

# Twickenham & Richmond TRIBUNE

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## Editors

Berkley Driscoll  
Teresa Read



27<sup>th</sup> January 2023

T&RT

# TickerTape - News in Brief

## Travel

### National rail strikes - South Western Railway

National rail strikes are planned on Wednesday 1 and Friday 3 February.

- TfL services will run as usual during these strikes
- Some of our services may be busier than usual

South Western Railway intend to run a full service on the mainland on Wednesday 1 and Friday 3 February. Train drivers at other operators will be involved in the strike action, meaning some connections with SWR services may be affected or may not run at all.

Given the impact of the wider ASLEF strike, SWR may experience difficulty getting colleagues and trains to where they need to be, resulting in some short notice delays and cancellations, particularly if there is disruption.

For more information, see the [National Rail website](#).

### Bus strikes

There are strikes on Abellio bus services. On strike days, we will aim to run as many services as possible, but we expect disruption.

There are bus strikes on these dates:

- Wednesday 1 - Friday 3 February

### London Overground

Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 January

No service between Richmond and Camden Road (via West Hampstead)

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# Covid 19

Teresa Read

## IN THE NEWS THIS WEEK

**Reuters:** Omicron sub-variant XBB.1.5 accounts for 61.3% of U.S. cases

**Health Policy Watch:** WHO Experts Confer on Possible End to COVID International Health Emergency

**Thai PBS World:** Thailand reports 30% drop in COVID admissions and deaths last week

**World Health Organization:** Africa emerges from holiday travel season with low number of COVID-19 cases

**The Mainichi:** COVID cases across Japan drop drastically from previous week; influenza spreading

## World Health Organization

Weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19 - 25 January 2023

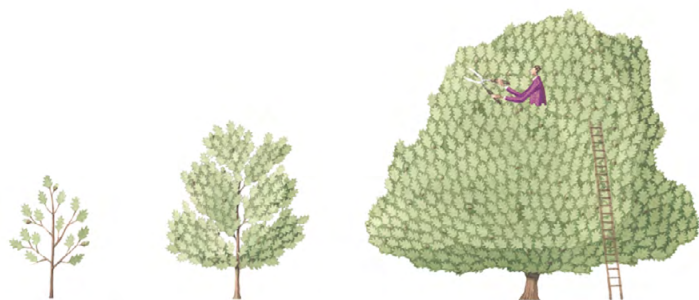
Data as of 22 January 2023

## European Region

The European Region reported over 264,000 new cases, a 33% decrease as compared to the previous week. Two (3%) of the 61 countries for which data are available reported increases in new cases of 20% or greater: the Russian Federation (37,544 vs 29,631 new cases; +27%) and the Republic of Moldova (382 vs 302 new cases; +26%).

The highest numbers of new cases were reported from Germany (57,439 new cases; 69.1 new cases per 100,000; -36%), the Russian Federation (37,544 new cases; 25.7 new cases per 100,000; +27%), and Italy (34,742 new cases; 58.3 new cases per 100,000; -56%).

The number of new weekly deaths in the region decreased by 42% as compared to the previous week, with 2,546 new deaths reported. The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from Spain (424 new deaths; <1 new death per 100,000; +21%), France (373 new deaths; <1 new death per 100,000; -31%), and Italy (330 new deaths; <1 new death per 100,000; -47%).



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*The Tree Agency*



# The Royal Gardens of Kew

By Simon Fowler

Kew Gardens has been delighting visitors for over 250 years. Here's an account from a guidebook published in 1792.

These gardens contain nearly one hundred and twenty acres; and though originally dead flat, being forced by art, at a very considerable expense, now exhibit a great variety of beautiful scenery. The palace stands on the north side of the gardens; it is a low neat building, and though not magnificent, serves as a temporary retirement for their Majesties, and the royal family.



Beyond a spacious lawn, on the south front, in view from this mansion, is a handsome piece of water; the banks of which are ornamented by shrubberies and other woody scenery. These gardens are between two and three miles in circumference; are adorned by a variety of temples and other buildings, chiefly in the Chinese and Turkish style of architecture, after the designs of Sir William Chambers, and some others. The most conspicuous of these is the Pagoda, which stands on a delightful spot near the south side of the gardens, and is intended to imitate a Chinese Tower. This edifice is built on a regular octagon base, forty-nine feet in diameter: the superstructure is of the same form, ten storeys high, regularly diminishing in height and breadth, each having a projecting roof, round which is a gallery enclosed by a rail; the whole making one hundred and sixty-three feet in height. The stairs which lead to the different storeys are in the centre of the building.

