public, 54 per cent, opt for William and Catherine, Prince and Princess of Wales, over Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, who are only supported by 7% of the country.
- There are considerable age differences: while 70 per cent of pensioners choose William and Catherine, only two percent choose Harry and Meghan. Meanwhile 39 percent of 18-24-year-olds choose William and Catherine and 13% choose Harry and Meghan.
- When asked if Harry and Meghan, The Duke and Duchess of Sussex, should be banned from attending King Charles III's coronation, 24 percent said they "completely" or "somewhat" agree while 39 per cent disagree. Eighteen percent were unsure, and said they neither agree nor disagree.
- When asked about their views on the couple, 22% of the public have a positive view and 48% have a negative view
- There is a strong generational divide with 36 percent of 18-24-year-olds having a positive view and 37 per cent having a negative view, but only 12% of pensioners having a positive view of the couple and 68 per cent having a negative view.
- When questioned on Lady Susan Hussey only 45 per cent of the country, a minority, think she should have resigned.
- There is a strong party divide with 67% of Labour voters thinking she should have resigned but only 32% of Conservative voters agreeing. Similarly, 63 per cent of Remainers think she should have resigned compared to 32% of Leavers, and 52 percent of 18-24s think she should have resigned compared to only 40% of pensioners.

Commenting, Professor and pollster Matt Goodwin said: *"When it comes to the ongoing feud between the younger members of the royal family, there is no doubt whatsoever that William and Catherine, the Prince and Princess of Wales, are seen by a majority of the country as best representing the values of Britain. Unfortunately for Harry and Meghan, they are barely on the radar."*

"There are certainly significant levels of support for excluding Harry and Meghan from the looming coronation, which rises from 24% to 41% among pensioners and 43% of Conservative voters. But a larger number of all voters, 39 per cent, think they should still be included with a further 18 per cent neither agreeing nor disagreeing."

"Lady Hussey's resignation has become another proxy battle in the culture war. Contrary to the widespread outrage we find that less than half the country think she should have resigned, 45 per cent, falling to one in three Conservatives and Brexit voters. 26 per cent do not think she should have resigned, while 30 per cent say they do not know, would prefer not to say or have no view."



Investigation into the performance of HM Passport Office

HM Passport Office (HMPO) processed record numbers of applications as demand rose amid the lifting of COVID-19 travel restrictions.

But a combination of factors led to delays for hundreds of thousands of people, with disruption to travel plans for many as a result, according to the National Audit Office (NAO).

Despite HMPO planning ahead, recruitment challenges, limitations in its systems, and unsuccessful efforts to manage demand all contributed to longer than expected waits, the NAO found.

Nonetheless, from January to September 2022, HMPO processed 6.9 million passport applications, an increase of 21% compared with the same period in 2019.

The NAO found that HMPO is already actively engaged in learning the lessons from its experience, by improving contact with customers, building future capacity to better manage demand, and completing its digital transformation.

As the pandemic emerged and government implemented travel restrictions, significantly fewer people applied for and renewed passports. HMPO planned for an expected surge in passport applications ahead of those restrictions being eased.

Based on the missing demand from 2020 and 2021, HMPO prepared for 9.5 million applications in 2022 - 36% more than a normal year.

As the Government removed COVID-19 travel restrictions, more than seven million people applied between January and September 2022, with almost half the applications received between March and May.

In May alone, HMPO received more than 1.2 million applications, 38% more than the highest month in any of the previous five years. In its busiest week, HMPO received 340,000 applications.

Between January and September 2022, 95% of customers received their passports within ten weeks. However, around 360,000 experienced longer waits.

HMPO's capacity to process applications within expected timeframes was affected by three interlinked areas.

Firstly, limitations in processing applications digitally meant that more applications were required to be processed on paper. This resulted in 134,000 digital applications being moved to the less efficient, paper-based system.

Secondly, some suppliers failed to meet service levels as demand increased.

In particular, media reports of delays pushed more people to call the telephone helpline for reassurance, placing greater pressure on services.

Thirdly, HMPO responded to customers' concerns by prioritising passports for those with imminent travel and moving experienced staff to deal with customers rather than processing passports.

HMPO estimates at least three million passport applications are still expected from people who did not renew or apply during the pandemic.

HMPO therefore expects that it could see a further 9.8 million applications in 2023.

The NAO urges HMPO to learn the lessons from this year's experience so it is better prepared for higher-than-average demand expected in 2023.

In particular, the NAO encourages HMPO to focus on improving how it manages customer expectations, improving its management information and working with the Home Office to develop a more flexible approach to managing higher demand for its services.

Gareth Davies, the head of the NAO said:

“HM Passport Office processed a record number of applications amid unprecedented demand. But limitations in its systems, coupled with difficulties in keeping up with higher-than-average numbers of customers contributed to delays for hundreds of thousands of people, creating anxiety for those with travel plans and hampering people's ability to prove their identity.

HMPO must now learn the lessons from this year and prepare for similar levels of demand that are expected in 2023.”

Click here for the [full report](#) and click here for the [PAC Chair's statement](#)



National Audit Office

Difficulties in discharging patients driving long waits in Emergency Departments

Responding to the [latest Emergency Department performance figures published by NHS England for November 2022](#), Dr Adrian Boyle, President of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, said:

“The Emergency Care crisis remains incredibly challenging. As we head into winter, we know things will get worse before they get better, but making things better requires the political will to drive change and improvement. Patients continue to face dangerously long waits which are harmful to them and are distressing for staff doing their best in difficult conditions.

