

Twickenham & Richmond TRIBUNE

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25th March 2022



Sunset beams onto Twickenham Green
 Photo by Berkley Driscoll

TickerTape - News in Brief

Shop fire - Twickenham - The Optical Gallery

Four fire engines and around 25 firefighters were called to a shop fire on King Street in Twickenham at The Optical Gallery.

Part of the ground floor shop with flats above was damaged by fire. There were no reports of any injuries.

The Brigade was called at 1543 and the fire was under control by 1607. Fire crews from Twickenham, Heston and Richmond fire stations attended the scene.

The fire is believed to have been accidental and involved hot works being carried out.

Local heroes honoured at Community Heroes Awards

On Wednesday 23 March, local individuals and groups were honoured at Richmond upon Thames' annual Community Heroes Awards in York House.

Over 100 inspiring individuals, groups and businesses were nominated across ten categories.

The Community Heroes Awards aim to highlight those working and living in Richmond upon Thames who go above and beyond to make their communities a better place in which to live, work, and learn.

A new community cargo bike hire scheme is coming to Richmond upon Thames

Residents and businesses in East Sheen, Teddington and Hampton will soon be able to hire Cargo Bikes by the hour and can benefit from two hours of free usage per day.

Residents and businesses can [register their interest](#) to use the new Cargo Bikes.

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COVID 19

Teresa Read

World Health Organization

Weekly Epidemiological Report

Overview

After a consistent decrease since the end of January 2022, the number of new weekly cases rose for a second consecutive week, with a 7% increase reported during the week of 14 through 20 March 2022, as compared to the previous week. The number of new deaths has continued a decreasing trend (-23% as compared to the previous week). Across the six WHO regions, over 12 million cases and just under 33 000 deaths were reported.

As of 20 March 2022, over 468 million confirmed cases and over 6 million deaths have been reported globally.

At the regional level, the number of new weekly cases increased in the Western Pacific region (+21%), remained stable in the European region, and decreased in the Eastern Mediterranean (-41%), Africa (-33%), South-East Asia (-23%) and Americas (-17%) regions.

Total cases Locally

Richmond upon Thames	62,387 (60,069 previous week)
Kingston upon Thames	56,366 (54,107 previous week)
Hounslow	90,291 (88,220 previous week)
Wandsworth	110,579 (106,884 previous week)

COVID IN THE NEWS

Mint, 25 March 2022: England's COVID R number remains steady, new infections growing

BBC, 25 March 2022: Covid: Wales' mask law to end in shops, but not NHS

Reuters, 25th March 2022: Some immune system memory persists year after infection; COVID from Omicron also less severe for pregnant women

New Scientist, 25 March 2022: Covid-19 news: China still aiming for zero-covid despite record cases



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The Ancient Druids of Kew

By Simon Fowler

If you've watched Digging for Britain and other archaeology programmes you will know all about the painstaking nature of the work. However, 250 years ago it was very different. Archaeology was in its infancy, largely conducted by local antiquarians with lots of enthusiasm and little organisation.

The most important man in the field – the “Indiana Jones” of the day - was the Reverend William Stukeley. It was Stukeley who first recognised the importance of Stonehenge and Avebury, accurately measuring the stones and mapping the sites. But his downfall was an unhealthy obsession with druids. He was not alone. With so little known about pre-historic England, historians assumed that the island was dominated by druids, first described by Julius Caesar.

When an ancient axe-head was found in the grounds of Kew Palace in June 1754, who better to investigate than Reverend Stukeley. He was asked to prepare a report for Princess Augusta of Wales on the significance of what had been found.

He visited the site and reported: ‘I walked over your Highness’s most elegant and magnificent garden to see the place, where they were discovered in digging the great basin.’ But there was no systematic dig. Stukeley reports finding an axe head and a broken knife.

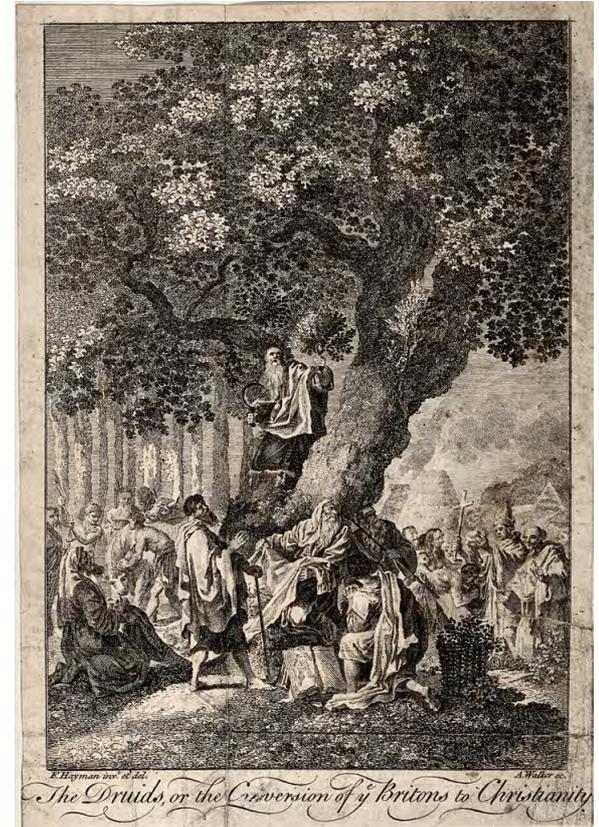
It has been impossible to discover where the items are now, although the British Museum has several flint axes recovered from the Thames near Kew Bridge.

The lack of knowledge did not stop Stukeley’s speculation. He proceeded to suggest that the axe-head was evidence that the Ancient Druids lived and practised in Kew, suggesting that they must have practised their religion in local woods ‘dedicated to Bacchus’. The knife was thus ‘a sacrificing knife of the ox-kind.’ This led to a further digression about the supposed links between early Christianity and the Druidic faith.

Further, Stukeley claimed that Kew was originally a British town ‘evidenced from by the name implying a corner, an angle.’ He argued that the name came from the Welsh word Gwio, which he said meant a corner, although it is actually the Welsh for war. Most modern experts think that Kew comes from ‘Quay’.

He completes the report by saying: ‘I shall take the opportunity in enlarging on any of the forgoing particulars, if it be agreeable to your Highness.’ Stukeley’s report was never presented to Princess Augusta and seems to have been forgotten.

Oddly, a writer claimed in 1921 that the Ha-ha, or ditch, along the towpath from Kew to Richmond was erected by druids for ‘the religious purposes of the ancient mythologists ...The Ha-Ha appears to represent three serpents.’ The head of one serpent was at the Brentford Gate to the Gardens. Can’t see it myself.



The druids; or the conversion of the Britons to Christianity”. Etching by A. Walker, 1758, after F. Hayman. Credit: Wellcome Collection.

SPRING COLOURS OF TWICKENHAM

By Doug Goodman

Spring is here and with the recent warm weather we can expect even more colour along our roads and in open spaces. Front gardens in Twickenham are particularly colourful in early spring as our soil is well suited for magnolias and camellias. Doug Goodman stopped to admire some of the shrubs and flowers around the centre of town.



Meet and Deep - Community Heroes

Shashi and Pallu Patel of Meet and Deep Newsagents on Hampton Road, Twickenham were “surprised, overwhelmed and in complete disbelief” when their names were called as winners at the Community Heroes Awards held at York House, Twickenham on Wednesday 23rd March 2022.

Meet & Deep Newsagents were told that they had the most nominations in the Business Contribution in the Community category. Shashi said “We feel privileged to be involved in so many people’s lives in our local community; we love to help everyone because that’s what we want our shop Meet and Deep Newsagents to be about”.

Pallu said “We are so grateful for all the support the community has shown our little shop, Meet & Deep...we had never expected to win an award like this, our guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj from the BAPS Swaminarayan temple in Neasden always taught us that in the joy of others lies our own, and he was right, because helping people in our community through our shop has given us so much happiness in our lives, we are so thankful to everyone”



Council awarded funding to deliver further tree planting

Richmond Council has received a grant of more than £220,000 from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund towards the planting of 410 new trees in the borough, in line with Richmond’s Climate Emergency Strategy.

The Urban Tree Challenge Fund is a government scheme that provides councils with funding towards the costs of planting new trees and ensuring their establishment during the trees’ first three years of growth. The funding supports the cost of buying and planting new trees as well as the associated costs of protection, weeding and watering during the trees’ important early development.



The funding will support the planting of 410 trees over the next year in areas that have a canopy cover of under 20%, increasing the number of trees in these areas and bringing all the benefits that trees can offer.

A significant number of the trees are being planted in the current tree planting season, with the remaining planting to be completed by Spring 2023.

Kew next on hyper-local COVID jab tour!

Residents in Kew will be able to get their COVID-19 vaccination at the next hyper-local pop-up clinic.

Over 120,000 people have now had the first two jabs and their booster vaccinations in the borough. However, there are still some people who are yet to have their first jab. As part of a series of hyper-local clinics, the NHS and Richmond Council has partnered with LiveWell in Kew to host a seven-hour drop in. Making it as easy as possible for those who have not yet been vaccinated, or due their latest jab, to have it in their local community.