The botanic gardens at Kew, were first formed by her Royal Highness the late Princess Dowager of Wales, in 1760; chiefly under the direction of the Earl of Bute and, in a short space of time, very considerable progress was made in collecting and propagating plants. After the death of her Royal Highness, descending to their present Majesties, they have, under their auspices, been brought to a degree of perfection far exceeding any other of the kind in the universe.

Kew Gardens, are supposed to contain above five thousand different species of plants (among which are many of the most rare from every part of the known world); a number which nothing but the most unremitting assiduity, combined with the most unbounded liberality, could produce in so short a period. They are kept in the most perfect order; have been conducted, from their first formation, under the sole management of Mr. William Aiton, botanic gardener to his Majesty; to whom, as a professional man, they do infinite credit; as may be seen by a catalogue of the plants cultivated in Kew gardens, in three volumes large octavo, entitled *Hortus Kewensis*, lately published by him.

Taken from Archibald Robertson, *A Topographical Survey of the Great Road From London to Bath and Bristol* (1792)

# Hampton North Ward

Councillor Geoffrey Samuel

## Visit to Abellio- Extended Report

On 11th January Nicholas Rogers, our GLA member, and I visited The Twickenham Depot and the Control Centre.

**Electric Buses** There are currently two in service on the 111 route: a further six expected by the end of January and all 30 buses should be electric by the end of 2023. We alighted one of them: it has facilities for mobile phones and a partially glass roof which makes the top deck attractively bright. One word of warning: as I know from my experience the battery charge lasts for a shorter period in weather that is either especially hot or cold. During the running in period I think we can expect that some buses will have to return –perhaps mid-journey – to the garage to obtain a ‘refill’. New technology has teething problems!

**Staff.** The establishment of over 400 drivers for the Twickenham Depot is some 95 short with some – not all – of the vacancies filled by Agency drivers. Negotiations on pay opened unusually early in September. The pay offer which was rejected [and strikes called] was for an increase of 12 1/2 percent which would have taken the annual wage for an experienced driver to £40,000

**Route problems.** In the Control Centre we observed the screen which allowed each operative to follow the progress of each individual bus. Some of the problems experienced by passengers are caused by traffic issues, for example a few days before our visit ,buses on the 111 route which passes through three separate Boroughs, Richmond, Hounslow and Kingston, encountered five unexpected sets of emergency traffic lights, none of which was notified to Abellio. Residents in Acacia Road at times rightly complain that a bus deviates from its prescribed route and passes through this road. We saw photos of parked cars which were such an obstruction that the bus was not able to follow its proper route. I have asked the Council for a modest extension of double yellow lines.

**The Future.** I did see a real commitment to service that also acknowledges the problems that exist. The training courses for drivers are usually full but too many drivers resign after a few months – often because of a dislike of shift work. I will continue to follow up every issue reported to me.

**Apologies** – because of the length of the Abellio report there is no room for a number of news items.

## RECYCLING CENTRE – on Hampton Square.

The Council has at last agreed to provide the CCTV which we have been requesting for so many months. Let me know if the situation does not improve.

## COUNCIL QUESTIONS

In response to local concerns I raised two questions about crime at the December meeting. In reply the Council welcomed the increase in police numbers and will consider my request for a leaflet explaining how best to prevent crime. On Tuesday I raised the problems of gullies – raised with me by so many residents - and the revenue obtained from the Burtons Road camera. Answers in the next edition!

### **BURTONS ROAD SCHEME.**

At a recent meeting of the Transport Committee the Council has now made the scheme permanent. However they did agree to offer 'exemptions' for residents in **Graham Road, Longford Close, Ringwood Way and Winifred Road** for which I have long campaigned. I am disappointed that they have demanded payment for three very recent inadvertent infringements by an elderly lady who, as an act of kindness, has been transporting an elderly Burtons Road resident reliant on pension credit.

### **THE WHITE HOUSE**

Sadly, still no decision. However the YMCA, which for years managed The White House so well but is now little more than a Caretaker is now reporting more activities: Zumba Mondays 6:30 to 7:30: Seated Exercise to Music Wednesdays 12-12:45: Community Bowls Wednesday 2-4: Flourish Yoga Wednesdays 7:30 to 8:30: Ballroom Dancing – several times on Tuesdays from 7th February. Further details [info.whitehouse@ymcaspg.org](mailto:info.whitehouse@ymcaspg.org). Well done the YMCA!

### **PORTALOO on HAMPTON GREEN**

With my support the Council made provision for a football pitch but without any toilet facilities. After I passed on strong objections from residents who would overlook the suggested portaloos the Council then proposed a toilet in the unused ambulance garage. I will agree to this only if residents are consulted – and agree. The local report that recently the garage has been left unlocked – with inevitable consequences – is not encouraging.