“It is vital that politicians, policymakers and the public understand that this is absolutely not driven by any increase in people who should not be in Emergency Departments. Demand remains at a steady level - despite a recent surge in childhood presentations - and in fact attendances decreased from October to November. These waits are almost entirely driven by poor flow through our hospitals; significant shortages of staff and beds mean we have dangerously high bed occupancy levels in hospitals, and this is made worse by our inability to discharge patients due to shortages of social care staff. These have all made providing adequate care effectively and efficiently almost impossible.

“We know that patients are concerned, while Emergency Departments are under immense pressure, they remain open to anyone seeking emergency care, and people should not hesitate to go to Emergency Departments if they need it. However, if your condition is not severe, we ask the public to use appropriate channels for their care needs, either calling NHS 111, their GP or local pharmacist. It is also vital that the public, and particularly the elderly and vulnerable, protect themselves this winter by getting a flu jab and a Covid-19 booster vaccination.

“We also know there will be some concern about the nurses and ambulance services industrial action, but the public should be reassured that patient safety is the NHS’s priority and measures will be put in place to ensure their short-term safety.

“However, there is a serious recruitment and retention crisis across the NHS, which if left unaddressed, risks a longer-term decline in patient safety. The College is not a union and cannot comment on terms and conditions of staff, but industrial action is, in part, a consequence of many staff feeling burned out, exhausted and overwhelmed. In any profession overworked staff who do not feel valued will leave, and healthcare is no different. We support the individual right of all NHS staff should they feel it necessary to take industrial action.

“We hope that there is a quick resolution before any industrial action takes place. Our nurses and ambulance services staff are skilled, competent professionals who provide a vital service. It is right that they should feel valued and supported. We want to keep our staff in the NHS, and while we wait for the workforce projections that the Chancellor pledged to deliver and the workforce plan from NHS England, we urge the government to take measures to ensure we retain all our NHS staff who provide excellent care for our patients, for the sake of our patients.”



Royal College of
Emergency Medicine

Report signals increasing resistance to antibiotics in bacterial infections in humans and need for better data

A new World Health Organization (WHO) report reveals high levels of resistance in bacteria, causing life-threatening bloodstream infections, as well as increasing resistance to treatment in several bacteria causing common infections in the community based on data reported by 87 countries in 2020.

For the first time, the Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS) report provides analyses for antimicrobial resistance (AMR) rates in the context of national testing coverage, AMR trends since 2017, and data on antimicrobial consumption in humans in 27 countries.

Within six years, GLASS achieved participation from 127 countries with 72% of the world's population. The report includes an innovative interactive digital format to facilitate data extraction and graphics.



© WHO / Nazik Armenakyan
Head Pediatrician at Wigmore Clinic in Yerevan, Armenia, Dr Ghazaryan explains the importance of hand hygiene to her students.

The report shows high levels (above 50%) of resistance were reported in bacteria frequently causing bloodstream infections in hospitals, such as *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Acinetobacter spp.* These life-threatening infections require treatment with last-resort antibiotics, such as carbapenems. However, 8% of bloodstream infections caused by *Klebsiella pneumoniae* were reported as resistant to carbapenems, increasing the risk of death due to unmanageable infections.

Common bacterial infections are becoming increasingly resistant to treatments. Over 60% of *Neisseria gonorrhoea* isolates, a common sexually transmitted disease, have shown resistance to one of the most used oral antibacterials, ciprofloxacin. Over 20% of *E.coli* isolates – the most common pathogen in urinary tract infections – were resistant to both first-line drugs (ampicillin and co-trimoxazole) and second-line treatments (fluoroquinolones).

“Antimicrobial resistance undermines modern medicine and puts millions of lives at risk,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. “To truly understand the extent of the global threat and mount an effective public health response to AMR, we must scale up microbiology testing and provide quality-assured data across all countries, not just wealthier ones.”

Although most resistance trends have remained stable over the past 4 years, bloodstream infections due to resistant *Escherichia coli* and *Salmonella* spp. and resistant gonorrhoea infections increased by at least 15% compared to rates in 2017.

More research is needed to identify the reasons behind the observed AMR increase and to what extent it is related to raised hospitalizations and increased antibiotic treatments during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic also meant that several countries were unable to report data for 2020.

New analyses show that countries with a lower testing coverage, mostly low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), are more likely to report significantly higher AMR rates for most “bug-drug” combinations.

This may be (partly) due to the fact that in many LMICs, a limited number of referral hospitals report to GLASS. These hospitals often care for the sickest patients who may have received previous antibiotic treatment.

For example, the global median AMR levels were 42% (*E. Coli*) and 35% (Methicilin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* – MRSA) – the two AMR Sustainable Development Goal indicators. But when only countries with high testing coverage were considered, these levels were markedly lower at 11% and 6.8%, respectively.

As for antimicrobial consumption in humans, 65% of 27 reporting countries met WHO’s target of ensuring that at least 60% of antimicrobials consumed are from the ‘ACCESS’ group of antibiotics, i.e. antibiotics which – according to the WHO AWaRE classification – are effective in a wide range of common infections and have a relatively low risk of creating resistance.

AMR rates remain difficult to interpret due to insufficient testing coverage and weak laboratory capacity, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

To overcome this critical gap, WHO will follow a two-pronged approach aiming at short-term evidence generation through surveys and long-term capacity building for routine surveillance.

This will entail the introduction of representative national AMR prevalence surveys to generate AMR baseline and trend data for policy development and monitoring of interventions and an increase of quality-assured laboratories reporting representative AMR data at all levels of the health system.

Responding to trends of antimicrobial resistance requires high-level commitment from countries to boost surveillance capacity and provide quality assured data as well as action by all people and communities.

By strengthening the collection of standardized quality AMR and AMC data, the next phase of GLASS will underpin effective data-driven action to stop the emergence and spread of AMR and protect the use of antimicrobial medicines for future generations.



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