The information and vaccination event will be at LiveWell at Kew, Quadrant House, Levett Square, Kew, TW9 4FF on Thursday 7 April from 11am to 6pm. A location just footsteps away from the Kew Retail Park.

Similarly to the last sessions, anyone who is hesitant to have the vaccination because they have questions or concerns can also come along and discuss their worries and facts with our expert NHS team in a private and confidential area. There will be no pressure to have the vaccine on that day, but the facility will be there if people want it.



Cllr Gareth Roberts, Leader of Richmond Council, said:

“Our hyper-local programme of vaccination clinics have been very popular. We are taking the COVID jab right into those communities that currently have a lower take up. We want it to be as easy as possible for people to have the jab.

“Please remember, having the vaccine is an easy step for each of us to take to protect ourselves and those around us. If you haven’t had your vaccine yet and have questions, NHS health experts (including GPs and family clinicians) will be at Livewell in Kew to help. And if you are due jabs two or three, please use this opportunity to have your next dose locally.”

Anyone aged 12+ who is due their first, second, or booster vaccinations will be able to have their jab throughout the day. No appointments are required, and people can just walk in.

Most children aged 12 to 17 can get a second dose from 12 weeks after they had their first dose. If your child has tested positive for COVID-19 and is not at high risk from COVID-19, they need to wait 12 weeks before they can have a COVID-19 vaccine. This starts from the date of their positive PCR test.

Those aged 18+ can get a second dose from 8 weeks after their first dose. Those aged 16 + can get a booster vaccination from three months after their second dose. If you are aged 18+ and have had COVID-19 recently, you need to wait 28 days before you can have a vaccination.

Find out more about [vaccine eligibility](#).

Those wanting to attend the session in Kew, are reminded that it is within the ULEZ boundary area. If you are wishing to attend, to avoid paying the TfL charge you are advised to either walk, cycle or use public transport.

View more information about the [vaccine and other walk-ins available](#).

Marble Hill Shire Horses

Picture taken this morning by Maurice Parry-Wingfield of shire horses working with a flail in Marble Hill Park'



Richmond and Twickenham Photographic Society Annual Exhibition

Richmond and Twickenham Photographic Society's Annual Exhibition returns to the Landmark Arts Centre this April, from 14 to 24 April 2022.

The exhibition will showcase a wide selection of members' work in addition to images from pupils at St. Catherine's School for Girls in Twickenham.

Most of the prints on show at the exhibition will be available to buy. The exhibition will run from Thursday 14 to Sunday 24 April and will be open from 10am to 5pm. Admission is priced at £2.50 with under 16s going free.

Image: Lorraine Clifton - Tea Time.



Save this valuable painting for Strawberry Hill

Strawberry Hill House & Garden has launched an appeal to raise £25,000 to ensure that a Portrait of Horace Walpole by William Hogarth, a highly significant and rare early work, can come to the House.

They hope to acquire the painting from a private collection through a hybrid Acceptance in Lieu, administered by the Arts Council. The National Heritage Memorial Fund has generously awarded the Trust £115k and the Art Fund has kindly given £90k, but Strawberry Hill now needs to raise £25k by 14 April 2022, to meet the total cost of £230k.



This portrait is of exceptional interest for two reasons - it is the earliest surviving oil portrait of Walpole, and a rare and significant example of Hogarth's early mature pictorial work. It also is the earliest-known commissioned picture of an identifiable sitter by Hogarth and his first-known portrait of a child.

Given the artist, subject, context, and provenance of this painting, it is very much a work of national and international importance.

The campaign runs until Thursday 14 April.

You can support the appeal by [donating through the Art Happens platform](#), or sharing our campaign, to help bring this treasured painting to the House, we would be very grateful for your support.

The Royal Parks urge residents to 'Have a Picnic not a BBQ'

As temperatures soar across London this week The Royal Parks are reminding residents that barbeques are not permitted in any of the parks, due to the substantial risk of accidental fires.

Accidental fires can have devastating effects for local wildlife populations. The Met Office has issued an amber wildfire warning this week which means that fires could quickly spread due to the hot weather conditions.

Several fires are accidentally started in the Royal Parks each year from the embers and ash from disposable barbeques. Last year, several lizards were killed by a grassland fire in Richmond Park.

Such fires can have a devastating effect, destroying historic parkland that hosts a rich diversity of wildlife and wiping out valuable wild-flower meadowland. In previous years fires have destroyed veteran trees, annihilated flower seed banks, and harmed or even killed birds and mammals.

The Royal Parks are warning residents that fires can easily start when people have positioned barbeques under the shade of large trees. Some of the oldest trees in the parks have become hollow over time, creating a chimney effect when a fire starts – enabling the fire to spread through the tree rapidly, destroying the tree and killing animals.

Parks for London launch 'Clean Parks for London' campaign to tackle litter in our parks

Richmond Council has joined 17 organisations and nine local councils to support Parks for London's new 'Clean Parks for London' campaign which is asking Londoners to keep our parks clean.

The campaign aims to tackle the unsightly and costly problem of litter in our parks by encouraging park users to be part of the solution, by simply taking home what they bring with them.

The cost of litter collection and disposal for London's parks and green spaces is estimated to be in the region of £14.8 million per annum. Litter also has serious environmental and public health implications as litter disposed with bin waste cannot be recycled and either ends up in landfill or is incinerated.



This environmental pollution can affect our water, soil, and air. Improperly discarded litter also attracts vermin which can spread diseases to humans.

The increased footfall in our parks and open spaces during the pandemic led to unprecedented levels of litter and waste which put additional strains on already stretched budgets and manpower. Keep Britain Tidy's 2020 survey of over 100 local authorities in England revealed that 81% had to increase spending to keep litter in check during this period.

You can play your part in helping to keep our parks clean by simply taking all your rubbish home and never leaving litter behind.

Find out more about the ['Clean Parks for London' campaign](#).

Parks for London is an independent charity providing the leading strategic and representative voice for the green space sector in London.

Twickenham solicitors celebrate 100 year anniversary with local charity fundraiser

Twickenham-based [Baron Grey Solicitors](#) has announced that it will mark its centennial year with the launch of a fundraising campaign for [Swan Support](#), a swan rescue charity that has been seriously impacted by the Covid pandemic. The company will kick off its support with a donation in March, and its goal is to raise £20,000 over the next 12 months through team initiatives such as sponsored cycle rides.

Founded in 1922, Baron Grey provides trusted advice and legal services to families and businesses throughout Twickenham, Richmond and surrounding areas. The firm employs 12 local people and offers opportunities for law students with training and career development.



Swan Support was formed as a registered charity in 2015 by a group of volunteers with extensive experience in the rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured swans within the Thames Valley region and surrounding areas. The independent non-profit provides a 24-hour service responding to calls reporting injuries and concerns from the public and organisations such as the police, Highways Agency and the RSPCA. Swan Support is staffed

by volunteers and is solely funded by individual donations and supporting businesses. During the pandemic, fundraising events and activities have been severely curtailed.

Baron Grey principal Vincent Hambleton-Grey said, “As part of Twickenham’s history for the last 100 years, we wanted to commemorate our anniversary by giving back to a cause that is close to our hearts, and to the hearts of the people in our local community. Swans are a legally protected species, and they have been present here on the Thames for centuries. These magnificent birds are enjoyed by residents and visitors throughout the year – we often see them from our office, which looks out over the river. The activities carried out by Swan Support in rescuing and releasing swans back to their natural habitat are vital to their long-term welfare, and we are honoured to be able to contribute to this essential work.”

Swan Support trustee Joanne de Nobriga commented, “We are extremely grateful to Vincent and his team for their dedication and help in raising awareness of our organisation. In addition to the adverse effects of the pandemic, this year we have been closely involved in the retrieval of swans and other waterfowl that have sadly perished from avian flu – extending our work as far as Reading, Windsor, Oxford and Newbury. This support from Baron Grey could not come at a more critical time.”

Swan Support has recently been granted planning permission for a purpose-built facility for the rehabilitation of swans, whilst providing a focus for educational outreach to schools and communities. Funds raised will partly contribute to this new build, as well as dedicated equipment to facilitate the charity’s work.

To make a donation to Baron Grey’s fundraising campaign, please visit the company’s JustGiving page at: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/baron-grey1>

An underwater scene with vibrant blue water, sunlight filtering through the surface, and a diverse coral reef with various colorful fish swimming around.

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MARCH FOOD AND DRINK NEWS

At long last, spring is here, and we can look forward to those sunny days ahead! I'm sure that many of us - including me - will be trying to lose some of that excess weight that piled on over the winter, so I've shared a few healthy options. But don't worry, not everything I've found for you this month is necessarily really good for us ...we deserve a treat occasionally!