### **RHP**

I have been in constant touch on behalf of a disabled tenant left without a functioning boiler for nearly ten weeks. Sadly this is not the only case of this kind

*I will continue to follow up every case reported to me on [gjshn@btinternet.com](mailto:gjshn@btinternet.com) and will forward your exact message unless you instruct me to the contrary.*

Dear Sir

## ULEZ

I was shocked to see Councillor Gareth Roberts on the early evening news this week talking about the ridiculously draconian ULEZ restrictions that our megalomaniac mayor is proposing inflicting on us all.

What horrified me was that he said that the council has already signed up to it!

Surely something as important to the local community should be the subject of some kind of consultation with us, the ratepayers, who are all paying his wages?

It's bad enough already with the 20 mph speed, limit but to force folk who can't afford to buy new cars to have to pay this levy is incredibly cruel.

And it will, no doubt, force even more of our small independent businesses to close. Just what we don't need!

Yours faithfully

Long term Twickenham Resident, North Twickenham (Name and address supplied)

# RYSO

## Richmond Youth Screen Orchestra

with guest musicians from the Countess of Wessex's String Orchestra

RICHMOND  
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Saturday 18.02.23  
1000-1700

Duke Street Church  
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Richmond  
TW9 1DH

£15 per participant

Featuring music from some of the best known film, TV and gaming soundtracks

Join us for a day of orchestral playing, ending with an informal concert to parents at 1630. This is the perfect opportunity to try out our new senior orchestra, which will run weekly from late Spring 23. Suitable for those in Years 6-13. RYSO is open to players of any orchestral instrument, including percussion, grade 4 and above. No audition required. For further information please contact [bethanycalder@richmondmusictrust.org.uk](mailto:bethanycalder@richmondmusictrust.org.uk)

[www.richmondmusictrust.org.uk/site/ensembles-and-courses/richmond-youth-screen-orchestra-ryso/](http://www.richmondmusictrust.org.uk/site/ensembles-and-courses/richmond-youth-screen-orchestra-ryso/)

# Residents invited to community potluck in Teddington

Teddington residents are encouraged to take part in 'Bring a Dish' event to build connections with the community.

Bring A Dish is a chance to share your favourite dish with your neighbours and discover new flavours to take home with you. The event is designed to give residents the opportunity to socialise with new people and one of the ways we are exploring new ways for all residents to feel a sense of belonging.

We want our borough to be a happy and welcoming place where the local community can flourish, and no one feels alone. That's why everyone is welcome. You do not need to bring any food, but if you do, please make sure it is ready to be served and labelled with a list of all the ingredients – there will be a microwave provided. If you have a food allergy, we encourage you to exercise caution as we cannot guarantee the production process.



## Event details

- **Date:** Saturday 11 February 2023
- **Time:** 12 to 2pm
- **Location:** United Response, Rowan House, Ground Floor, Field Ln, Teddington TW11 9BP

This is a free event and you do not need to register, so feel free to drop in at any time.

If you have any questions, please email [communityconversations@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:communityconversations@richmond.gov.uk).

# Elleray Hall Construction Community Briefing

There will be the first briefing session on the Elleray Hall Construction project, which will take place at Teddington Methodist Church Hall next Tuesday 31st Jan starting at 12.00 when the contractor will introduce themselves and the archaeologists will give a presentation about the works they will be carrying out.

Letters will be sent out.





# A Downside of Electric Vehicles

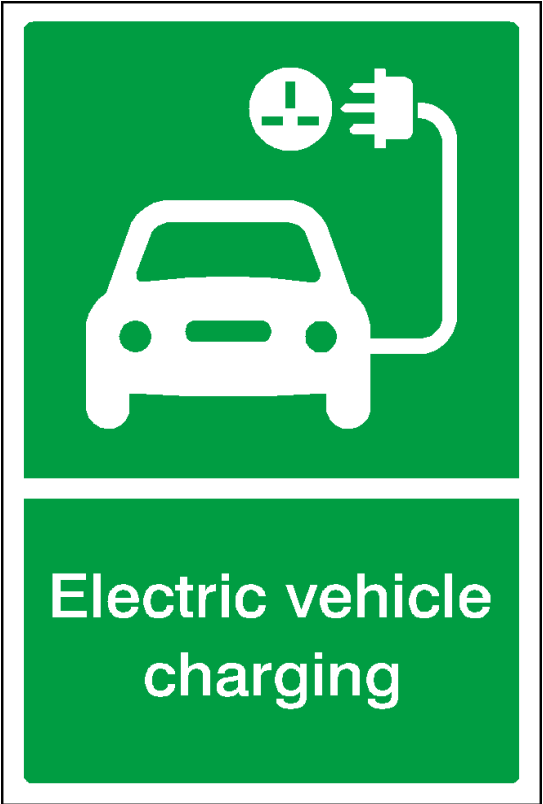
By Teresa Read

This week there has been concern about the extension of ULEZ into the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and the coercion to use electric vehicles with a £12.50 charge a day for using petrol driven vehicles.

