

Twickenham & Richmond TRIBUNE

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Editors

Berkley Driscoll
Teresa Read



17th June 2022

T&RT

Nocturnal Strawberry Hill resident

Photo by Berkley Driscoll

TickerTape - News in Brief

Teddington Lock Bridge Closure

The Tribune understands that the Teddington Lock Bridge is going to be closed for repairs, but when this will happen or for how long is not yet known.

Twickenham Stadium Rugby

Saturday 18th June - Gallagher Premiership Final

Kick off: 1500, Attendance: 82,000

Rugby, London & Whitton Roads are expected to close between 1300-1500 and 1630-1900.

Sunday 19th June - England v Barbarians

Kick off: 1500, Attendance: 50,000

Rugby, London & Whitton Roads are expected to close between 1300-1500 and 1630-1900.

South Western Railway - RMT industrial action

The RMT union has announced that they will be taking industrial action on:

Tuesday 21 June, Thursday 23 June and Saturday 25 June 2022

With Network Rail signallers and more than 2,100 SWR RMT members taking industrial action, SWR will run a dramatically reduced timetable on strike days, with significant parts of the network closed.

A late-starting Sunday level of service will operate across the network on **22, 24 and 26 June**, and customers are urged only to travel by rail if absolutely necessary between 21 and 26 June.

Any Tube services that do operate are unlikely to run after 19:00, so anyone who needs to travel should complete their journey by 18:00.

Disruption on all Tube lines will continue through the morning of Wednesday 22 June. No London Underground services are expected to run before 08:00. We encourage customers to avoid making journeys until mid-morning.

Disruption is expected on the **District line - Richmond** and Wimbledon branches

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COVID-19

Teresa Read

World Health Organization

Epidemiological update on COVID-19

15 June 2022

After five weeks of decline, the number of new weekly deaths has risen again, with over 8,700 fatalities reported, a 4% increase as compared to the previous week.

At the country level, the highest number of new weekly cases were reported from the United States of America (743,723 new cases; +13%), China (501,146 new cases; -5%), Germany (281,706 new cases; +16%), Brazil (279,862 new cases; +29%), and Australia (194,158 new cases; -13%).

The highest number of new weekly deaths were reported from the United States of America (2,367 new deaths; +32%), China (1,201 new deaths; +32%), Brazil (989 new deaths; +52%), the Russian Federation (500 new deaths; -12%), and Italy (443 new deaths; +17%).

These trends should be interpreted with caution as several countries have been progressively changing COVID-19 testing strategies, resulting in lower overall numbers of tests performed and consequently lower numbers of cases detected.

IN THE NEWS

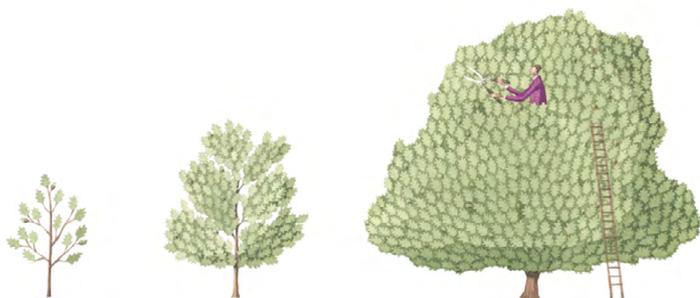
Sky News, 17 June 2022: COVID-19: Infections rise by nearly half a million in a week: Last week, an estimated 1,415,600 people had coronavirus in the UK, up 425,800 or 43%. The rise is likely to have been caused by the Omicron variants BA.4 and BA.5.

BBC, 17 June 2022: Covid infections up after Platinum Jubilee celebrations: An estimated 1.4 million people or one in 45 has the virus - up from one in 65 the week before. That's a rise of 43%.

NDTV, 17 June 2022: Coronavirus Live Updates: India Records 12,847 New Covid Cases in 24 Hours

Aljazeera, 16 June 2022: Portugal's COVID deaths grow as tourism season kicks off

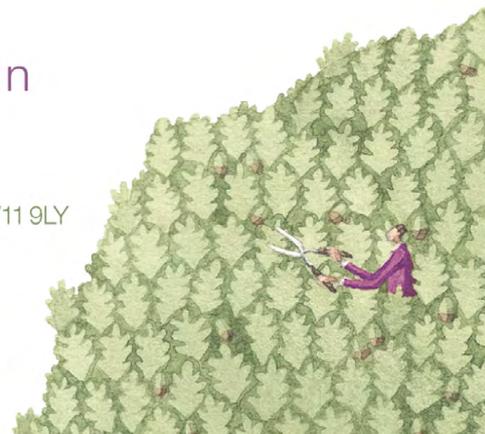
Aljazeera, 16 June 2022: Dr Fauci, renowned pandemic adviser, tests positive for COVID



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The Tree Agency

The Queen's Silver Jubilee

By Simon Fowler

Some readers may remember the Silver Jubilee in 1977. It was held at a time of national uncertainty with high inflation and industrial unrest. But many people believed the celebrations would bring the nation together. The chairman of Mortlake's committee Dennis Scuse told the Richmond and Twickenham Times that the Jubilee offers: 'unique to stand up again as a nation to remind ourselves how much we have to offer the world in every aspect of daily life.'

A range of events were organised during June and July, many of which would have been familiar to visitors to previous celebrations: fairs and fetes, processions, and fireworks. But inevitably there was much that was new – barbecues and discotheques, and even the opportunity to sup English wine.

Street parties proved popular. Kew's Alexandra Road provided magicians 'equipped with live white rabbit' and 'late night revelry' for the older residents. But the highlight must have the fancy dress competitions, Maxine Willis triumphed dressed as a box of tissues (what must her mother have thought). The weather was less kind across the river in Teddington when it rained heavily on the street party in Somerset Road.

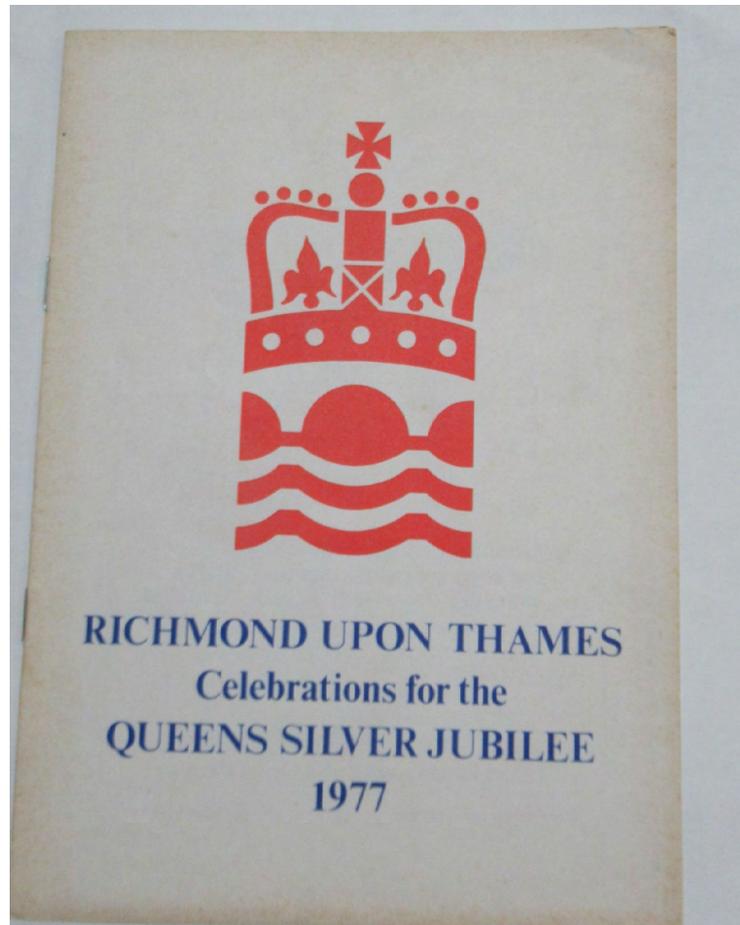
As with previous jubilees a procession was held on 9 July marching between Twickenham and Richmond greens led by a pipe band from St Edmund the Confessor RC School (now Christs School). A number of floats took place including a floral float provided by the Council and ones from Thames Television and the Poppy Factory. The only problem was that no public address system had been provided so that the mayor's speech and the choir singing patriotic songs were inaudible. Perhaps a blessing in disguise!