I'm told that two welcome bi-products of the pandemic have been a growing appetite for a healthier lifestyle, coupled with a welcome renaissance for breakfast. Nut specialist **Borna Foods** knows that nut appreciation sits at the heart of so many healthy eating trends; vegan, keto, coeliac and dairy-free. Borna's simple mission is to take the plant-based milk, nut butter and now also trail mix categories, and add some quality 'pizzaz' to our choices. London-based Borna is a community spirited brand, determined to give back to its local (Greenwich) community. Employing locals with learning disabilities, supporting the local Felix Project are just two of the many ways this company is helping others while providing us with some delicious products. Do look out for the award-winning innovative pistachio, almond and cashew products in health food stores or online at [Bornafoods.com](https://bornafoods.com)



You know those times of day when you crave something sweet? Well, you don't necessarily have to be a vegan to enjoy the **Flower & White's** plant-based range of low-calorie meringue and Fairtrade chocolate-based bars and bites. The two new vegan bars - Melting Strawberry and Melting Chocolate meringue - are rather moreish, 100% dairy-free creamy M*LK chocolate with a

rather clever chickpea-based meringue middle. Flower & White meringue bars are available at around £1 each at selected Asda stores nationwide, plus other stockists, health independent retailers, farm shops and cafes. Or online at flowerandwhite.co.uk.

On a keto diet? Check out the **Fatt** range of treats. Dark Chocolate Bites are a low carb high nutrition (LCHN) choice, filled with a creamy almond and cocoa centre, covered in a quality dark chocolate coating. Packed with unsaturated fats, very low carb (just 3g per 27g portion) and high in prebiotic fibre to feed your good bacteria, they're 100% natural, full of vitamins and minerals, such as potassium, magnesium and vitamins A, B and E. Packed two small bars to a pack too, so you can restrain yourself (or try to!). Four varieties in the range are available at Ocado for £1.85 a pack as well as mainstream health stores and from [Livefatt.com](https://livefatt.com)





I'm such a fan of smoked salmon and smoked trout, and now I've discovered a company that not only smokes it beautifully, but infuses it with alcohol! The subtle flavours are delicious and the producer - **The Pished Fish** - started out as a hobby in a back garden in South London, then sold through local farmers' markets, but now has a full smokery in East Sussex and supplies nationally online.

The ethos is to showcase salmon's more outlandish persona by pairing it with an array of high-quality spirits and botanicals before being smoked in small batches over a variety of

aromatic woods.

There are ten flavours of smoked salmon infused with such wonderful flavours as Margarita, Dark & Stormy, Whisky & Maple Syrup and more - so check out the [website](#) and consider treating someone (or yourself) ...you won't regret it! New products are being added on a regular basis to can ring the changes. There are also best-selling multipacks starting from £7.50 for three varieties, to give you a taste of a few different flavours.



Cocktails (well, cocktail infused smoked fish) reminded me to tell you about a wonderful new coffee liqueur. The Australian coffee liqueur brand, [Mr Black](#) has just launched a special edition: **Mr Black Italo Disco**. Having taken inspiration from the Italian espresso, this dark roast makes the new liqueur very different from previous limited releases. Every bottle is hand produced at its coffee roastery and distillery and **Mr Black Italo Disco** is made with dark, espresso roast Brazilian coffee beans. This blend has tasting notes of *caramel, honeycomb, candied almonds, anise, dark spice, cacao and hints of orange zest*. If you're a coffee connoisseur, you'll enjoy the long, bittersweet finish. Available from mrblack.co/uk and Amazon for £35.

If you're planning to do some pre-Easter baking, then do make sure you have some top quality chocolate chips. These new, award-winning, ones from **Nibble** are made with top-notch, responsibly-sourced, Madagascan cocoa, crafted by Belgian chocolatiers and sweetened with healthy coconut, rather than refined sugar. They are seriously special, with 64% fewer sugars than most chocolate chips, use 81% single origin chocolate and are also suitable for vegans. **Nibble Simply Divinely Dark Madagascan Chocolate Chips** are £3.99 for 160 resealable pack, from Ocado, Amazon, or online if you want to treat yourself to some of the company's yummy bite-sized nibbles too, from nibblesimply.com





Carmen

by Georges Bizet, libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy

Ellen Kent Productions at Richmond Theatre and on tour until 8th May

When my programme revealed that Ellen Kent's *Carmen* company were mostly Ukrainian, the evening suddenly achieved a new poignancy. And so somehow did the story of Carmen and Don Jose's fatal choice between duty and family.

Set against the backdrop of the feria in sultry southern Spain, Carmen the cigarette girl, the ultimate temptress with her manipulative sexuality, first draws soldier Don Jose under her spell, in spite of his allegiance to his beloved Michaela, the girl from his home village. Then toreador and local hero Escamillo falls into the same trap. Here though, tempers run high.



Of the principals, Carmen (Katerina Timbaliuk) was spellbinding as a taunting sexual predator and her uninhibited and committed performance matched her vocals. Don Jose (Sorin Lupu) was at his best in the more melancholic parts of the role, but I loved the opening tableau where we see him brooding obsessively about Carmen. Michaela has some of the most memorable, but lesser known, score and Alyona Kistenyova gave a sensitive portrayal of this much underrated role. Racovita Petru gave commitment to

his charismatic Escamillo, who shares the same arrogant sexuality as Carmen.

In *Carmen*, the chorus has a very active part in the story. Constant movement, dancing and focus to their actions gave this chorus a real sense of involvement, rather than just being bystanders. One of the joys too was a guest children's chorus, drawn from local groups, who made a really genuine ramshackle lot, mimicking the march of the soldiers.

A profound and humbling moment came during the curtain call when the Ukrainian national anthem was sung with a deep passion that would have matched anything in Bizet's score. I was left with a profound sense of the power of art that will always survive and heal.



Read Claire Alexander's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/03/15/carmen-ek

Photography courtesy of Ellen Kent Opera



Madama Butterfly

by Giacomo Puccini, libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa

Ellen Kent Productions at Richmond Theatre and on tour until 6th May

Madama Butterfly must surely be one of the most moving of Puccini's well-known operas, with its theme of trust betrayed and the raw emotion of its tragic ending. However, even the pathos of this most poignant of operas was magnified in this new touring production, with its mainly Ukrainian cast. True to Puccini's intentions, it points up the music and poetry of the piece.



An oriental idyll, set near a traditional Japanese "paper" house on a hill near Nagasaki, is punctured by the arrival of a US navy lieutenant, B.F. Pinkerton. He has bought a bride and a long lease on the house, both with the option to cancel every month. Tenor Vitalii Lisovetski takes the ambiguous role of Pinkerton. Lisovetski (who was a pilot in the Ukrainian military), looks resplendent in his white dress-uniform and plays the perfidious Pinkerton with aplomb.



His wedding night duet with Cio-Cio San is one of the musical highlights of this production. He urges her towards the house, while she sings of the lovely night, so many stars, "*Dolce notte! Quante stelle!*". Beautifully done.

Madama Butterfly it is really solely about the eponymous Madama Butterfly, the fifteen year-old Cio-Cio San.

Korean soprano, Elena Dee portrays all the delicacy and fragility of the character, but also all her steadfastness and moral strength. One of Puccini's best-known arias is *Un bel di ...* as in her mind's eye Cio-Cio San describes Pinkerton's longed-for return. Add Dee's superb singing to the moving music, and it is exquisitely heart-rending.

At the curtain call, when the Ukrainian flew to the singing of its national anthem to the proud music of the orchestra, one sensed the courage and sense of duty and honour that Cio-Cio San felt was mirrored that of the fellow countrymen of many of this *Madama Butterfly* company. We pray that the outcome for Ukraine will, unlike Butterfly's, enable them to survive and thrive.



Read Mark Aspen's review at

www.markaspen.com/2022/03/16/mdm-butterfly-ek

Photography courtesy of Ellen Kent Opera

Snow White

by Ben Crocker

Questors at the Judi Dench Playhouse, Ealing until 27th March

What did you miss at Christmas? Was it the song and dance, men dressed as women and women dressed as men? Was it cries of 'he's behind you!' and the riotous audience participation? Due to pandemic restrictions Questors lost the chance to give us all this. Nevertheless, undeterred, they gave us an excellent and colourful panto for spring!

If you love panto, you will love this panto's whacky ideas, and there were plenty of them. Everybody enjoyed the ambiguous casting and the exuberant colourful and imaginative costumes. Panto staples, yes, but here taken a notch further.



Snow White was played by Rianna Sam-Kubam, who was having great fun with the role and clearly enjoying herself. She is a great performer with a good voice, as her moving duet with Prince Freddy, played by Caitlyn Vary, showed. Perhaps there was a subtle 'bluesy' tone to her voice. If so, it will hopefully be developed. As a counter to that, Danny Dolittle played by Quinn Goodliffe, treated us to a great comedy rendering of the Elvis Costello classic *Is She Really Going out with Him*.

The cast included a wide range of ages, which was brilliant for the audience. Older actors played the normal suspects – the evil Queen Caligula (Sam Moran), the dame Mrs Dolittle (Derek Stoddart) and the incompetent henchmen Bogwort and Stinkwort (Mark Redrup and Robert Vass) very convincingly, bringing their own unique characters to these parts, and providing great role models (!) for the youngsters.

Replacing the seven dwarves by trolls, in deference to modern sensibilities, was seamless. These were based on the plastic toys with fluorescent hair, of course, not the traditional ugly creatures that hide under bridges. The presentation of the team of Half Pint, Grim, Chuckles, Sniffy, Dozy and Snoozy and... Alan (?!) was inspired.