We should also be aware of the downside of vehicles that use lithium batteries, not only problems such as disposal but how lithium extraction impacts on people in other parts of the world.

Many of us will already be aware of concern about cobalt mining, used in lithium batteries, by organizations such as Amnesty International and the European Parliament. For instance, it has been reported that child labour is used in the dangerous mining of cobalt in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) a large cobalt producer, supplying a Chinese company. An extract from a European Parliament report states that “children as young as four are forced to slave for 12 hours a day in Congo ‘horror mines’ extracting cobalt”.

A report by Friends of the Earth reminds us that “lithium extraction inevitably harms the soil and causes air contamination. As demand rises, the mining impacts are increasingly affecting communities where this harmful extraction takes place, jeopardising their access to water.”



## Looking for your local Richmond Neighbourhood Policing Team?

<b>Barnes</b> Barnes@met.police.uk 0207 161 8042 @MPSBarnes		<b>East Sheen</b> EastSheen@met.police.uk 0207 161 9562 @MPSEastSheen		<b>Fullwell &amp; Hampton Hill</b> FulwellandHamptonHill@met.police.uk 0208 721 2911 @MPSFulwell		<b>Ham &amp; Petersham</b> HamandPetersham@met.police.uk 0208 247 7074 @MPSHamPetersham	
<b>Hampton</b> Hampton@met.police.uk 0776 817 8523 @MPSHampton	<b>Hampton North</b> HamptonNorth@met.police.uk 0207 161 9158 @MPSHamptonNorth	<b>Hampton Wick</b> HamptonWick@met.police.uk 0208 247 3847 @MPSHamptonWick	<b>Heathfield</b> Heathfield@met.police.uk 0208 247 7185 @MPSHeathfield	<b>Kew</b> Kew@met.police.uk 0208 721 2930 @MPSKew	<b>Mortlake &amp; Barnes</b> MortlakeandBarnes@met.police.uk 0207 161 8041 @MPSMortlake	<b>North Richmond</b> NorthRichmond@met.police.uk 07879 433 390 @MPSNthRichmond	
<b>South Richmond</b> SouthRichmond@met.police.uk 07843 291 152 @MPSSthRichmond	<b>South Twickenham</b> SouthTwickenham@met.police.uk 0208 247 7015 @MPSSTwickenham	<b>St. Margaret's</b> StMargarets@met.police.uk 0208 247 7142 @MPSStMargarets	<b>Twickenham Riverside</b> TwickenhamRiverside@met.police.uk 0208 247 7055 @MPSTwickenham	<b>Teddington</b> Teddington@met.police.uk 07768 178 924 @MPSTeddington	<b>West Twickenham</b> WestTwickenham@met.police.uk 0208 247 7017 @MPSWTwickenham	<b>Whitton</b> Whitton@met.police.uk 0208 247 7032 @MPSWhitton	



Richmond

# Richmond Council rolls out food recycling to more homes

Richmond Council is continuing to roll out its food waste recycling scheme to properties in the borough with communal waste and recycling facilities. A further 3,300 properties will receive food waste collections by the end of March 2023.

Councillor Julia Neden-Watts, Chair of the Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Committee said:

“Tackling food waste is important for the environment and we are pleased that more homes will now be able to access the recycling service.

“In the borough of Richmond upon Thames, an estimated average of 153kg of food is wasted by each household every year. Producing all this food waste generates around 48,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions.

“The food waste recycling service is a key element in tackling the problem of food products going into general waste bins. Clearly, it’s best if residents can purchase the food they need and eat it up rather than throw it away, using any leftovers in other meals. And

for some things like raw vegetable peelings, home composting can be a good option, if there is space. Otherwise, using the food recycling service is a simple habit to adopt to keep food out of general waste bins and reduce carbon emissions associated with managing this waste.”

Residents who are yet to receive this service can reduce and recycle their food waste in various ways; communal home composting, properly storing food to maximise freshness and using a meal planner.

More tips can be found on the [Love Food Hate Waste website](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/love-food-hate-waste).

Residents will be notified if they are part of the current roll out by the end of March 2023.

Kitchen caddies, a leaflet and a free starter roll of compostable liners will be delivered to every household covered by this roll out. Further premises will start receiving this service later in 2023.

If you would like to find out if your flats are suitable for the new collection service, please contact [foodrecycling@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:foodrecycling@richmond.gov.uk).



# The Poppy Factory

Museum of Richmond



We have more Curator's tours planned for February on The Poppy Factory, every Thursday at 2pm.

No need to book – just head to the Museum's reception.