In Twickenham a highlight was the Richmond Arts Council fair at York House, with more than forty stalls a variety of entertainment, including the Friends of North American Indians who 'uttered war cries and danced around the lawn.'

The borough saw several royal visits. In mid-July, the Queen Mother visited Richmond and Barnes police station where she met the police dogs and horses. And Princess Alexandra was shown around Kew Gardens and went to the Queen's School. Everywhere they were mobbed by excitable school-children. Security seems to have been minimal.

Not everything went smoothly. The Council's handsomely produced history of the borough's royal connections bombed. Copies are still readily available today.

The Jubilee today is largely remembered for one thing – the Sex Pistol's notorious song 'God Save the Queen.' But in Twickenham and Richmond people were more interested in having a good time and dressing up their children in bizarre fancy dress. The Thames Valley Times commented that 'the man in the street demonstrated that the monarchy still commands respect, loyalty and above all affection.'



Marble Hill re-opens with free admission for all visitors

With the support of the National Lottery, English Heritage has restored and reopened one of the finest Georgian homes in London with free entrance for all visitors.

Marble Hill on the banks of the Thames in Twickenham is where leading writers and wits escaped the crowds of 18th-century London to enjoy the river, the pleasure gardens, the glorious architecture and the company of their host, Henrietta Howard. English Heritage has now restored the historic rooms and reinstated key elements of the lost gardens.

English Heritage has also done justice to the inspiring life of Marble Hill's original owner, Henrietta Howard, Countess of Suffolk. Howard, whose story has too often been reduced to her role as King George II's mistress, was a remarkable, resourceful and cultured woman with a gift for friendship. A patron of contemporary architecture and garden design, she created at Marble Hill a hub for London's intellectual and political elites, as well as a happy family home.

English Heritage have improving the sports pitches and changing facilities, refurbishing the café, created a new play area and helped nature and biodiversity to thrive across Marble Hill's 66 acres of parkland.

The house is now free to visit with an extensive programme of events and no booking required. The house is open five days a week from Wednesday to Sunday each week.

Find out [more about the restoration](#).



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Twickenham Cricket Club

The Cricket Pavilion

The Green, Twickenham

TW2 5TU

020 8894 3110

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Saturday 11am to 10pm

Sunday when cricket is being played

(Also open when there is a cricket match
and the pavilion is in use)

TWICKENHAM RIVERSIDE COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER PUBLIC INQUIRY

The Council's Compulsory Purchase Order on the **Diamond Jubilee Gardens** is going to be subject to a public inquiry.

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES (TWICKENHAM RIVERSIDE) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 2021 and APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE UNDER SECTION 19 AND PARAGRAPH 6 OF SCHEDULE 3 OF THE ACQUISITION OF LAND ACT 1981

*Notice is given that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has instructed one of his Inspectors to hold a public local inquiry into the above order at Clarendon Hall, York House, Richmond Road, Twickenham TW1 3AA starting at 10.00am on **Tuesday 1st November**.*

There will be a Virtual Case Management Conference (CMC) on Monday 25th July, hosted by the Planning Inspectorate, to which those who objected to the CPO are invited.

What Do They Know Freedom of Information Request Twickenham Riverside - disputing the misinformation: 40 Years of Neglect

Teresa Read

in relation to the planning for Twickenham Riverside and in the run up to the election I received emails from Liberal Democrats informing me that there had been forty years of neglect of this area.

As a local resident I know this is not the case, so I used the WhatDoTheyKnow Freedom of Information website to ask the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames how much the Council had spent on this area in the last twenty years.

However, it seems that my request could not be fulfilled as the Council said that it would cost too much to answer and exceeded the limit of £450 for answering such requests.

If Twickenham Riverside had been neglected for forty years surely it would not be too difficult to calculate what had been spent on the area in the last twenty years, presumably not very much if the “40 years of neglect” is a true statement.

It seems to me that the information “neglect for the past forty years” is obviously incorrect and this should be made clear in advance of the planning meeting for this site.



A scene of “40 years of neglect”

In fact, as a local resident for over forty years I am aware of the investment that has been made in the Twickenham Riverside area and those responsible for these incorrect emails and advertisements should apologise for misleading information - sent to residents - and make the situation clear at the planning meeting for the Twickenham Riverside site.

https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/give_details_of_all_works_carrie?nocache=incoming-2054353#incoming-2054353

SATURDAY 25 JUNE
 SUNDAY 26 JUNE
 &
 SATURDAY 2 JULY
 SUNDAY 3 JULY
 11AM-6PM



CARTOONISTS
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EEL PIE ISLAND ARTISTS OPEN STUDIOS 2022

Eel Pie Open Studios offers an opportunity to buy or commission original arts and crafts directly from the artists in the unique surroundings of Eel Pie Island.

Access to the island is via a footbridge from The Embankment, Twickenham. Follow the arrows.

The studios are situated in a working boatyard, so children must be supervised at all times.

Eel Pie Island Boatyard,
 Eel Pie Island,
 Twickenham TW1 3DY

For more information please contact eelpieislandartists@googlemail.com or visit www.eelpieislandartists.co.uk



Eel Pie Island Artists SUMMER OPEN STUDIOS

2 weekends 2022

June 25-26 & July 2-3

11.00am - 6.00pm

(not all studios will be open both weekends so please check with individual artists)

100 years of community brought to life in new Poppy Factory exhibition

A Falklands-themed display is among the new exhibits opened at the Poppy Factory visitor centre on the 40th anniversary of the end of the conflict.

Stories from The Poppy Factory's diverse ex-Forces community are brought to life in a new exhibition, revealed in the charity's centenary year at its visitor centre in Richmond-upon-Thames.

The personal legacy of the Falklands War is highlighted in one of four new displays unveiled. It includes contributions from Sara Jones CBE, whose husband H Jones was killed in action during the Battle of Goose Green.



An artillery shell casing picked up from the battlefield in Port Stanley is also featured in the exhibition. It was brought home by former soldier Paul Clayton, who developed post-traumatic stress disorder from his experiences in The Falklands.

The [Poppy Factory visitor centre](#) is open Monday to Friday for private and hosted group visits, which can be booked in advance online.

All funds raised through visitor centre bookings go towards employment support for veterans with health conditions in England and Wales.

Richmond in Europe Association annual garden party

The Mayor of Richmond, Cllr. Julia Cambridge, was the guest of honour at the Richmond in Europe Association annual garden party last week.

The Mayor is one of three patrons of the association, which promotes sporting, cultural and education links with the rest of Europe. The other patrons are the mayors of Fontainebleau, in France & Konstanz in Germany.

Find out more about the [Richmond in Europe Association](#).



EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE FORMATION OF THE TWICKENHAM & RICHMOND TRIBUNE

TWICKENHAM ALIVE EVENTS PART 5 OF 6 - EVENTS 2015/16

Teresa Read

Twickenham Alive's first concept plan for the Twickenham Riverside development was promoted this year; after the official council plan, we produced five separate plans which were well received by over 4,800 people.

The 2015 Twickenham Alive Film Festival took place at Twickenham Rowing Club, Twickenham Riverside, at the start of the Twickenham Alive Riverside Festival.

Twickenham Alive Film Festival 2015 - Two of the winning films (Click images to view video)



Twickenham Jazz Club Sketchbook by Alban Low



Living With The Cubs by Rhodri Williams

The Twickenham Alive Riverside Festival included Dragon Boat races on 15 June with the Twickenham Alive Charity Mile SUP Races the following day.



During the festival we organised the Charlie Shore's Boys and Girls Regatta along with Twickenham Rowing Club and the Richmond Environmental Information Centre (REIC).

At the same time Berkley and I were organizing the 2015 Twickenham Alive Strawberry Hill Music and Fun Day raising funds for Strawberry Hill House.