Read Nick Swyft's review at

www.markaspen.com/2022/03/12/snow-white-q

Photography by Carla Marker



Слава Україні



Mark Aspen

www.markaspen.wordpress.com

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Opera in a War-Riven World

Sung with passion, new words, not from any opera, are ringing out in opera houses, *Ще не вмерла України і слава, і воля*, the Ukrainian national anthem.

A rendition of the anthem at the opening of the [ENO's *Così fan tutte*](#) brought the audience at the London Coliseum together in an expression of respect. The Royal Opera House is lit in the colours of the Ukrainian flag and, at the premiere of *Peter Grimes*, one of our critics witnessed a moment of reflection before the performance. Most movingly, Richmond Theatre hosted operas where most performers were Ukrainian. At the curtain call [for *Carmen*](#) and for [Madama Butterfly](#), the cast unfurled the Ukrainian flag and sang its national anthem, and audience members presented yellow and blue bouquets to Vasyl Vasilenko, conductor of the Orchestra of the Ukrainian National Opera.



Performers at Richmond were from major opera companies in Kyiv, Lviv and Odessa, long established companies, which have the three oldest opera houses in Ukraine. Opera houses are just one physical manifestation of the culture and civilisation of a country. All three opera houses have been damaged, to a great or lesser extent, in the terrible conflict unfolding there.

Of course a damaged building, no matter how important, is nothing compared to the loss of life, limb and livelihood of so many of the inhabitants of these cities. However, these buildings are a symbol of national culture and pride.

One cannot help but be appalled by the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Ukraine. Mark Aspen wrote that [the Richmond performance that *Madama Butterfly*](#) mirrored the courage and sense of duty and honour that was felt by of the company's fellow countrymen. Claire Alexander, [writing of the *Carmen* production](#), said, "I am left with a profound sense of the power of art that will always survive and heal".

Read Thomas Forsythe's reflection at www.markaspen.com/2022/03/25/opera-in-war, where there are pictures of the Opera Houses of Kyiv, Lviv and Odessa.



Photography by MC and Anna Lunda.

WIZ Tales - Bosnia and Herzegovina



Teresa Read

The country of Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the Balkan Peninsula in South Eastern Europe - the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska is bordered Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia.



Following the Second World War Bosnia and Montenegro became part of the Federal Peoples' Republic of Yugoslavia. Although Yugoslavia (1945-1991) was run as a communist government, the country's leader, Josip Broz "Tito" distanced himself from the USSR.

After Tito's death in 1980 there was a struggle for political control of the country; within ten years the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had become weak and at the beginning of the 1990s the republics began to break away and declare independence.

Independence in Bosnia and Herzegovina was followed by fighting within the country leading to three years of inter-ethnic war. The NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR) became responsible for the stabilisation of the peace following the Dayton Peace Agreement at the end of 1995.

With the war in Ukraine there is some concern in the Balkans that the war may spill over, however there is a NATO space in between.

It has been reported in Aljazeera that there is now an opportunity for vulnerable countries like Bosnia to shake off Russian influence and take steps to join NATO.



More information about Bosnia and Herzegovina:

<https://worldinfozone.com/facts.php?country=BosniaHerzegovina>

TRAVELLER'S TALES 119

LONDON'S CURIOSITIES



Doug Goodman finds some odd sites in London

I love walking in London – exploring new districts and discovering some of the Capital's curiosities. Once, I used to travel into London for meetings or exhibitions: always rushing and never stopping to look around and study a monument, a sign or a memorial. Now I don't need to rush anywhere. I can walk slowly with a map and guide book and photograph the unusual. A recent walk from Charing Cross Station to St. Paul's Cathedral, which would normally take me about twenty minutes, took over four hours. With 70 places to look at on the route it was such a pleasure to discover so much that was new to me. The series of guide books 'London's Hidden Walks' are a mine of information and bring places to life through revealing descriptions and history.

GAS FROM BELOW

I knew that London was once illuminated by gas light but I thought all the lamps had vanished a century ago. Not so as one still stands in Carting Lane near The Savoy and works on methane gas from the sewers below. The notice alongside the lamp says that it is a 'patent sewer ventilating lamp dating from the 1880s'. Reaching Fleet Street I recalled the time – long before the internet - when I could hand deliver a press release to almost every national newspaper and then retire to El Vinos for a long drink or two. Ladies were banned from ordering drinks at the bar until fairly recent times! Once when I entered the Daily Mirror offices in Holborn I pushed too hard on the revolving door and bumped the large gentleman in front of me. I was accused of trying to injure the newspaper's proprietor, although Robert Maxwell didn't put it quite like that. In Gough Square near The Cheshire Cheese pub and Dr. Johnson's house and museum is a statue to Hodge his 'very fine cat'.

In the narrow streets of The City there's a plaque or sign to be seen on almost every building. Several old-fashioned blue police boxes have been preserved. Look up in Lombard Street and you'll see many large brass and iron signs. These denote the trade carried out and survive from medieval times. Lombard Street was the banking centre of London founded in the 12th century when Italian merchants from Lombardy arrived. These early bankers worked from benches – banco in Italian: this is how the word bank originated. A colourful building near Liverpool Street Station dates from 1895 and is said to be styled on Jerusalem's Holy Sepulchre Church. You can no longer get a Turkish bath there but it was a café not so long ago,



Gas from the Sewer



Much Loved Hodge



Police Box



City Sign

COFFEE TIME

After so much walking a coffee is required from one of the vast number of cafes and kiosks in the centre of London. However, choice was limited in 1652 to just one which was established as a meeting spot for local traders by Pasqua Rosee an Armenian. Ninety years later over 550 coffee shops were open in The City, each catering to a specific trade. On an old wall in The East End I saw a sign over a school entrance with the words 'special girls'. I wonder what special qualifications the girls needed to gain a place. In World War 2 much of London was destroyed by Nazi bombing but I hadn't realised that in World War 1 many air-raids also took place. A plaque on an office building in Farringdon Road marks the spot where a Zeppelin dropped its bomb-load.



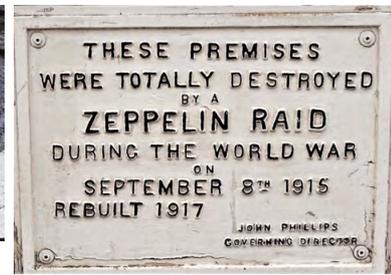
Former Turkish Bath



The First of Many



'Special' Girls Welcomed



Where Bombs Fell in Farringdon Road

TO SOHO

A walk around Soho is fascinating with its restaurants and bars, squares and elegant houses, market and Carnaby Street's clothing shops. Known many years ago for its seediness, strip clubs and disreputable joints, it's now a great place for entertainment, fine dining and simply sitting in one of its leafy squares. The area was laid out from 1670 and favoured by the rich and the aristocracy. Immigrants from France were the first to settle in Soho followed by Greeks, Turks, Germans, Italians and Jews fleeing from Eastern Europe. In Soho Square on the railing of St. Barnabas, a beautiful Georgian mansion House, there's a curious reminder that this area was once home for the very poor. Drop a coin into the 'Alms' pipe and your donation goes directly into the building.

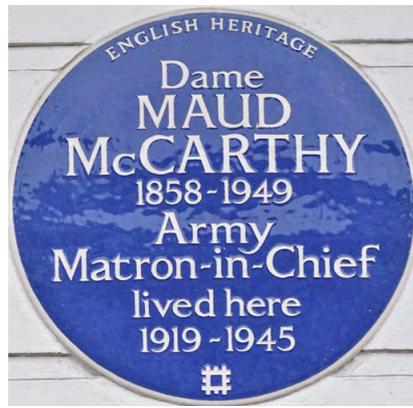
As a student in London I used to frequent the 2is coffee bar and from a wine store called Del Monico's in Old Compton Street I bought my very first bottle of wine. It was a sweet white that cost six shillings and three pence. The shop's still there but under a new name. In Broadwick Street in the John Snow pub raise a glass to the famous Doctor. London suffered from cholera many times in the 19th century: in 1849 50,000 deaths occurred from this 'mysterious disease'. The medical profession at the time thought it was an airborne disease but John Snow proved in 1854 that a public water pump in Broad Street was providing severely infected water. Voted one of the most eminent doctors of all time his memorial stands outside the pub: the original, or more likely a copy of the offending water pump, is on the pavement.



Alms for the Poor



Cholera Hot-Spot



Dame Maud Lived Here



Hidden River

HIDDEN RIVERS AND BLUE PLAQUES

London has many rivers. Most rise in the north and flow unseen into the Thames. The Fleet River, which flows under Farringdon and New Bridge Street, was once an open sewer. Its course can be easily traced unlike the Westbourne, which runs from Hampstead through Kilburn, Hyde Park, Knightsbridge and Chelsea to The Thames near Chelsea Bridge. Next time you are at Sloane Square Station look up at the green metal 'bridge'. This is the River Westbourne hidden away.

I always stop to read a Blue Plaque and usually recognise the person it commemorates. In a pretty square off Chelsea's Kings Road I saw an unfamiliar name. It was a dedication to Dame Maud McCarthy 1859 to 1949. She was a nursing sister who became Matron in Chief of the British Army. She served in The Boer War and was involved in establishing Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service. In WW1 she had 6,000 nurses under her control, who cared for hundreds of thousands of casualties. Dame Maud received many decorations including Dame Grand Cross of the Order of The British Empire.