Tours last 20-30 minutes.

[www.museumofrichmond.com](http://www.museumofrichmond.com)



MUSEUM of  
RICHMOND

## KEW THE MUSIC 2023

SERIES OF SUMMER PICNIC CONCERTS SET IN KEW GARDENS, LONDON

Kew The Music has announced its first shows for 2023, which will feature headline performances from Jack Savoretti, The Human League, Haçienda Classical, and Jools Holland & His Rhythm & Blues Orchestra.

Further acts will be announced in due course for the renowned annual week-long festival of picnic concerts set in the stunning Kew Gardens, a UNESCO World Heritage site in South West London.

Having established itself as one of the most spectacular summer concert venues in the UK, the shows have proved to be a hit amongst all generations of music lovers, hosting the perfect evening out for all the family to enjoy. Guests are welcome to bring their own food and drink, or to enjoy the open-air bars and street food stalls.

English-Italian singer-songwriter Jack Savoretti will headline Kew the Music on 13th July, performing songs from his consecutive No.1 albums 'Singing to Strangers', and the summer-soundtracking 'Europiana'.

One of the most influential avant-garde pop groups of all time, The Human League, bring their musical and cultural explosion to London as they headline on 14th July, performing hits to Kew such as 'Don't You Want Me', 'Love Action (I Believe In Love)', and 'Together In Electric Dreams', culture-defining songs that saw them become Synth-Pop's first international superstars.

Haçienda Classical will bring to life the sounds of the legendary Manchester Haçienda Club, with an orchestrated twist on 15th July, revisiting the biggest tracks of the era with new arrangements. The show features a set played as a continuous live DJ mix, where vocalists, choir, orchestra and guests all combine to create a vibrant, exciting performance.

Jools Holland & His Rhythm & Blues Orchestra perform on 16th July, featuring Jools' long-time drummer with Squeeze & others, Gilson Lavis, and starring special guests Pauline Black and Arthur 'Gaps' from The Selecter. The show will also feature guest vocalists Ruby Turner, Louise Marshall, and Sumudu Jayatilaka.

Tickets Available from: [KewTheMusic.org](http://KewTheMusic.org)



## VEGANUARY ROUND UP

I suppose it's sensible of those who decided to run Veganuary at the start of the year. Not least because there isn't another month that trips off the tongue in the same way. It's also a month when many of us are trying to eat healthily after the excesses of the festive season, and there certainly seems to have been a great deal of Veganuary activity on social media and an interesting range of new vegan products. Here are a few products that I've checked out for you - even if you're not vegan, they are pretty delicious!

**Odysea** is a fine food producer, specialising in sourcing products from Greece and the Mediterranean. I love this company, and have yet to be disappointed by anything it produces. It recently launched a new range of meze products and dips and it's worth a special trip to Sainsbury's to stock up. (by far the best range) Many of them are, in fact, vegan, without necessarily promoting this on the packaging. The Aubergine Meze, the piquant Spicy Ajvar, and the Harissa Houmous at £2.75 for a 220g jar are great value and delicious. And being ambient, are great store cupboard reserves (if you can resist opening them!) Also available from the Odysea website [here](#)



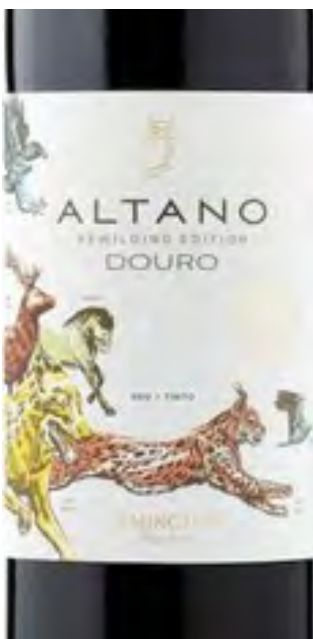
**Heura** is the next generation of plant-based meat alternatives – with products that are good for you and the planet. Heura embodies the Mediterranean lifestyle, using olive oil to create a range of surprising tasty products. I loved the chorizo burgers and the sausages, and the Mediterranean 'Chick'n Pieces' made a very tasty stir fry. And at around £3 a pack, available from Waitrose and [Ocado](#), they're good value too.

**Biotiful** has just launched the UK's first plant-based kefir. Kefir set to be one of the big food & drink [trends](#) next year, and I'm really impressed with the dairy free [products](#) from [Biotiful](#). This cultured oat-based drink is fermented with billions of vegan kefir cultures, added vitamins, calcium and no sugar added. As a non-vegan, I wouldn't have known that it was plant based - the whole range of yogurts and drinks and protein pots are delicious and packed with all sorts of extra goodness. Widely available and sensibly priced, from around £1.25, at most major supermarkets.