The Twickenham Alive Ice Rink opened in December 2015 for Christmas and New Year continuing into February 2016; Richmond council planning department allowed an extension as the rink had experienced bad weather but unfortunately wind and rain continued.



During this time Twickenham Alive had interviewed local residents who had been skaters at the original rink in a room in Strawberry Hill House looking on to the temporary rink. This was part of work that Berkley and I were undertaking for the Heritage Lottery project ICERINX, a project of the Richmond Environmental Information Centre (REIC).

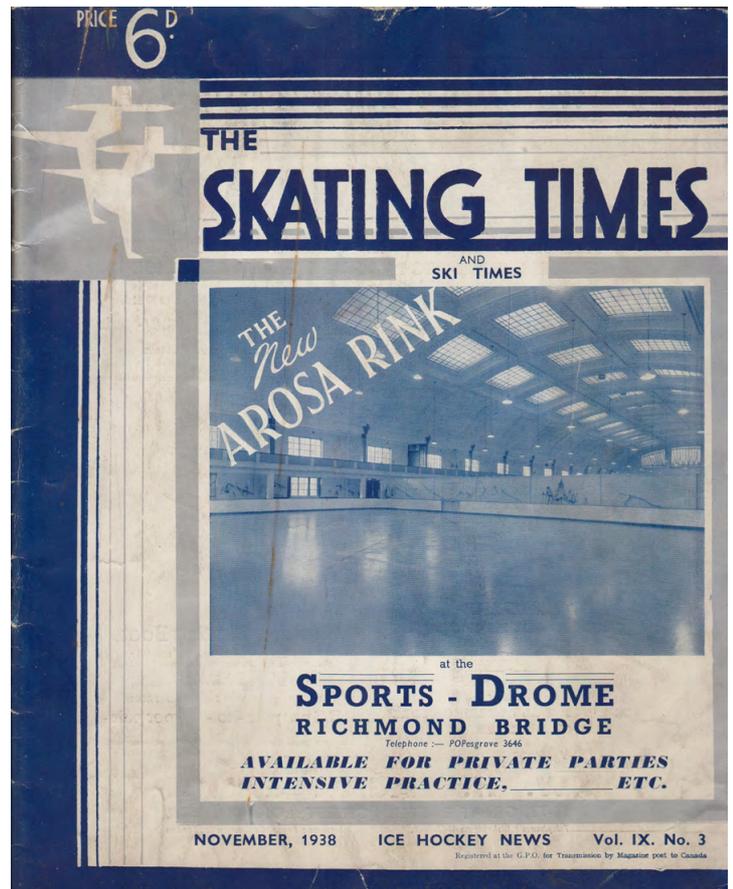
Click image below to view the video



The Twickenham Alive/REIC exhibition of historical photographs of skating and skaters at the ice rink in East Twickenham was also on daily display at the Twickenham Alive Ice Rink at Strawberry Hill House for a two-month period.

[Twickenham Alive Film Festival 2015](#)

[Most Famous Ice Rink in the World](#)



KEW MIDSUMMER FETE

SATURDAY 18 JUNE 2022
11AM TILL 6PM
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VICTORIAN FUN FAIR, OVER 100 STALLS,
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Works to widen footway and improve congestion to begin on Barnes High Street

Following last year's consultation, works will begin on Monday 20 June to widen the footway for pedestrians on the south side of Barnes High Street, add a bus stop and alter some of the street's parking bays.

The works will run for approximately eight weeks. Broadly, the scheme involves the removal of most of the parking activity along the north side of Barnes High Street, and the introduction of a new eastbound bus stop positioned outside of 41-43 Barnes High Street.

Along the south side, the intention is to widen the length of the footway along the whole section east of the pelican crossing outside of Barnes Fish Shop.

View the [Barnes High Street waiting and loading layout](#).

To facilitate the works some temporary parking restrictions will be imposed.

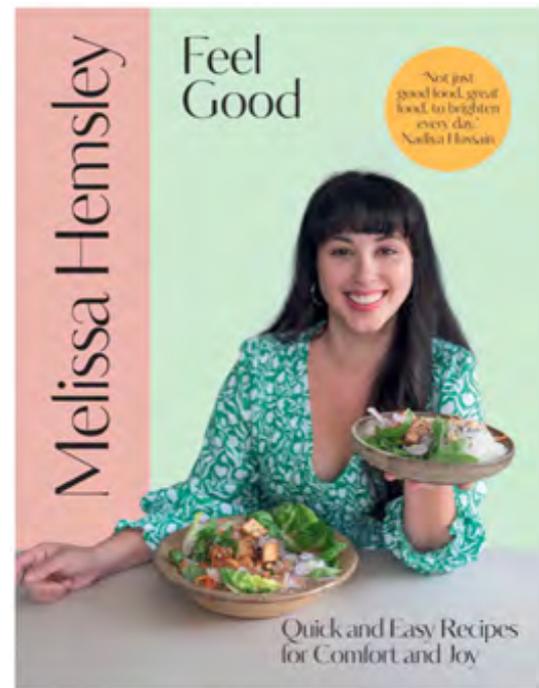
Site notices will indicate parking restrictions beginning on Monday 20 June with restrictions marked visibly with cones. Pedestrian access to shops and properties will be maintained throughout. Stanton Road will be temporarily closed at the junction with the high street with access to the road maintained via Cleveland Road and Grove Road.

If you have any questions about the works taking place, contact tony.robinson@richmond.gov.uk or call 020 8891 1411 and quote the reference number 2380-L-TR-100622-W001.



FEEL GOOD FOOD - AND IT SURE WORKS!

If you haven't heard of Melissa Hemsley, and you're into food, then I'm surprised! She's just written her fifth cook book - **Feel Good** - and I love it! It has 100 easy and uplifting recipes to help you feel your best, whether it's a quick dinner after a long day, a cook-ahead meal to see you through the week or heart warming dishes for an evening of comfort and nourishment. Melissa explains that feel-good cooking isn't just what we eat - it's the mindset around it. A relaxed approach that encourages you to tune into what suits your mood, time constraints and the contents of your fridge. Many of the recipes take less than half an hour and all the recipes use readily available ingredients, are gluten free (or have a gluten free option) and don't rely on refined sugars. Melissa is local to SW London - she was a sixth former at Tiffin Girls School and had a Saturday job in Kingston, (to save up to go out for nice meals in places like Petersham Nurseries). Good food has always been a priority for her, and it shows.



Enjoy recipes for energy-boosting Breakfast Muffins with Banana, Carrot and Seeds; satisfying salads such as Roasted White Beans with Caesar-style Tahini Dressing; Big Broccoli and Spinach Salad with Carrot-Ginger Dressing or Fried Halloumi and Chickpea Rainbow Salad (see below). Dinners include Zingy Vietnamese-style Noodles with Fried Sesame Tofu; Spiced Chickpea and Fish Traybake and Mum's Filipino Chicken with Mango-Tomato Salsa. And for dessert don't miss the Three-Ingredient Chocolate Pots or the No-Bake Chewy Nutty Bars.

Here is a delicious dessert recipe for you to try that I'm sure will whet your appetite to buy the book. **FEEL GOOD** by Melissa Hemsley is published by Ebury Press at £22. Photography by Lizzie Mayson

Three-ingredient Chocolate Pots (feeds 6: 20 minutes + 4 hours chilling)

180g Medjool dates (about 10 large dates)

250ml nut milk

160g dark (50%–70%) chocolate

A little pinch of sea salt, plus extra to serve (optional)

Optional toppings:

Dollop of (plant-based) cream

Chopped toasted hazelnuts or pecans
Pitted cherries or fresh pomegranate seeds
Raspberries or strawberries
Crushed biscuits (such as ginger nut or digestive)

Variation: For a Christmassy chocolate orange flavour, add a teaspoon orange extract to the blender and top the finished pots with a little grated orange zest. Add a festive flourish of a tiny pinch of nutmeg or cloves.

“These are so simple and delicious, plus they’re plant-based! If you want to make them in advance, they’ll keep for 3 days in the fridge. I love them made with just the three ingredients – hazelnut milk works particularly well – but if you want to go to town, try adding extra toppings – whatever you have in your cupboard! These are quite rich, so they happily feed six. You’ll need 6 ramekins or glasses/jars – tea cups would look lovely; just avoid delicate glasses that might crack under the hot mix.”