'Hidden London Walks' by Stephen Millar is indispensable when exploring London. Another fascinating travel book by Dr. John Law covers the history and development of foreign holidays from the 1950s to the 1970s. 'A World Away. The British Holiday Boom, 1950-1974,' provides stories and details of our early holidaying habits.

HENRY IV

at the MARY WALLACE THEATRE!

The rehearsal rooms of the Mary Wallace Theatre are currently alive with the words of the Bard and the clash of swords and armour as the Richmond Shakespeare Society prepares for their most ambitious production in decades. Not just one HENRY IV but both - parts one and two - will be presented between **April 9th and 22nd** at their riverside theatre on Twickenham's Embankment. Generally regarded as Shakespeare's finest historical plays they encompass the decline of one king and the rise of another under the shadow of rebellious plots and the tragedy of civil war. If the names of Harry Hotspur, Prince Hal, Jack Falstaff and Mistress Quickly are vague memories from your school textbooks



it's time to be reintroduced to them in peace and in war, in the taverns of Eastcheap and the battlefield at Shrewsbury. The plays will be performed in repertoire over two weeks between

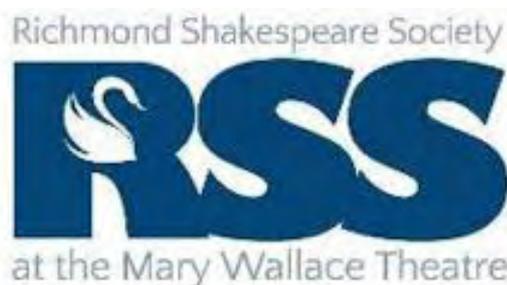
April 9th and 22nd and can be seen either singly, or together on specified dates.



Find the performance plan for both productions and book tickets at www.richmondshakespeare.org.uk

The Mary Wallace Theatre is on Twickenham's Embankment, standing between St Mary's Church and the Barmy Arms.

Photos credit : Pete Messum



New Richmond orchestra set to make a splash

Richmond's newest orchestra, [Richmond Light Orchestra](#), will play its first ever concert on **Saturday 2 April** at St Mary's Church in Twickenham.

The 'Sounds of the Seas' programme will take the audience on the orchestra's maiden voyage on stage with performances of a range of show tunes, film themes and light classical music inspired by seas, rivers and oceans.

Founded by violinist Chris Childs in the height of the pandemic last year, the orchestra aims to fill the gap in amateur orchestral music, bringing accessible music to a corner of London. "Our members can expect to have fun performing music they've always wanted to play, and audience members get to enjoy tunes they are familiar with", said Chris.

"Think Lloyd Webber over Lizst. Bernstein over Berlioz. John Williams over Vaughan Williams. You get the jist!"

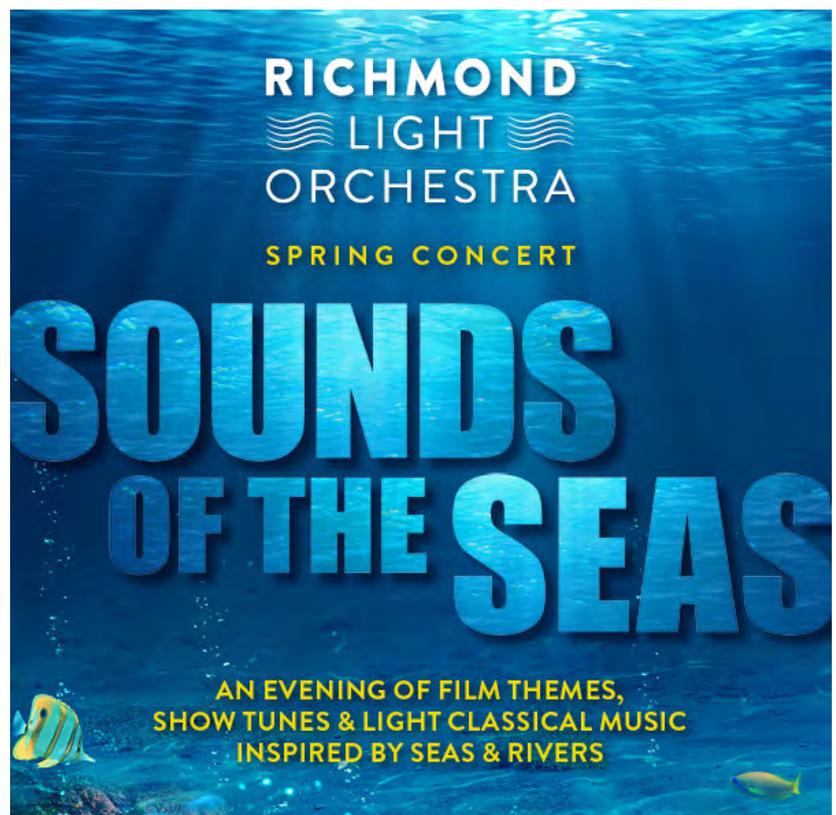
As well as an evening of music, the Richmond Light Orchestra will also be raising money for the British Red Cross Ukraine Appeal to help support their efforts in the country.

The orchestra is led by Edinburgh-born violinist Alexander Casson, and conducted by musical director James Golborn.

Tickets are on sale now: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/Richmond-Light-Orchestra>

The concert programme will include:

- Pirates of the Caribbean
- Anything Goes
- Highlights from The Little Mermaid
- Music from Moana
- Highlights from Show Boat
- The Pirates of Penzance Overture
- Music from Titanic
- Jaws theme
- The Blue Danube Waltz
- Moon River from Breakfast at Tiffany's



Twickenham school shortlisted for the prestigious Design Museum award, Design Ventura

Over 110 schools from across the UK and internationally took part in the 12th edition of Design Ventura, the Design Museum and Deutsche Bank's design and enterprise competition for students aged 13-16. Students responded to a brief set by award-winning sound artist, designer and Partner at Pentagram, Yuri Suzuki to design a new product for the Design Museum Shop.



Later this month the 10 shortlisted teams will have the opportunity to pitch their design concepts to a panel of design and business professionals at Deutsche Bank's head office in London. The winning team will then be announced at a celebration event at the Design Museum in April, with their winning idea going on sale in the Design Museum Shop later in the year.

A flagship partnership within Deutsche Bank's global Corporate Social Responsibility Born to Be youth engagement programme, Design Ventura offers students an opportunity to build vital design skills, and hands-on experience developing a product and taking it to market. The shortlisted teams have all designed products which respond to the brief to improve everyday life by addressing a social, educational or environmental issue and retails for around £15. The shortlisted entries in alphabetical order include:

- County Upper School, Suffolk, Sunny London - a fun children's craft kit to create stained glass windows featuring great British design icons
- Cambourne Village College, Cambridge, Eco Seed - a product which allows users to grow seeds and watch them germinate.
- Ferndown Upper School, Dorset, The Flippy Book - a flip-book that mixes and matches iconic designs letting the user explore their creativity
- Liverpool Blue Coat School, Liverpool, Designosaur - a dinosaur shaped buildable and customisable plant pot to grow herbs
- **Orleans Park School, London, The Sturdy Stabiliser - portable and reusable pads to fix wobbly chairs and tables legs**
- Prendergast Ladywell School, London, Grow Your Story - a biodegradable fairytale storybook and plant kit
- Salford City Academy, Manchester, Tongue Twister Game - a card game with alliterative phrases challenging the players to pronounce individual words
- South Wilts Grammar School, Wiltshire, Gender Jigsaw – jigsaw pieces with preferred pronouns to be worn on your clothing
- The Piggott School, Berkshire, Corky - a quirky pineapple soft toy made of cork, bamboo and felt
- Tiffin School, London, Drummable - a DIY cardboard drum-kit creating a wide range of textures and sounds

The shortlisted teams were chosen by a panel of leading professionals from the world of business and design. The teams will now be invited to attend a pitching event to test their entrepreneurial skills in front of a panel of judges including **Yuri Suzuki**, Sound Artist and Designer and Design Ventura 2021-22 brief setter; **Rosa Bertoli**, Design Editor at Wallpaper; **Sebastian Conran**, Designer and Trustee at the Design Museum; **Preena Patel**, Merchandising Manager at the Design Museum; and **Christoph Woermann**, Global Head of Corporate Bank Marketing at Deutsche Bank.

"I loved seeing the work that has been produced – the research, ideas and level of presentation were impressive and inspiring. There are some very promising concepts." **Sam Griffiths, designer and founder of Griffics, Shortlisting Judge, Design Ventura 2021-22**

<https://ventura.designmuseum.org/>

NO LONDON PARK OR GREEN SPACE SAFE FROM DEVELOPMENT

More than 50 London parks and green spaces under threat from privatisation and neglect: even premier league clubs Spurs and West Ham 'in on the act,' say campaigners

Environment campaigners CPRE London have today released a new report [Forever Green?](#) identifying more than fifty parks and green spaces under threat from development in London and, as the local elections approach, they are calling for borough councils to take action.

Alice Roberts, Head of Campaigns at CPRE London said: “Nothing is safe: all kinds of green space - from public parks, including historic and even royal parks, to vast areas of Green Belt, sports pitches, recreation grounds, open fields, nature reserves and green spaces in housing estates - are coming under threat. Many of the sites have protected Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land status.