**Tropical Sun Jackfruit** is now available in ready-to-serve recipes: BBQ; Tex Mex and Thai Green Curry. These tasty meat alternatives are ideal for making a quick, tasty meal and are great as a cupboard standby. They're low carb, low calorie as well as vegan and free from any artificial nasties. Around £2.50 for an 800g can from [Asda](#)

I love a good kimchi or sauerkraut, and **Vadasz**, the gut-friendly condiment brand, has just this month launched new **Pineapple and Turmeric Sauerkraut**. This crunchy, tangy and sweet condiment is made from natural ingredients, rich in fibre and vitamin C. I'm told that Pineapple and Turmeric Sauerkraut is a posh, modern interpretation of Piccalilli, boasting the health benefits of pineapple and turmeric with the gut-health benefits of fast-growing, on-trend sauerkraut; naturally fermented for extra gut-ness. Available in selected [Waitrose](#) stores at £4.75 for a 400g pot.



Because vegan wines are usually organic and devoid of additives, preservatives, and artificial ingredients, they usually taste richer, more vibrant, and fresher than regular wine. They are not often very obviously marked, so it's definitely worth checking the label. We particularly enjoyed this **Altano Rewilding Edition Red** at £10 a bottle from [Tesco](#). It has defined, vibrant aromas of red fruits, with floral notes that express the Mediterranean vegetation of the Alto Douro.

**Laderach** has recently launched some excellent vegan chocolate. Made with cashew milk and coconut blossom and preservative free, the range includes vegan tablet bars, vegan chocolate-covered popcorn and also FrischSchoggi™ (the



brand's signature fresh chocolate slabs), to supplement other dark chocolate, dairy-free products Läderach also offers. Available in all three London stores as well as on [Laderach.com](#)

## THE FAT BADGER, THE FARM SHOP NOW OPEN IN RICHMOND



The front part of The Fat Badger restaurant on Hill Rise in Richmond is now a lovely farm shop! The Gladwin Brothers have transformed it into a Local & Wild cornucopia, bursting with fresh seasonal produce. There's fruit and veg, artisanal breads, homemade ready meals, cakes, dry goods such as British quinoa and fava beans, coffee, plus a meat and fish counter displaying daily specials from local farms and coastlines. The prices are pretty reasonable too. It's open from 8am and well worth a visit.



Comoros is located in the Indian Ocean off the coasts of East Africa and Madagascar. Consisting of four main islands Comoros is classified as a Small Island Developing State, one of thirty-eight UN member SIDS.

SIDS are said to contribute less than one percent of global greenhouse gas emissions but these small islands are very much affected by climate change, exposed to rising sea-levels and water and food security.



A large dhow with lateen sail rigs

Protected areas in the Comoros archipelago include Moheli National Park, the Coelacanth National Park, the Mitsamiouli Ndroude National Park and Karthala National Park.

Comoros is known as the “Perfumed Islands” as it has traditionally produced large quantities of ylang ylang and vanilla, ingredients used in perfume manufacture.

Areas of the archipelago have been identified as an Important Bird Area supporting large numbers of birds including a colony of Sooty Terns.



Lake Dzialandze, Anjouan, Comoros



Sooty Tern

More information on Comoros: <https://worldinfozone.com/country.php?country=Comoros>

# ARE YOU TOO SERIOUS?

By Deep Patel

One of my favourite sayings is “you gotta have a laugh”.

In fact, those of you who have been into my shop would have heard me sporadically saying this phrase, usually at very irrelevant and probably inappropriate times, none the less, needless to say, I say it very often. Quite often I am told by customers in my shop that if I really “wanna have a laugh”, all I need to do is to look in the mirror...charming. In all seriousness, do we really have to have a laugh, or should life be more serious? The aim of this very article will be to answer this very question (hopefully).



We all have down days, or down weeks/months (or even years in some cases) but never forget, that after every dark night, the sun always rises again...things...will... get...better. So why the majority of us spend 70% of our lives worrying about things that probably aren't even as important as the importance we give them? Well its human nature some might say? I mean, you only have to look at the newspapers (not this one of course) to see that 80% of what we read is somehow warning us, or reporting on something “bad” that has happened to someone , or something, somewhere in the world... we are always somehow more interested in reading “bad news” than good news stories (don't act like you aren't too...we all are...in fact a few years ago a new newspaper launched that reported on 80% of the good news stores from the world...in went bankrupt after 6 weeks of launching).

Life can be hard, it is not without its challenges to say the least, there are often more downs than ups too along the way, but that doesn't mean we need to be so serious surely? In the words of George Orwell: “all of us are in the gutter, but some of us are looking up at the stars”. The cup can be half empty...or half full...the grass isn't greener on the other side, it's greener where you water it” ...