Roughly tear the dates, discarding the pits, and soak in just-boiled water for 10 minutes. Even though Medjool dates are soft anyway, this helps soften them further, which is good for any blenders that might need a helping hand.

Heat up the nut milk in a saucepan, being careful not to boil, and remove from the heat once it’s heated through.

Meanwhile, finely slice about 2 tablespoons of the chocolate to create some chocolate ‘shavings’ and set aside for garnishing.

Chop the rest of the chocolate and add to a blender or food processor, then pour over the hot nut milk. Drain the soaked dates and add them with the salt, then carefully blend until smooth.

Divide the mixture between 6 ramekins or glasses (see introduction) and chill in the fridge for 4 hours until set. Cover them if you’re keeping them there any longer, so they don’t pick up ‘fridge’ smells. Scatter over the chocolate shavings, plus a tiny extra sprinkle of sea salt, if you like, or add any of the other toppings to serve.

CHISWICK CHEESE MARKET:

Sunday 19th June 9.30-3pm



It's 'Cheesewick' time again this Sunday, 19th June

There are over 150 different artisan cheeses from near and far - much-loved, old regulars and new, exciting cheeses... Oh, and it's Father's Day! What could be better than bringing Dad along to the market to choose his own gift?

Here's a list of ten things to look out for:

- Roi is bringing his fabulous Spanish cheeses - don't miss **La Retorta** from Finca Pascualete - cut the top off and scoop out the unctuous utterly delicious interior.
- Room & Roots stall for vintage cheesy kitchenalia to find that perfect quirky gift for Dad.
- Pexommier - A Yorkshire organic Brie style made in Todmorden made in a micro farm with organic milk from a single herd of Meuse Rhine Isle cows. Find at No. 2 Pound St.
- NEW 'Bread Winners' who support refugees by enabling them to work selling artisan bakery products. This is refugee month so please support.
- Mozzarella and burrata from La Latteria - buy for our monthly recipe (see below).
- Paulo's Honey - Have you tried honey drizzled on cheese - salty blue or aged sheep cheeses?
- Pevensey Blue (buy at Big Wheel Cheese) awarded Britain's Best Cheese at the artisan cheese awards.
- Did you see the Balsamic vinegar episode of Stanley Tucci's Italian food program? If so then we have the actual 12 year old balsamic on sale at Beansworld (next door to Bianca Mora).
- NEW Somerset Cheese Company - try the Pendragon - semi hard, naturally rinded buffalo milk cheese.
- Love Fermented Kimchee Ketchup for a healthy punch on your cheeseburgers.

<https://www.chiswickcheesemarket.uk/>





The False Servant

by Pierre Marivaux, translation by Martin Crimp
Orange Tree Theatre, Richmond until 23rd July

A tale of duplicity, avarice, sexual tension and generally bad behaviour is played out at a dizzyingly fast pace at the Orange Tree's production of *The False Servant*. The dialogue is delivered at machine-gun speed and is as devastatingly cutting in its outcome.



The intricately involved plot focuses on a personable young noblewoman (Lizzy Watts) who disguises herself as Chevalier, a sharp-suited chap, to expose the despicable motives of Lelio (Julian Moore-Cook). Lelio is suave and cynical, not as smart as he thinks when pitted against Chevalier. He possesses not a moral bone in his body as he chases a lucrative marriage, with love and loyalty merely collateral damage in his quest.



Most of the rest of the characters in this re-worked French comedy are equally morally bankrupt. Take Trivelin (Will Brown). He's a larger and louder than life character, a garrulous and grubby sort who has seen better days and now down on his luck thanks to a prison term for raiding a master's wine cellar. Full of sly asides to the audience, Trivelin cheerfully reckons, 'Deep down man is a piece of shit.'

It's hilarious thanks to its revamp by Orange Tree veteran Martin Crimp, which bring it bang up to date. He works well with director Paul Miller, who succeeds in marrying sharp humour with double entendres. The action is played out against an abstract set, dominated by a menacing green sculpture that could have come from Henry Moore on a bad day.

Love, marriage and morality take a back seat to pride, poverty, status, thwarted ambition and drunkenness. However, if you have any concern that this comedy of (bad) manners written in 1724 by Pierre Marivaux might not be your *tasse de thé*, you'll be too busy laughing to care.



Read Gill Martin's review at
www.markaspen.com/2022/06/14/false-serv

Photography by The Other Richard



Macbeth

by Giuseppe Verdi, libretto by Francesco Piave after William Shakespeare
The Grange Festival, Northington until 5th July

The Grange, with its air of distressed grandeur yet majestic pride is a dramatic location to stage the most dramatic of Verdi's operas. *Macbeth* is a melodrama, but with shocking power and great psychological depth. As The Grange Festival's first full production freed of the strictures of the pandemic, it certainly packs some punch, musically and dramatically, that drips with symbolism.

Verdi insisted that in his opera there are three main characters, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and the chorus of Witches. Comprising singers and dancers, The Grange Festival's meaningfully choreographed witches are a powerful presence. Their coven is a circular library with floor to ceiling bookshelves. All is cobwebby and dusty, an atmospheric and eerie ambience. Ranging from Goths to grandmas, post-punks to poster girls, bitches to ballerinas, you would not want to meet any of these witches on a dark night. They are ubiquitous, controlling, impelling and re-writing destinies. Books of knowledge are ripped up in their hands and reconfigured; the past literally litters their feet.



In the title role, the strong acting skills of the Albanian baritone Gezim Myshketa are matched by a fine warmth of voice, tempered by an increasing harshness, as Macbeth degenerates into a ruthless tyrant. Acclaimed coloratura soprano Judith Howarth excels as Lady Macbeth, bringing [a wide experience](#) to a role for which Verdi demands the full range of technical skills. The multifaceted character is more nuanced than Macbeth. That subtlety is there in Howarth's acting.

Lady Macbeth's assertion, the road to power is full of crimes, rings poignantly topical. One is reminded of events in the Ukraine, then more so by the chorus, when subjugated refugees, fleeing Macbeth's depredations, sing *Patria oppressa*, a patriotic anthem of their beleaguered homeland.

Nevertheless, in this production, the protagonists are real people, not melodramatic caricatures. The Macbeths are not monsters, but humans with strengths and weaknesses, who eventually tear themselves apart in realisation of how far the ruthlessness of their ambition has taken them.

Read Mark Aspen's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/06/12/macbeth-grange

Photography by Simon Annand



JANE AUSTEN'S PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Adapted by Janet Munsil
Directed by Fiona Poole
Fountain Gardens, York House



Romance, avarice, villainy, comedy and drama are being played out in and around Twickenham's York House famous Fountain Gardens as the Richmond Shakespeare Society rehearse their July production of Jane Austen's PRIDE and PREJUDICE.

Playing from July 4th- 9th and with the "Naked Ladies" as their backdrop, this best-loved novel will be brought to life in Janet Munsil's elegant stage adaptation.

Bring your rugs and picnic baskets, relax in the sunshine and be part of the magic as Mrs Bennet struggles to marry off her five daughters and Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy dislike, distrust - and eventually come to an understanding.

Performances at 7:45pm each evening (including Wednesday).
Matinee at 3pm on Saturday.

Tickets available now [HERE](#)



TRAVELLER'S TALES 125

MORE RICE PLEASE



Doug Goodman gets muddy in a paddy field

The mud was up to my knees and elbows and a rather unpleasant looking wave was coming towards me propelled by a passing water buffalo. But this was all part of the enjoyment of learning about rice on a day's course in Northern Laos. The paddy fields were only a short drive from Luang Prabang, the Laotian city famous for its temples, night markets and hospitable people. The day before the trip I had visited the military museum and met a team of mine clearing soldiers. Left over from the Viet-nam war, when the United States Airforce dropped millions of bombs on the Ho Chi Minh trail in the north-eastern part of the country, are vast numbers of unexploded ordnance. Death regularly occurs when farmers plough their land, when children pick up strange objects and when villagers light a fire under a cooking pot in a new location. I had great admiration for the brave specialists who risked their lives every day trying to make their war-ravaged land safe. I was amazed to learn that rats have been trained to discover unexploded bombs.