“Developers and borough councils are often behind the threats. And even Premier League football clubs Spurs and West Ham are in on the act, looking to profit from deals with councils – Spurs to build a training facility on Whitewebbs Park in Enfield, West Ham to build a new development centre, kicking out grass roots football club Bealoniens’ from playing fields in Redbridge.

“This situation is extremely alarming. London only has half the green space it needs for a population its size and the limited green spaces we have are coming under more pressure since the start of the pandemic despite their growing importance. Meanwhile, attacks on Green Belt threaten loss of countryside around London while leaving rundown brownfield sites unused.

“Threats nearly always relate to money one way or another because land is worth much more if it can be developed. This is exacerbated because there is currently no mechanism that provides robust legal protection for parks and open spaces in London.

“The planning system doesn’t seem provide adequate protection anymore either. Despite welcome policies in the London Plan and positive action by some Boroughs , the national reforms in 2012 have opened the system up to greater challenge, so if you can argue that building on a green space is ‘sustainable development’ then that seems to trump all protections. Obviously that is arguable but it just creates a bonanza for lawyers and puts the party able to pay for legal support in the strongest position.

“As a result the protection of London’s green spaces ultimately falls to local communities who are prepared to fight for them. Often they don’t have the necessary expertise or resources. Even so, there are many local groups prepared to campaign – and we, and others like the London Gardens Trust, help them as far as we can.”

Alice Roberts concluded:

“Urgent action is needed to address these growing threats. We now want all those standing for election to Borough Councils to commit actively to identify green spaces under threat; and positively plan, with local groups, to save those spaces. Where a borough council is actively involved in creating a threat, we are urging them to think again.

“Ultimately, we need effective legal and planning policy protection for our precious green spaces. That may well mean new legislation and changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. Until effective protections are in place – your local park is only as safe as the communities who befriend it and are prepared to fight for it.”



Major Exhibition in London, Gibraltar Our Sacred Earth, Our Sense of Place

A major exhibition is being organised in London by Gibraltar Cultural Services on behalf of the Ministry of Culture, showcasing the work of nine Gibraltarian artists. The exhibition titled 'Gibraltar Our Sacred Earth, Our Sense of Place' is being curated and managed by artist Philippa Beale. The event will open at Bermondsey Project Space on Tuesday 6th September and will run for three weeks.

The show aims to embody the artists' relationship with their home, with each interpreting the title in different ways. This multidimensional construct allows for varied creative expression which will be further demonstrated by the broad selection of artists exhibiting. The show will feature established and young artists with paintings, sculpture and video installation all on offer. We are also delighted to have art critic, artist and broadcaster Matthew Collings visiting the artists in Gibraltar later in their year to write the forward to the catalogue. Other events to promote Gibraltarian Art and Culture in London are being planned.



Other events to promote Gibraltarian Art and Culture in London are being planned.

Minister for Culture John Cortes commented, "We all know that Gibraltarian Art is rich and diverse, and in many ways defines us as a people. It is important to project this as widely as possible, and where better to start than in the Cultural Capital that is London. This is a really exciting development."

Line up announced for Teddington Choral Society's spring concert

Teddington Choral Society (TCS) and its Musical Director, Julian Collings, have announced the line up for their forthcoming spring concert which will feature Benjamin Britten's 'Saint Nicolas' and Bob Chilcott's 'Songs and Cries of London Town'.

Benjamin Britten's 'Saint Nicolas' unfolds with the life of the saint in a vivid and mystical style.

Bob Chilcott's 'Songs and Cries of London Town' depicts London's sights, sounds and scenes from the past with thrilling and engaging music.



TCS will be accompanied by pianist Phil Culling on the night with the event also featuring pianist Elspeth Wilkes, tenor Joseph Doody, organist Peter Jaekel, the English Sinfonietta ensemble together with the Tiffin School's Boys Choir.

The [spring concert](#) will take place at All Saints Parish Church (KT1 1JP) on Saturday 2 April at 7.30pm.

St Mary's University

St Mary's University Announces Scholarships for Victims of the Ukraine War

St Mary's University, Twickenham has today announced five full postgraduate scholarships open to those who were citizens of, resident in, or students in Ukraine on 23rd February.



The scholarships are for entry to St Mary's in September 2022, and if places remain, will also be open to students beginning courses in January or September 2023. The awards cover 100% of the course tuition fees. The University offers a number of distance learning masters' degrees, allowing successful applicants to the scholarships to complete their studies if they wish to remain in Ukraine or another country in which they have sought refuge.

The scholarships are available for the following programmes for either full-time or part-time study:

Two places for MA Catholic Social Teaching or MA Catholic School Leadership*

One place for MA Social Justice and Public Service

Two places on any St Mary's Master's Degree**

*distance learning is available on these St Mary's courses

**distance learning is available on a number of St Mary's Masters' courses. This includes St Mary's

extensive suite of applied health programmes.

Speaking of the scholarships, St Mary's Vice-Chancellor Anthony McClaran said, "As an institution, we believe in the transformative power of education. It allows people from all walks of life to change their outcomes through developing skills and accessing knowledge. We feel it is our moral duty to provide access to education for people fleeing the conflict in Ukraine, to help the successful applicants to rebuild their lives after such an appalling upheaval.

"Students and staff across the university, and indeed throughout the higher education sector, have been deeply touched by the harrowing images of the war in Ukraine and the plight of civilians escaping the conflict. Students have raised substantial sums of money for refugees from Ukraine and students and staff have helped in other ways. We have also come together as a community to hold vigils and pray for victims of the conflict. I am sure our entire community will be delighted to hear of the provision of these scholarships for victims of the war and welcome the successful applicants with open arms."

St Mary's University has a proud history of widening access to education. The University was founded in 1850 by the Catholic Poor Schools Committee to meet the need for teachers to provide an education for the growing number of poor Catholic children.

Full details for applying to the scholarships can be found the St Mary's website www.stmarys.ac.uk/ukraine-scholarship



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Princess Alice Hospice rated 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC)

On 17 March 2022, the national independent regulator of health and social care services awarded the top rating of 'Outstanding', following a rigorous inspection of the Hospice's expert palliative and end of life care services that took place in November and December 2021.

Following publication of the full report on its website, the CQC highlighted how 92% of patients achieved their preferred place of death and "doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals worked together as a team to benefit patients". The report concluded that "multidisciplinary working was widespread across the service and reflected a focus on holistic, multifactorial care".

Inspectors said that "staff demonstrated initiative in their kindness and efforts to make people comfortable and happy in their last days", and they provided many examples of staff and volunteers who had gone above and beyond in their roles, planning and delivering new ways of providing patients with positive experiences.



Several areas of outstanding practices were highlighted, including the provision of emotional support to patients, families and carers to minimise their distress, and the comprehension of patients' personal, cultural and religious needs. Inspectors stated that "staff empowered families and carers to understand their condition and make decisions about their care and treatment and be active partners in their care". It was also noted that "staff had assessed regional unmet health needs to identify vulnerable groups who may benefit from access to hospice care", e.g. people experiencing homelessness within the broad geographic care area.

The Hospice was commended for its promotion of inclusivity and equality as well as its tangible sense of flexibility and adaptability amongst staff to meet people's needs. The CQC said the service had a vision for what it wanted to achieve and a strategy to turn it into action in a sustainable way. It had a culture of learning, demonstrable high levels of engagement, and a willingness to introduce new approaches to care, such as delivering Wellbeing sessions using Zoom and making use of emerging technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR).

Nicki Shaw, Chief Executive, said: "The last couple of years have been immensely challenging, but we have made it through thanks to an amazing and dedicated team and the support and encouragement of our communities. It's a great privilege to provide free, expert, compassionate palliative and end of life care to patients and their families and carers at a very difficult time in their lives.

"The publication of this report comes as we are about to embark on the launch of our new strategy for the future. The retention of our Outstanding rating - first awarded in 2016 - is a tremendous boost to everyone and will give us the confidence to help us achieve our vision."



Action must be taken to tackle e-scooter and e-bikes fires – Hina Bokhari

News from the Liberal Democrat London Assembly Group

The growing number of fires in homes caused by lithium-ion batteries in e-scooters and e-bikes can no longer be ignored by the Government is the powerful message being sent by Hina Bokhari, the Liberal Democrat London Assembly Member Hina Bokhari.

In a joint letter with Tim Farron MP (enclosed) to Lord Stephen Greenhalgh, the Minister of State for Building Safety and Fire, she has called for the Home Office to issue clear guidance to local authorities and housing associations about the safe storage of e-scooters and e-bikes. An effective publicity campaign around buying batteries from reputable suppliers, safe storage and charging has also been made.

Setting out why action is so necessary Hina Bokhari said:

“In the first few months of 2022 there have already been reports of fires caused by the batteries of e-scooters in Brixton, Leytonstone, Newham, West Drayton and Willesden.

“The number of fires has been growing, with the London Fire Brigade reporting that in 2021 they attended over 50 fires involving e-scooters and e-bikes. A doubling of the number of fires in 2020.

“Around the country there is also widespread evidence that the number of fires caused by batteries in e-scooters and e-bikes is soaring.”