So in answer to my original question...do we really need to “have a laugh”? Absolutely we do. Laugh more and frown less, turn that frown upside down...why? Because life is too short, and no matter what difficulties you are facing, there is usually always someone worse off... so granted it isn't easy, but as we near the end of the first month of this new year 2023, do me one favour in the coming month, try to face each difficulty with a smile and don't take life too seriously. Life is for living...not worrying. Troubles come and go, but it is the way we choose to greet them that really matters...whether with tears...or laughter...the problems will still come and go...so why choose the tears, anxiety or stress? Instead smile more and remember there is always a bigger plan for us all, and all we have to do is keep trying with good intent to be the best humans we can be.... kind...caring....and loving towards all lives big and small. So in answer to my original question...yes...it's true...” you gotta have a laugh”...otherwise what is even the point in life? Laugh more...stress less...and always try and do your best.

Those who follow my articles know, what I am about to say about kindness to the little lives... but just in case you are a first time reader, I always like to share these little good-karma gems to celebrate kindness in all its forms, helping each other and all the life forms on this beautiful planet we call home...

As I always say, we are not the only inhabitants of this beautiful planet and there is a kind way for everything...If you have rodent issues, consider live capture traps where you can catch the rodents alive and release them in woodland or parkland areas far from homes. Try electronic high-frequency sound deterrents (check online for ones with good reviews and ones that are safe for your pets if you have any). Put empty jam jar lids filled with white vinegar all around areas where you don't want them to stop them without harming them (they HATE the smell of white vinegar). This also works for foxes, squirrels, mice and rabbits. Just picking up a slug off a pavement with a leaf and moving it over a wall counts as a good deed... choosing a kind way to stop ants (like talcum powder around where they come but not on them) counts as a good deed. Avoid sweeping/washing the garden patio too often to help save countless tiny almost invisible little lives that live there (particularly under large pots in the garden, hence I say gently lift the pots if you need to move them rather than dragging them to avoid crushing little lives). As I always say...the true key to our own happiness lies in the happiness of other life forms...until the next time...have a lovely week ahead and look after the smaller life forms and the universe will look after you.

For further tips, check out my Facebook page "Kind World". As always...Peace, love and good karma to all Xx

***Remember...***

***"Laugh more...***

***stress less...***

***and always try and***

***do your best" ....***





## *The Hollow*

by Agatha Christie

Richmond Shakespeare Society at the Mary Wallace Theatre, Twickenham until 28<sup>th</sup> January

Like most plays by the Queen of crime fiction, *The Hollow* is set in what one critic described as "Agatha Christie time". Rodney Figaro's magnificent set, complemented by the music and some of the costumes, nicely evokes the 1930s ambience with which Christie is generally associated, but other touches suggest the 1950s, when the play was first produced.

*The Hollow* takes place in the eponymous home of Lord and Lady Angketell. The couple are played by Geraint Thompson and a sparkling Frances Billington, who knows *exactly* what kind of play she is in and *exactly* how to play her character, an eccentric aristo with a flair for forgetfulness and a shrewd eye for the truth. Christie's servants are usually entertaining and the Angkatells' are no exception. James Phillips is suitably mordant as the butler and Asha Gill delightful as a star-struck maid; both have excellent comic timing.



Milly Newman plays the Angkatells' daughter Henrietta, and there are houseguests: John Cristow, a self-centred doctor, played with the right amount of disdain by Hugh Cox, and Gerda, and Cristow's subjugated wife, an excellent Katie Abbott. Edie Moles is the Monroesque Midge - "half an Angkatell" - a woman-child whom no one takes seriously, least of all the man she adores, Edward Angkatell, portrayed by a suave Luke Daxon. The obligatory unexpected guest is provided by Anna Piggott, channelling Lady Gaga as a vivacious Veronica Craye, a vampy actress whose entrances - and jewellery - light up the stage.

Then, surprise, surprise ... there is a murder (not quite solved by Mark Saunders and Graham Schafer's Inspector Colquhoun and Sergeant Penny), for although originally billed as a comedy thriller, *The Hollow* is of course a whodunit where what matters most are the performances of the victim and murderer. Despite Christie's somewhat ponderous script, the actors concerned are thoroughly convincing, especially the killer in the final scene when ... but *that* would be telling.

Read Louis Mazzini's review at [www.markaspen.com/2023/01/21/hollow](http://www.markaspen.com/2023/01/21/hollow)

Photography by Jessica Warrior



## *The Edge of Darkness*

by Brian Clemens

Teddington Theatre Club at the Hampton Hill Theatre until 28<sup>th</sup> January

Behind the oak panelling in *The Edge of Darkness* lie sinister doors, mysterious hallways and an intriguing bureau. The authenticity and atmosphere of this period piece, gas lamps lit accordingly, sets the audience up for a suspenseful Edwardian thriller. With moody lighting (Patrick Troughton) and tense haunting music (Jacob Taylor), there are moments of genuine horror.