Laos. Paddy Field



Rice Planting



Buffalo Power

RICE PLANTING

Rice is the staple crop in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and eaten with every meal in many different ways. I had never really thought about rice production – just accepting it came in tins as a pudding or in packets to be boiled. An invitation to spend a day with farmers to learn about the product was eagerly accepted, not quite knowing what would be involved. First sight of the paddy fields with the nearby mountains reflected in the water was stunning. A tour of the fields to see rice growing at different stages was followed by a planting session. Shoes and socks were discarded and if you were not wearing shorts then you would have had a problem. Stepping into deep, warm mud to place a small plant below the water was an interesting experience. Water buffalo ploughed the muddy field accompanied by workers wearing traditional pointed straw hats. 'Students' were given 'coolie' hats to protect our heads from the fierce sun. Keeping upright in the slippery mud and constantly bending low to plant the rice was very exhausting. After achieving three rows I extracted my legs and was hosed down before the mud could dry and form a black plaster –like cast.

Laos is the only land-locked country in South-East Asia; its population is around seven million. The capital is Vientiane. Laos was part of France's Colonial Empire until gaining independence

in 1953. It has land borders with Cambodia, China and with Vietnam. Rice is the country's most important product consisting of 80% of its agricultural production. Some 3.5 million tons of rice are harvested annually. The main crop is grown during the rainy season as the plants are cultivated in water. Irrigation channels in a mountainous country, where only 4% is arable land, are difficult to build. Along the banks of The Mekong, which is nearly 5,000 kms long and separates Laos from Myanmar and Thailand, the river water is used particularly during the floods.



Mud up to my Knees



Rice Growing



Just One Stalk



Ready to Eat

After the exhaustion of planting we were given a splendid lunch of local-grown vegetables and fruit and various rice dishes including the 'roll it into a ball and eat it with your fingers' – sticky variety. Much potent rice wine was consumed. In a small show room rice packets from around the world were displayed along with plans to bring more land under cultivation to greatly increase production. In the south of the country four vast, state-of-the-art milling plants have been constructed with Chinese support to cater for the expected increase. After a fascinating day observing such industrious people at work it was time to explore the night market back in Luang Prabang where every kind of fruit, vegetable, fish and meat was prepared while you waited. I declined the rat burgers, the steamed snake and the crunchy fried locusts and chose kebabs with a large helping of rice.



Rice Boiler



Rice and Kebabs



Fertile Farm Land

The Lao People's Democratic Republic - Climate Action

Last week the Youth Climate Action Conference was held in Vientiane, the capital of Laos. The conference was supported by the European Union and Norwegian People's Aid.

Pupils' tree planting throughout the country was highlighted and a Youth Climate Ambassador chosen.

Sustainable fashion was also on the agenda and ideas for local environmental protection were discussed.



The country is keen to promote Green Sustainability and an Inclusive Agriculture and Forestry sector; there is also a Zero Waste programme.



Information about Laos: <https://www.worldinfozone.com/country.php?country=Laos>

The Woodland Trust

“Woods and trees are a natural solution to the climate crisis.

Trees are the ultimate carbon capture and storage machines. Like great carbon sinks, woods and forests absorb atmospheric carbon and lock it up for centuries. They do this through photosynthesis. The entire woodland ecosystem plays a huge role in locking up carbon, including the living wood, roots, leaves, deadwood, surrounding soils and its associated vegetation.

But we need more of them. If the UK is to reach its carbon neutral target by 2050, the Committee on Climate Change has recommended an increase in woodland cover from 13% to 19%.

Free trees for schools and communities: We want to make sure everybody in the UK has the chance to plant a tree. So we're giving away hundreds of thousands of trees to schools and communities. Together, we'll get millions more trees in the ground.”

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/climate-change/>

Photographs, Kew 2009: Teresa Read <https://worldinfozone.com/features.php?section=Kew>



“MAKING THE MOST OF IT?”

By Deep Patel

This week we have seen some days where Twickenham was hotter than Jamaica, and people always say “you’ve gotta make the most of it” right? But what does “making the most of it” truly mean?

When the sun is out, I for one have noticed that everyone I see is 100 times happier! I see neighbours who never talk to each other saying good morning to each other as they pass each other on the streets...it’s like the sun makes everyone nicer...could we all be solar powered perhaps? Or is it the memories of distant past holidays that spark a happy feeling within us?

I am a great believer in finding our happiness through being a good human, helping others where we can, and in the moto that “in the joy of others abides our own”.

During these summer months, as many will know, I even go to the level of advocating kindness towards the smaller creatures in life, such as sprinkling talcum powder or finely ground black pepper powder/white vinegar around where ants come (but not directly on them) in order to stop them kindly, without harming them in name of good karma, or stopping snails and slugs munching our prized plants by putting bamboo canes into the ground and wrapping pure copper mesh from online stores (or Meet ad Deep newsagents) around the bottom to create an effective barrier (much better than the tape), however what else can we do to really be happy? What can we do to “make the most of it” during these gloriously hot (sometimes excessively hot!) days?

Many will answer this question by saying we should go to the beach, or somewhere even more exotic right? But sometimes the pressure of trying to “make the most of it” actually causes a lot of anxiety and results in us not enjoying ourselves at all...sound familiar? I truly think that sometimes less is actually more...during these hot days, I think we could all benefit from taking a step back and trying to find pleasure in the little things in life, like sitting with family or friends, or enjoying the views of normal life on Twickenham Green, because I truly believe that later in life, we all eventually will realise that it’s those little things in life, like holding hands with a loved one, sharing a lemonade whilst playing cards with an old friend, or even just sitting outside your front door or even indoors with your window open admiring the sky whilst listening to music from your youth, it’s these little things in life that we eventually realise were actually the big things.

So next time when it is a sunny day and everyone around you is telling you that you must “make the most of it” ... choose to take a step back instead of forwards...simplify... and enjoy the little things in life...they will one day be the biggest things when you look back...

If you have any thoughts to share with me, do get in touch, thedeepatel@gmail.com



ARTS RICHMOND AFFORDABLE ART TENT 2022

Saturday 2nd July 2022, 11.30am - 6pm

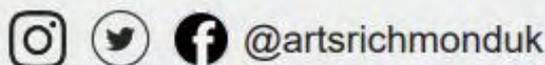
St Margaret's Fair Moorhead, Moorhead Road, TW1 1JS

Arts Richmond is delighted to present our Affordable Art Tent 2022!

All artwork on sale from local artists will be on offer for £100 and under.

Any local artists interested in selling work, please contact Arts Richmond to register via info@artsrichmond.org.uk or call 0208 892 9446.

Affordable Art Tent 2022



Arts Richmond is delighted to present our Affordable Art Tent 2022! All artwork on sale from local artists will be on offer for £100 and under.

St Margaret's Fair
Moormead, Moormead Road,
St Margaret's, Twickenham
TW1 1JS
11.30am - 6pm

**Saturday
2nd July**

St Mary's University

St Mary's Academic Receives Lifetime Award

Senior Lecturer in the Department of Business, Law and Society at St Mary's University, Twickenham, Robin J Birn has received a lifetime award from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM).

The Board of Directors of CIM have awarded a Lifetime Membership and Lifetime Fellowship to Robin in recognition of his continuous support for CIM for the last 45 years.

“The CIM Accreditation for St Mary's Business Management and Marketing and Communications and Marketing Degrees allows me to continue to provide this support. It is the time of my life to stop counting the years but to make the years count.”

Head of the Department of Communications, Media and Marketing Dr Jon Hackett added,



The Chartered
Institute of Marketing

The CIM, which was founded in 1911, is the world's largest community of marketers. It supports, represents, and develops marketers, teams, leaders, and the marketing profession as a whole. CIM also accredits courses at St Mary's, including the [BA Business Management and Marketing](#) and [BA Communications, Media and Marketing](#).