“Unless action is taken I fear that before long there will be a horrific fire in a home or block of flats involving the loss of lives.”



Lord Stephen Greenhalgh
Minister of State for Building Safety and Fire
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
SW1P 4DF

Thursday 24th March 2022

RE: Fires caused by lithium-ion batteries in e-scooters and e-bikes

Dear Stephen,

We wish to raise our concerns relating to the growing reports of fires in homes caused by lithium-ion batteries in e-scooters and e-bikes.

London Fire Brigade reported that in 2021 they attended over 50 fires involving e-scooters and e-bikes. This was double the amount they saw in 2020. In just a short period of last year some of the fires included the following incidents:

- 15 March: six fire engines and around 40 firefighters tackled a fire at a flat on Callender Road in Erith which involved an electric scooter which was on charge. A woman and a child were treated at the scene for smoke inhalation.
- 1 May: firefighters were called to a blaze at a flat on Poynders Road in Clapham. It was caused by a fault in a battery unit for an electric bike which was on charge at the time of the fire.
- 24 May: a first floor flat on Tierney Road in Brixton was badly damaged after a fire caused by a fault in the lithium-ion battery pack of a mountain bike which had been converted into an e-bike.
- 26 May: five people were taken to hospital after a fire at a flat on Flint Street in Southwark. The fire was caused by the failure of part of a battery in an electric scooter on charge.
- 9 June: a person was taken to hospital after a fire at a maisonette on Newnham Road in Wood Green. It was caused by the failure of a battery fitted to an electric bike that was on charge at the time of the fire.

In the first few months of 2022 there have already been reports of fires caused by the batteries of e-scooters in Brixton, Leytonstone, Newham, Willesden and West Drayton.

We are also aware that the growing number of fires is a national issue as well.

Matthew Scott, Kent's Police and Crime Commissioner, has recently gathered data from across England and Wales. In total the 33 fire and rescue services that responded to his request attended 95 e-scooter fires last year – up from 33 in 2020.

It is against this background that it was disappointing to discover from a recent Parliamentary Question (UIN 125074) that there is no existing Fire Safety Order guidance for housing associations and local authorities on the safe storage of these vehicles.

Clear guidance needs to be provided to local authorities and housing associations about the safe storage of e-scooters and e-bikes. An effective publicity campaign around buying batteries from reputable suppliers, safe storage and charging is also needed.

I am sure you agree that it is a matter of public safety that more is done to prevent lithium-ion battery fires in e-scooter and e-bikes. We would welcome clear commitments on the suggestions made in this letter.

Given the importance of this matter we look forward to a response at your earliest convenience.

Hina Bokhari AM
Liberal Democrat Member of the London Assembly Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee

Tim Farron MP
Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Red Roses name matchday squad for TikTok Women's Six Nations opener in Scotland

England Women head coach Simon Middleton has named his matchday squad for this weekend's TikTok Women's Six Nations opener against Scotland (Saturday 26 March, KO 12 noon, DAM Health Stadium, Edinburgh and live on BBC Two).

Sarah Hunter captains the side at No 8 while Emily Scarratt returns to the starting XV at outside centre following a lengthy injury lay-off and is selected as vice-captain. Marlie Packer is set to earn her 80th cap at openside flanker while Saracens team-mate Poppy Cleall is at blindside flanker.

Maud Muir represents her country at loosehead prop for the first time with Lark Davies (hooker) and Sarah Bern (tighthead prop) forming the front row. Harlequins' Rosie Galligan makes her first Red Roses appearance in over three years and earns her second cap at lock.

Bristol Bears duo Abbie Ward and Leanne Infante are at lock and scrum half respectively. Helena Rowland and Holly Aitchison make up the 10-12 axis while Ellie Kildunne, Heather Cowell and Abby Dow are the back three.

Bryony Cleall returns to the group after missing the autumn internationals through injury. She takes her place on the bench alongside uncapped Emma Sing who is in line for her senior debut.

Middleton said: *"We're really looking forward to this weekend's opening game.*

"We've had a good start to the week training at Bisham Abbey and are excited to be in Edinburgh to fine-tune our preparations.

"We've named a strong side and are looking forward to seeing how the group fare.

"We have great strength-in-depth, the whole squad have trained well and it's important we give players opportunities and at the same time look at a couple of new combinations.

"Emma Sing is a player we've been working with for a while, she has impressed both in our camps and for Gloucester-Hartpury in the Allianz Premier 15s. She deserves this opportunity in what is a competitive group.

"It's also great to welcome Rosie Galligan back into the fold, she exemplifies what international rugby is about, in that she was given an opportunity and to this point she's taken it. Her contribution in training has been first class.

Both Emma and Rosie bring even more depth and competition in two key positions in the squad.

"We go into this year's Six Nations with some clear objectives in terms of the improvements we are looking for in our performances. The players are crystal clear in terms of how we want to play and what we want our game to look like.

They have trained exceptionally hard and every session we have improved our accuracy and execution. What we now need to find out is which players can put the best version of our game on the field come the big occasion.

"Playing Scotland in Scotland is one such occasion, we're excited to take to the field at the DAM Health Stadium this Saturday."

England team to play Scotland

15. Ellie Kildunne (Harlequins, 18 caps)
14. Heather Cowell (Harlequins, 2 caps)
13. Emily Scarratt (VC; Loughborough Lightning, 96 caps)
12. Holly Aitchison (Saracens, 4 caps)
11. Abby Dow (Wasps, 22 caps)
10. Helena Rowland (Loughborough Lightning, 10 caps)
9. Leanne Infante (Bristol Bears, 48 caps)

Finishers

16. Connie Powell (Gloucester-Hartpury, 1 cap)
17. Vickii Cornborough (Harlequins, 64 caps)
18. Bryony Cleall (Wasps, 5 caps)
19. Sarah Beckett (Harlequins, 22 caps)

1. Maud Muir (Wasps, 4 caps)
2. Lark Davies (Loughborough Lightning, 35 caps)
3. Sarah Bern (Bristol Bears, 40 caps)
4. Rosie Galligan (Harlequins, 1 cap)
5. Abbie Ward (Bristol Bears, 50 caps)
6. Poppy Cleall (Saracens, 50 caps)
7. Marlie Packer (Saracens, 79 caps)
8. Sarah Hunter (C; Loughborough Lightning, 130 caps)

20. Alex Matthews (Worcester Warriors, 45 caps)
21. Lucy Packer (Harlequins, 1 cap)
22. Amber Reed (Bristol Bears, 58 caps)
23. Emma Sing (Gloucester-Hartpury, uncapped)



UKRAINE: 28 days of war, 64 verified attacks on health care, and 18 million people affected

Copenhagen, 24 March 2022

One month of war has had a devastating impact on Ukraine's health system, severely restricted access to services, and triggered an urgent need to treat trauma injuries and chronic conditions. Destroyed health infrastructure and disrupted chains of medical supplies now pose a grave threat to millions of people.

Impact on health

Close to 7 million people are internally displaced, and the number of people that have fled to neighbouring countries is fast approaching 4 million.

That means that 1 in 4 Ukrainians are now forcibly displaced, aggravating the condition of those suffering from noncommunicable diseases. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 1 in 3 of the internally displaced suffers from a chronic condition.

A number of hospitals have been repurposed to care for the wounded: a shift due to necessity – which comes at the cost of essential services and primary health care. Approximately half of Ukraine's pharmacies are thought to be closed. Many health workers are displaced themselves or unable to work.

Close to 1000 health facilities are close to conflict lines or are in changed areas of control. The consequence of that – limited or no access to medicines, facilities and health professionals – mean that treatments of chronic conditions have almost stopped.

COVID-19 vaccination and routine immunization has also come to a halt. Prior to the invasion, at least 50 000 people were getting vaccinated against COVID-19 per day. Between 24 February and 15 March, however, only 175 000 people were vaccinated against COVID-19.

Attacks on health care

As of 22 March, WHO had verified 64 incidents of attacks on health care in 25 days (between 24 February and 21 March) causing 15 deaths and 37 injuries. That is 2–3 attacks per day. WHO condemns these attacks in the strongest possible terms.



“Attacks on health care are a violation of international humanitarian law, but a disturbingly common tactic of war – they destroy critical infrastructure, but worse, they destroy hope,” said Dr Jarno Habicht, WHO representative in Ukraine. “They deprive already vulnerable people of care that is often the difference between life and death. Health care is not – and should never be – a target.”

WHO's response

On the day the war started, WHO activated its contingency plans, repurposed staff and projects, and shifted focus to emergency needs – to support Ukraine's health system and workers.

WHO works closely with Ukraine's Ministry of Health and authorities to identify gaps and needs in the country's health system – and swiftly respond. WHO has opened an operations hub in Rzeszów in Poland, developed a pipeline of trauma supplies to most Ukrainian cities, and sent more than 100 metric tonnes of medical equipment over the border, to health facilities across the country.

Some 36 metric tonnes of supplies are currently on their way to Lviv, with an additional 108 metric tonnes in the pipeline, consisting of trauma supplies, medication for chronic diseases, paediatric drugs and blood transfusion supplies.

“What we are delivering – and where – meets the very needs of people on the ground, where Ukrainian health workers are working around the clock in unimaginable circumstances. A team of trained health-care professionals can, with one WHO trauma kit that contains surgical equipment, consumables and antiseptics – save the lives of 150 wounded people. In other words, delivering 10 such kits, means 1500 lives saved,” said Dr Habicht.

As part of a United Nations convoy on 18 March, a WHO truck also reached Sumy in the north-east of Ukraine, carrying critical medical supplies sufficient to treat 150 trauma patients and provide primary health care to 15 000 patients for 3 months. Among other deliveries to health facilities in past days are artificial lung ventilation machines, chemical protection suits, a haematology analyser, liquid oxygen bulk tanks and cryogenic cylinders.

More than 20 emergency medical teams have also been deployed to Ukraine, Poland and the Republic of Moldova, to provide training and specialized medical care to supplement existing services.

In an [assessment](#) of the public health situation in refugee-hosting countries, WHO identifies and lists key health risks and makes related recommendations – on vaccine-preventable diseases, maternal and child health, and chronic infectious and noncommunicable diseases.

“I have seen with my own eyes the exceptional humanitarian response in neighbouring countries, but this emergency is far from over. We expect more people – mainly women, children and older persons – with even greater health needs to be displaced in the coming weeks. They may face challenges in accessing the services and medicines that they need – and this can have life-threatening consequences,” said Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe.



NAO - The Police Uplift Programme

Government is on course to achieve its target of recruiting 20,000 additional police officers by 2023, according to the National Audit Office (NAO).

In 2019, in response to increasing pressure on police forces, government announced plans to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers in England and Wales by the end of March 2023. The Home Office (the Department) established the Police Uplift Programme (the Programme) to help forces achieve this target and support them to become more representative of the communities they serve. It expects to spend £3.6 billion on the Programme up to March 2023, and for the Programme to cost a total of £18.5 billion over the next ten years.

The Programme has been well managed to date and is a positive example of effective working between policing and the Department. A senior police officer was appointed as the Programme's director, which allowed decision making to be informed by strong operational experience. The Programme's team has remained broadly stable from the outset, which has maintained continuity and supported relationships between stakeholders. Appropriate controls were put in place to monitor recruitment and release funding to forces, which means the Department can act quickly if forces need additional support.

The Department has adjusted the Programme to stay on course, and to respond to new challenges. To adapt to COVID-19 lockdowns, the Department, the National Police Chiefs' Council and College of Policing quickly set up a national online assessment process and moved initial training online to allow recruitment to continue. The Department also plans to increase capacity within regional organised crime units to deal with more complex crimes, including fraud. Following engagement with policing, the Department expects 725 officers to move into these units by March 2023, with the remainder moving after the end of the Programme.

By the end of December 2021, forces had recruited 11,048 of the 20,000 additional police officers. This was against a target of recruiting the first 12,000 additional police officers by March 2022. The Department expects to recruit the remaining 8,000 police officers in the final year of the Programme, although it accepts this will be more challenging.

Approximately a quarter of new police officers recruited during the first year of the Programme had previously held roles in policing, such as Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), special constables or civilian staff. While this approach supported police forces to reach their recruitment targets comfortably, PCSO and special constable vacancies may now need to be backfilled to increase visible police presence in the community.

Diversity in policing has slowly improved. As at March 2019, 32% of police officers were female, and 7% of those that reported their ethnicity came from minority ethnic backgrounds. As at December 2021, 42% of new recruits were female, increasing the proportion of female officers to 34%. Almost 12% of new recruits reported they were from a non-white ethnic background, increasing the proportion of police officers from a minority ethnic background to 8% of all officers, although there are variations between different ethnicities.

The Department has not yet set out how it will evaluate the Programme's impact. The business case estimated the additional police officers would reduce the number of crimes by around half a million a year by 2024-25, however, the Department acknowledges its evidence base is weak and highly sensitive to what appear to be optimistic assumptions based on limited evidence. The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed the nature of crime, for example, in 2020-21, the number of burglaries fell due to shop closures and working from home directives, whereas cases of fraud increased. This makes it even more challenging to demonstrate a causal link between changes in crime and police numbers.

According to the NAO, to maximise the Programme's benefits, the Department will need to take account of certain challenges:

- New recruits have been allocated to police forces using an outdated funding formula, which may not align with current or future demands on policing.
- Forces are concerned that the focus on increasing and maintaining police officer numbers may reduce their flexibility in how they use their resources in the future.
- Training new recruits means more experienced officers have less capacity for their operational roles.
- The Programme will lead to an increasing reliance on an inexperienced frontline workforce. By 2023-24, 38% of police officers nationally will have less than five years' experience (compared to 12% in 2014-15).
- The rapid increase in police officers will exacerbate pressure on a criminal justice system that is already under strain and struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NAO recommends that the Department should identify and share what has worked well with the Programme, so it can apply these lessons for future schemes. The success of the Programme will ultimately be judged by the reduction of crime and protection of communities, so the Department should put in place a method to demonstrate what impact the additional police officers have had in strengthening the capability of policing.

Gareth Davies, the head of the NAO, said:

“The Police Uplift Programme has benefited from tightly defined objectives, strong support for its aims, and effective joint working between government and policing. As a result, it is on target to recruit 20,000 additional police officers.

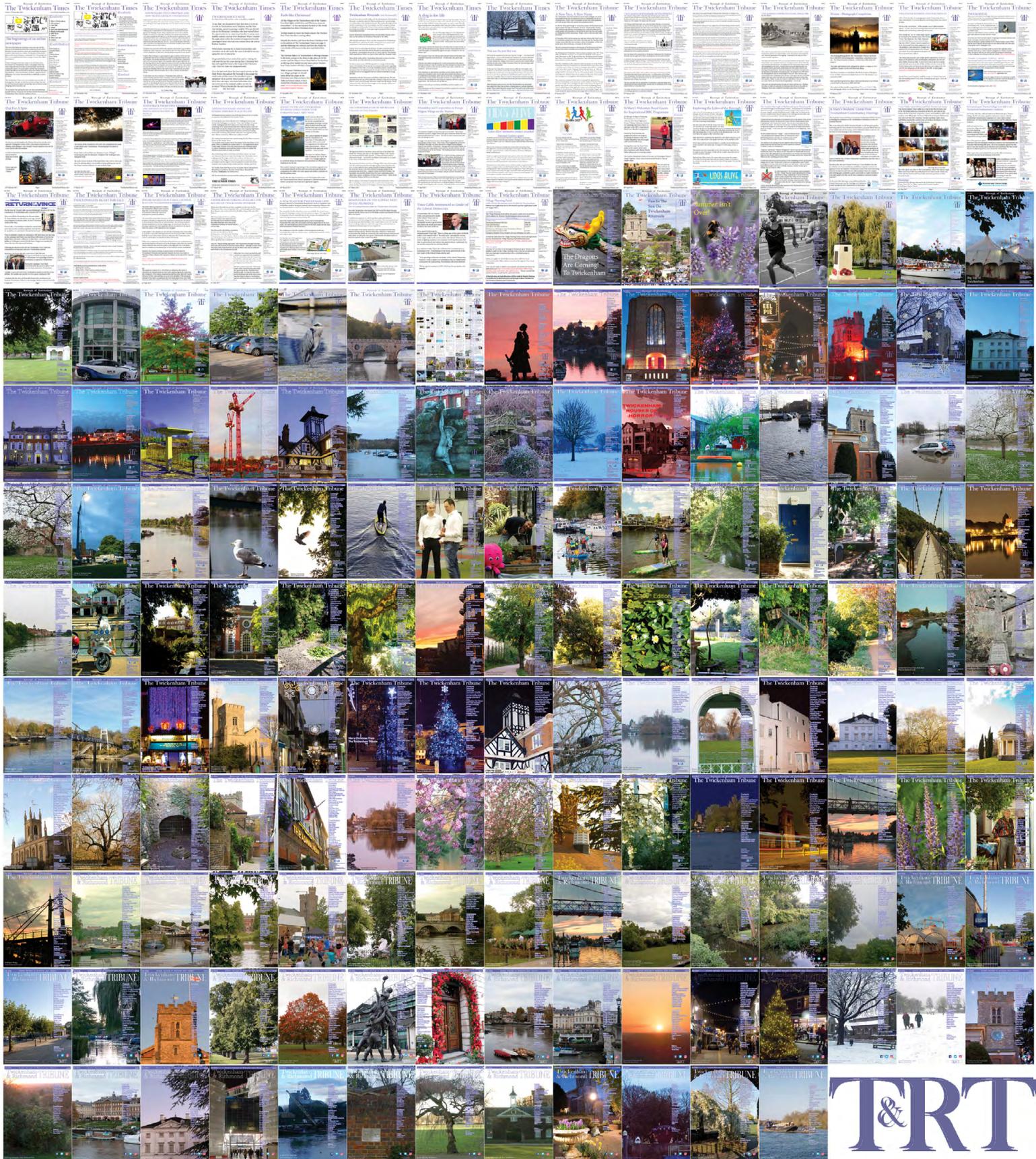
“Government now needs to work closely with policing and the wider criminal justice system to manage the implications of such rapid recruitment. It should also provide clarity over future funding arrangements, so that forces are able to plan effectively and develop the capabilities needed for 21st Century policing.”

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



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