Speaking of receiving the award, Robin J Birn said, “This is a great honour from the marketing professional body recognising a considerable time in which marketing has undoubtedly progressed due to the fast-paced profession. In this time the CIM and its members have continued to provide the necessary support and qualifications to allow marketers to excel and prosper in their chosen profession.

“This award recognises the esteem in which the marketing world holds Robin and recognises his consistent service to the profession. Students in the Communications and Marketing, and Business Management and Marketing degrees at St Mary's benefit not only from his professional expertise and insight, but from his constant academic support and encouragement, his enhancement of the programmes through accreditation, and the professional networks on whom he can call. It is well deserved.”



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

The Bees are back!

By [Brentford FC](#)

Tickets for our home pre-season friendly against Real Betis will be on sale to all 2022/23 Season Ticket and Premium Seat Holders on Monday at 2pm



The Bees welcome Copa Del Rey Champions, Real Betis to West London for our pre-season friendly on Saturday 30 July (3pm kick-off).

This match will be the final one for The Bees before the start of the 2022/23 Premier League season. So, get your football fix and make some more incredible memories at the Brentford Community Stadium.

2022/23 Season Ticket Holders can purchase a ticket for this fixture in their own seat at 2pm on Monday, 20 June, by logging into their ticketing account.

2022/23 Season Ticket Holders have until 9am on Monday 4 July to book their own seat. After this time, seat reservations will be removed, and tickets will no longer be guaranteed. These will become available to all 2022/23 My Bees Members*.

Premium Seat Holders will be able to login to their ticketing account on Monday at 2pm and claim their complimentary ticket for this fixture. They have until Monday 4 July 9am to claim their complimentary ticket and may be able to purchase additional tickets. [Read more about our Premium Packages here.](#)

Further ticket information about this fixture can be seen below.

Get ready to buy at 2pm on Monday [HERE](#)

Please note: to get priority access to your Match Tickets you will need to log in to your ticketing account before purchasing.

Find out more information about buying reserved seats (including those for friends and family) and printing tickets [here](#).

*Information on how existing Members can renew their My Bees Membership or how you can become a Member for 2022/23 will be made available soon. If you are interested in becoming a new My Bees Member, [register your interest here](#).

England men's team announcement - England v Barbarians

Eddie Jones has named the England side to take on the Barbarians in an uncapped fixture at Twickenham Stadium on Sunday 19 June (3pm KO).

Tom Curry (blind-side flanker) will captain the side and Harry Randall (scrum half) is named vice-captain. In the front row, props Bevan Rodd and Will Collier join Jack Walker (hooker). Jonny Hill is at lock alongside Charlie Ewels. Sam Underhill is at open-side flanker and Alex Dombrandt is No. 8.

Tommy Freeman is at full back. Joe Cokanasiga starts at right wing, and Jonny May is on the left wing. Joe Marchant is outside centre, Mark Atkinson is at inside centre and Marcus Smith is fly half. Jack Singleton, Will Goodrick-Clarke, Patrick Schickerling, Courtney Lawes, Jack Willis, Danny Care, Orlando Bailey and Jack Nowell are named as finishers.

Tickets are still available for the game priced from £25 for adults and £12 for under 16s.

Following the Barbarians game, England will travel to Australia for their three Test series. They will play the Wallabies in Perth (2 July), Brisbane (9 July) and Sydney (16 July).

Jones said: *"This is a young team, they have prepared really well and worked hard over the past few camps to come together as a group. It is a great opportunity to play in this England XV side and show what they can do.*

"We are looking forward to playing against an unusually French Barbarians side – which you normally only get when you play the French Barbarians.

"We'll use it as an opportunity to develop combinations and assess players for the Australia tour.

"We will put our best foot forward and it should make for a great game of rugby for all of the supporters at Twickenham."

ENGLAND XV

15. Tommy Freeman (Northampton Saints)
14. Joe Cokanasiga (Bath Rugby)
13. Joe Marchant (Harlequins)
12. Mark Atkinson (Gloucester Rugby)
11. Jonny May (Gloucester Rugby)
10. Marcus Smith (Harlequins)
9. Harry Randall (Bristol Bears)

1. Bevan Rodd (Sale Sharks)
2. Jack Walker (Harlequins)
3. Will Collier (Harlequins)
4. Charlie Ewels (Bath Rugby)
5. Jonny Hill (Exeter Chiefs)
6. Tom Curry (C) (Sale Sharks)
7. Sam Underhill (Bath Rugby)
8. Alex Dombrandt (Harlequins)

FINISHERS

16. Jack Singleton (Gloucester Rugby)
17. Will Goodrick-Clarke (London Irish)
18. Patrick Schickerling (Exeter Chiefs)
19. Courtney Lawes (Northampton Saints)

20. Jack Willis (Wasps)
21. Danny Care (Harlequins)
22. Orlando Bailey (Bath Rugby)
23. Jack Nowell (Exeter Chiefs)



Fixtures announced for rugby union's new adult male community game structure in England

The 2022/2023 season will see the biggest change in 30 years to how community rugby is structured in the adult men's game in England. The new structure is intended to improve player retention and attract new players to an area of the game where research has indicated players are choosing to play less regularly. [Fixtures announced](#) outline how teams will line-up in the new framework which sees national, regional and counties leagues replacing levels 3-11 in the men's game. A new cup competition will round-off the season, adding to the excitement of something else to play for.

Societal changes have resulted in participation becoming less frequent across a number of team sports. This has been accentuated by the pandemic as players developed alternative commitments at weekends when unable to play matches. The new framework aims to adapt to modern behaviours and respond to player and club feedback to develop a league structure that better suits players' lifestyles of today.

To create the blueprint for the new structure, consultation has taken place since December 2019 with grassroots players, directors of rugby, coaches, club administrators and RFU Council Members about how a structure might look and work for them. Lengthy travel to matches and the intensity of the league season were noted as key barriers to participation for many players.

To address these challenges, in April 2021 the RFU Council approved recommendations from the Future Competition Structure Group for a new competition structure. The revamped structure aims to reboot and re-energise this area of the community game, reducing travel, bringing back local derbies and creating new ones, while placing a key focus on club sustainability and making the quality of player experience as high as possible. The new structure is organised according to four core principles:

- Ensuring a high-quality player experience
- Putting player welfare and needs at the forefront of decisions
- Minimising travel
- Supporting club sustainability

In what has been termed 'flattening the pyramid,' the number of teams in each league has decreased, thereby reducing the number of fixtures, while the number of leagues has increased. The effect of this allows for more regionalisation and localisation, with an intention to reduce the travel burden for players and clubs. As a result of changes, the majority of teams that were previously playing at old levels 4-6 will see average trip mileage reduced. The travel benefits at the lower end of the structure will be less pronounced as they were already very localised. Break weekends have also been layered into league rugby during the season.

Following the changes in structure, the 2022/23 season will see an additional 145 teams taking part in the England Club Championship (ECC) including the return to RFU leagues of 45 teams from Cheshire and Lancashire. The increased number of teams also includes the addition of lower XV teams up to Counties 1 who met entry criteria, approved by RFU Council in November 2021, to join the English Club Championship. The new offering has seen the number of Constituent Bodies who have lower XVs playing in the ECC increase from 9 to 17.

Stephen Pearson, RFU Council Member and Future Competition Structure (FCS) Group chair, said: "We are excited by the potential of these changes which put player welfare and player experience at the

centre of decision-making, making sure travel requirements are appropriate and that clubs continue to be sustainable.

“In general, rugby is in good shape, with strong participation at minis and junior level, which has bounced back well post Covid. That is an important part of clubs’ sustainability. We’re also seeing huge growth in the women’s and girls’ game year-on-year, which will be driven forward again by this autumn’s RWC and the RWC 2025 in England.

“However, we need to recognise there are challenges, particularly in the adult men’s competition. We’ve seen a trend towards a greater number of players being required to complete a first team fixture list, which sucks players up from the lower teams and impacts on the number of sides a club can put out. We’ve sought to declutter the season, so it’s more accessible to a player to play in short batches, for example four games of league rugby, followed by a break weekend.

“By putting the new, optional cup competition at the end of the season, teams will still have something to play for. This coupled with the potential to play in a Community Game Finals day at a prestigious venue is a dream of many players.

“Alongside those playing and coaching the game, we have worked closely with Council Members representing the community game and CBs and Organising Committees who have a detailed understanding of their local rugby environments. Changes of this size and significance cannot be made in isolation from the centre. It has been hugely important to listen to and respect local knowledge while creating the blueprint for the new structure. It has been a long process and this collaboration has been appreciated by all involved. We thank everyone who has shared their time and expertise to create what we believe is a safe, fair, inclusive league structure that will attract more players to the men’s game.

“We acknowledge there will be some anomalies when it comes to travel in the first season, but this will settle down over time and we will look to work with those clubs and see how they can be supported. The majority however will see reduced travel.

“Recommendations include for there be a rapid review of specific aspects of the competitions. Changes of this magnitude will inevitably take time to settle in. We will be monitoring the effects and formally reviewing the outcomes within a three-year time frame, while local changes are always possible within the normal seasonal competitions management process.”

Community Game Board (CGB) chair, David Roberts, added: “The review was commissioned by the CGB pre-Covid because we recognised the need to evolve the competition structure to ensure the adult men’s game at community level remains relevant and popular. If anything, Covid has re-emphasised the need for these changes, respecting the core principles which have been put in place. The fundamental aim is to create a positive structure that works for players of today and the future, to increase playing numbers.”



Transparency about the scale of UEC crisis ahead of winter is vital for any strategy, RCEM warns

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

“A marginal improvement in performance data is positive but should not be cause for celebration. The data remain grim reading and there is no real sign of this crisis easing.

“While the improvement is once again a testament to the hard work of staff, the number of patients staying for over 12 hours is the third highest ever. As our report [Tip of the Iceberg](#) details, these 12-hour DTA waits are only a fraction of the true number of long waits. We know that the number of 12-hour waits measured from when patients arrive in the Emergency Department is far higher. But until NHS England are transparent about the scale of the crisis and publish the 12-hour data measured from time of arrival monthly, there is little to no hope of improving the situation on the ground for both patients and staff.

“NHS England must publish this data as a matter of urgency, so we can begin to tackle the crisis in its true breadth and depth. In May 2022 we wrote to Amanda Pritchard, Chief Executive of NHS England, about this and have still not received a response, leaving us in limbo and waiting for clarification on a timeline as to when these data will be published.

“Things are now worse than any previous winter, and next winter is already looming. Staff morale remains incredibly low; they are depleted and continue to face moral injury day-to-day. Patient safety remains at constant risk with excessively long waiting times, and patients are distressed at these shockingly long waits.

“It is naïve at best and disingenuous at worst to say that this is a consequence of the pandemic. Over the past 10 years [the bed base has shrunk significantly](#), workforce planning has faltered, and resourcing has not met demand. This is to say nothing of the decline of social care. Unsurprisingly all of this has added up to a substantial deterioration in performance over these 10 years; the pandemic just made a terrible situation worse. It is entirely correct though that there are no quick fixes to mend a mess that’s been over a decade in the making.

“Telling staff there is no funding coming to help fix the situation and exhorting them to just work a bit harder will do nothing to improve morale. However, we greatly welcome talk of a 15-year staffing plan, but this will of course need funding to help fill the 100,000 current vacancies and ensure we do not have such shortages again.

“We also welcome NHS England’s recognition of the need for an Urgent and Emergency Care Strategy. We urge that any UEC strategy must contain meaningful action that begins to tackle this crisis and drive improvement. One meaningful action must be to publish the 12-hour data measured from time of arrival. Beyond that we must see emergency resourcing of social care, and the health system must do all it can to expand capacity.”

Responding to the publication of Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch’s Interim Bulletin *Harm caused by delays in transferring patients to the right place of care*, Dr Henderson said:

“It is well-known among health care professionals, especially the Paramedicine and Emergency Medicine workforce, that ambulance handover delays cause serious harm to patients. Instances of ambulance handover delays became a frequent and serious threat in late 2020 and early 2021 and in response to this rising threat The College published [Ambulance Handover Delays: Options Appraisal](#). In November 2021, The Association of Ambulance Chief Executives published their report [Delayed hospital handovers: Impact assessment of patient harm](#) which found that these delays were leading to an unacceptable level of patient harm and presented a serious risk.

“We welcome the HSIB interim bulletin and its safety recommendations, we urge the Department of Health and Social Care to prioritise and urgently act on these recommendations. The situation continues to worsen, and it is highly detrimental to patient safety, to paramedic and EM staff, and public confidence in the emergency care services. Critically, the Urgent and Emergency Care system is failing to function as it should, we must do all we can to change that.”

Tackling local breaches of air quality

Government is not yet on track to achieve its targets for reducing air pollution and it has not communicated effectively with the public on the issue, according to the National Audit Office (NAO).

While emissions of most air pollutants have been falling in recent decades, poor air quality continues to cause damage to people's health and the natural environment.

The UK has legal air quality limits for major pollutants at a local and national level. In 2019, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) published its Clean Air Strategy outlining its approach to improving air quality.

Existing measures will not be sufficient to achieve most of government's 2030 air quality targets. Defra told the NAO that there are challenges to reducing some air pollutants, such as particulate matter, including because the rise of energy bills could result in greater domestic wood burning.

Defra has also found it challenging to change agricultural practices such as fertiliser use, which has caused ammonia emissions to plateau at 2007 levels. Defra expects to outline further measures to achieve its 2030 emissions targets in September 2022.



In 2016 Defra established a Joint Air Quality Unit (JAQU) with the Department for Transport (DfT) to tackle illegal levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) air pollution in the shortest time possible. This NO₂ Programme (the Programme) is government's largest dedicated air quality initiative.

Government has worked with local authorities to tackle illegal levels of NO₂ pollution, but the Programme has progressed more slowly than expected. Government has identified 64 local authorities with potential breaches of NO₂ concentration limits.

As at April 2022, information from JAQU showed 14 of these local authorities had implemented all measures that are expected to bring NO₂ levels within legal limits, with a further 16 authorities found to be already compliant. Government expected that measures would take three years or less to implement, but its information shows it is taking longer in many areas.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly been a factor, it is not the only cause of delay, and the relative impact of different issues is not clear.

National Highways told the NAO it is limited in what it can do to reduce NO₂ emissions on some parts of major roads and motorways. It has concluded that there are no viable measures

for 17 of the 31 non-compliant sections of the Strategic Road Network.

There is a lack of transparency underlying this conclusion, as government does not publish the criteria for 'viable' measures, and government has been slow to consider wider options. National Highways predicts that up to four sections of the network will still be in breach in 2030.

Government does not clearly and consistently communicate air quality issues or its proposed solutions to the public. It publishes many sets of air quality data and air quality reports, but most are inaccessible to the public.

People cannot easily find out about air quality problems in their local area, whether pollution levels breach legal limits, and what progress their local authority is making on tackling those problems.

Public communications campaigns about Clean Air Zones do not appear to have been fully effective. JAQU recognises the need for effective public engagement to address potential political and public opposition to charging in Clean Air Zones and other clean air measures.

It decided that local authorities should lead on communicating with people and businesses in their area. However, independent evaluations of local communications campaigns showed mixed results. Some of the local authorities the NAO spoke to raised concerns about the lack of a coordinated national communications campaign on NO₂ emissions.

The NAO recommends that Defra, DfT and JAQU should review and clarify milestones for the Programme, taking into account delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Defra should also improve the accessibility of air quality information for the public.

Gareth Davies, the head of the NAO, said:

“Government has made progress with tackling illegal levels of nitrogen dioxide air pollution, but not as fast as expected. There are also concerns about the health risks from particulate matter, which government is finding challenging to tackle. To meet all its 2030 targets for major air pollutants, government will need to develop robust solutions quickly.

“The public need clear information to understand why clean air measures are important and what the measures will mean in their area. Those living in the worst-affected areas ought to be able to find out when and how their air quality is likely to improve.”

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



National Audit Office

Improving the UK's science capability for managing animal diseases

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) has allowed facilities at the UK's primary site for managing threats from animal diseases to deteriorate. As it transforms the site, Defra will need to manage several risks. Failure to do so could limit the UK's ability to respond effectively to a major disease outbreak, according to the National Audit Office (NAO).

Animal diseases have major impacts on the UK, as demonstrated by outbreaks such as Foot and Mouth disease and Avian Influenza. Defra leads government policy on animal health in England and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) is responsible for investigating and responding to emerging animal disease outbreaks. APHA also undertakes long-term research into animal diseases and supports trade in plants, animals and associated products.

APHA's Weybridge site (Weybridge) is the UK's primary centre for managing threats from animal diseases, but its condition has been allowed to deteriorate to a point where some facilities are not fit for purpose. Ageing buildings need major repair and replacement, and a lack of laboratory capacity is negatively affecting APHA's work. Defra estimated in 2019 that the ongoing decline of Weybridge could lead to a total loss of capability within the next five to 10 years. This would leave the UK vulnerable to future animal disease outbreaks.

Defra has under-invested in Weybridge, and the current short-term 'patch and repair' approach is not sustainable. Investment to update facilities at Weybridge largely stopped following the 2008 financial crisis. There is also a large maintenance backlog. An estimated £197 million of investment between 2020 and 2025 is required to maintain the site. For the 11 years from 2025-26, Defra expects its critical works programme to cost, on average, around £80 million a year.

Defra took several years to set up the Science Capability in Animal Health programme (the Programme), which will involve a major transformation of Weybridge. This includes constructing a new science laboratory hub, upgrading infrastructure, and transforming the way the site operates. Defra identified the need for substantial investment in urgent maintenance in 2015 but carrying out this maintenance highlighted that significantly more work was required. The Programme Business Case was agreed by HM Treasury in November 2021.

Defra estimates that the Programme will cost £2.8 billion. The Department initially estimated that £1.2 billion would be needed but increased the figure in its 2021 business case after carrying out more detailed cost estimates and widening the Programme's scope. While the latest estimate reflects the risks in the Programme better, there remains substantial uncertainty around costs, as would be expected in a programme at this early stage.

HM Treasury has approved funding of £1.2 billion, but has not formally agreed to fund the Programme at the revised cost estimate of £2.8 billion. Failure to secure sufficient funding would limit the benefits of the Programme. HM Treasury will scrutinise the next stage of the Programme Business Case in June 2024. Following this, Defra will begin procuring the main

construction contracts, and expects the main construction work to start in 2027.

Defra has made efforts to learn from similar programmes and projects. For example, engaging with other departments, developing a network of contacts with experience of major projects, and learning from similar international sites. Defra has also made good progress in establishing governance structures within the Programme, including a clear board structure with regular reporting from programme workstreams.

The Programme is high risk due to a range of factors, including the specialist nature of the construction work that is required and the complexity of managing the Programme while maintaining the business-as-usual operations of APHA. Defra has put in place processes to manage the Programme's risks but needs to do more to integrate this with risk management across the entire Weybridge site.

The NAO has identified four risks that Defra will need to manage during the Programme's planning phase, which runs to 2024:

- **Setting unrealistic costs and schedule estimates.** Best practice is to express estimates at this early stage as a range, but Defra has used single point estimates in its 2021 business case. This could lead to unrealistic expectations among stakeholders and decision-making being dominated by fixed completion dates.
- **Not having the right staff.** Failure to recruit the necessary skills (such as specialist technical and engineering skills) could impact on the delivery of the Programme and increase costs.
- **Ineffective arrangements with contractors.** Failure to ensure contractors are working together with appropriate delivery incentives could result in higher programme costs.
- **Ineffective management of dependencies.** For example, it will be important to manage dependencies between the construction elements of the Programme and the transformation elements.

The NAO recommends that Defra prioritises producing a strategy for the long-term management of Weybridge within the next year. Defra should also demonstrate that it is continuing to learn lessons from across government and is ensuring that contractual incentives are targeted at reducing costs and delivering the Programme to schedule.

Gareth Davies, the head of the NAO, said:

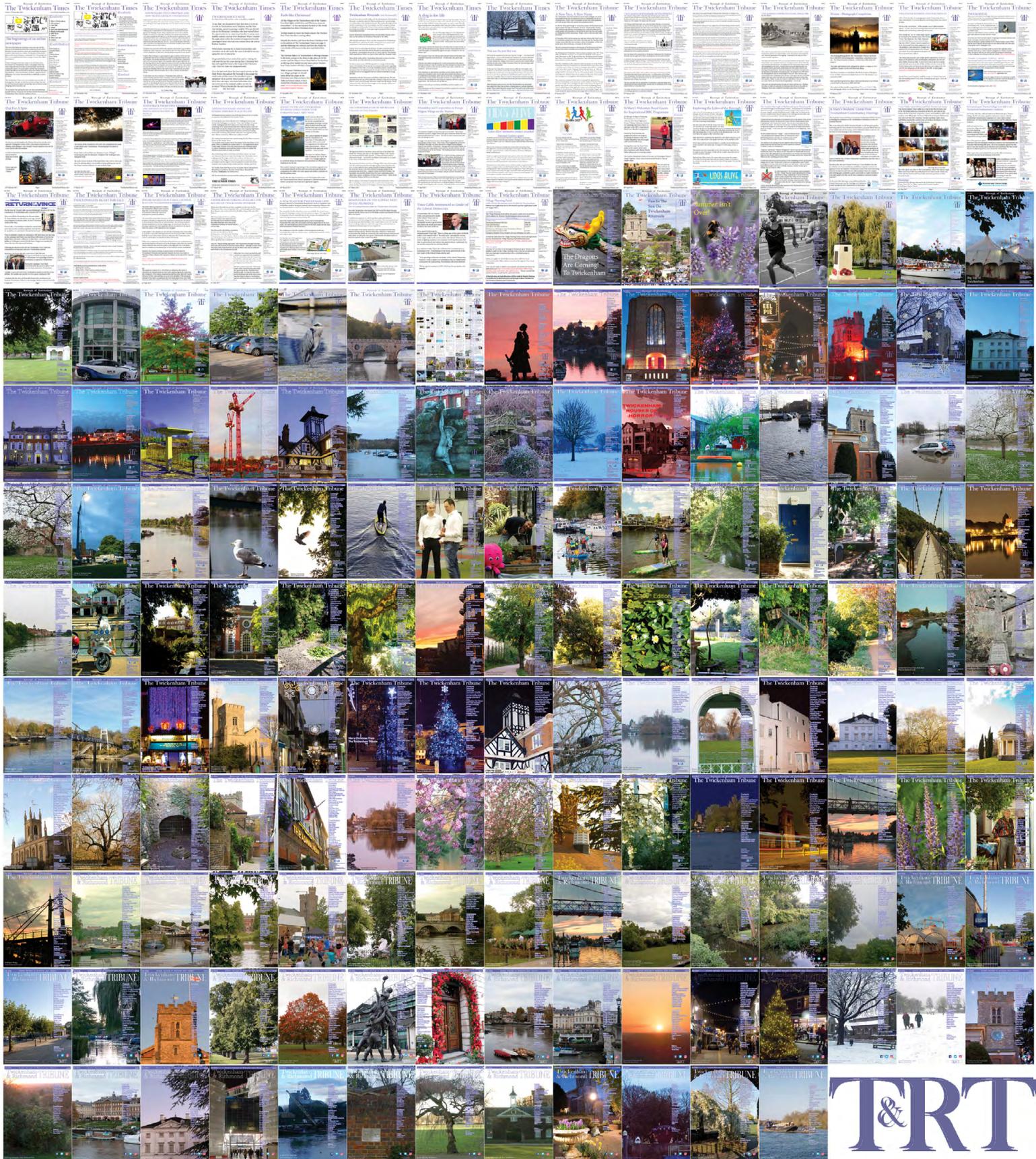
“Defra has allowed the Weybridge site to deteriorate to a point where major redevelopment is now urgently required. Considering the site's importance to the UK, it has taken Defra a long time to set up a programme to redevelop it. The Department has recently put in place many of the right measures to manage the redevelopment successfully, but it will need to navigate many risks to deliver a site that can protect the UK against animal disease outbreaks and demonstrate value for taxpayers.”

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



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