Every character is under suspicion in this gothic yarn. Even the bawdy yet sensitive maid, Penny, who is played with light relief by a vibrant Lara Parker getting every detail right when waiting table, could be the one. When the Cranwells bring home their estranged daughter Emma who lost her memory three years ago, there is dark underlying doubt.



Hardy the handsome handyman, played beautifully by Paul Grimwood, is distinctly underhand. He often visits the bureau that holds so many keys to this tale of mystery and murder. As the key literally turns, we encounter the enticingly sinister Livago, in a play already full of such characters. Sharp suited, natural, Oliver Redpath's performance in this role is incisive and intelligent, a catalyst that reveals secret schemes, turning the plot around, and finally exposing the Cranwells.

Max Cranwell, played by Steven Peters, is sincere and thorough. He and his wife Laura, intelligently portrayed by Juanita Al-Dahhan, let out teasing glimpses that tell us things are not as they seem.

Meanwhile, the vulnerable Emma, played with convincing nervous energy by Julie Davis, lets herself unravel nicely. Her trances are genuinely unnerving.

Steve Taylor's clever direction brings full justice to this spiralling play. The stunning set designed by Wesley Henderson Roe, and splendid costumes by Mags Wrightson take us straight into the period. *The Edge of Darkness* leaves no detail spared, and no spine left untingled. See it if you dare.

Read Heather Moulson's review at [www.markaspen.com/2023/01/25/edge-dark-ttc](http://www.markaspen.com/2023/01/25/edge-dark-ttc)

Review by Heather Moulson  
Photography by Stephen Sitton



## Beauty and the Beast

by Loz Keal

Edmundians at Cheray Hall, Whitton until 28<sup>th</sup> January

Whitton's annual post-Christmas pantomime always provides cheer and enjoyment to all the family members of all ages. This year's *Beauty and the Beast* by local writer Loz Keal, reliably directed by Jackie Howting, includes large scale music numbers under the impeccable choreography of young Izabelle Sochanik-Oliver. An appropriate motto for the tight-knit company, opening number, *We are Family* picks up the pace, giving a glimpse of 'Wiz' Baker's feel-good musical arrangements to come.

Bright backdrops and a moving panorama, expertly painted by Becky Halden, transport us to the Beast's castle.



Glistening Theresa McCulloch transforms between beggar and sorcerer. Assisted by twin fairies (Ciara and Holly Nunn), spell-setting abounds, cast on the selfish Prince who transmutes with scary stage trickery from a handsome young man to a hulking creature in ripped tunic. With his powerful delivery and rich baritone singing, Terry Bedell's portrayal of the Beast, devastated by the curse, is magnificent.



The Beast is given a magical rose which acts as countdown to his ultimate loving redemption. Dave Young and Dave Breen's ingenious special effect, a concealed mechanical rose, rotates to lose one petal at a time.

Comic relief from the Beast's intimidating growls is provided by the delightful Dame Di (Marc Batten), who effortlessly interacts with the audience, donning many costumes (including fluorescent socks and boots).

The Beast's servants have also been cursed to become household tableware. The impressively fiery candlestick (Ciara McKernan-Wink), the napkins (James Kingsland and Tobi Sochanik-Oliver), the eye-catching sparkly cutlery (Lily Halden, Evie Nunn, Izabelle Sochanik-Oliver, Saoirse Kingsland) and salt and pepper (a seasoned performance by Evie Schaapveld) orchestrate the Beast's attempts to woo Beauty in an hilarious dinner scene. As our heroine Beauty, Savannah Swyer portrays kindness and goodness with ease. With her lovely singing voice and dancing, she is entirely natural in this part.

Then more stage trickery magically transforms the Beast back to the dashing Prince. The part returns to Emily Hill-Kelly, heartfelt warm emotion contrasting with her earlier sneering irritation.

With a large cast, wide-ranging in age, in a small space ingeniously turned into an expansive set, Edmundians produce a big show as the whole cast performs *Spice up Your Life* in a fun filled finale.

Read Alex Montague's review at [www.markaspen.com/2023/01/24/beauty-beast-edm](http://www.markaspen.com/2023/01/24/beauty-beast-edm)

Photography by Juliette Wait



## Little Dorrit

by David Hovatter after Charles Dickens

Questors Theatre at the Judi Dench Playhouse, Ealing until 28<sup>th</sup> January

The theme of *Little Dorrit* is money, the problems associated with having either too little or too much. It is a frequent theme of Dickens', perhaps because as a child he suffered the trauma of seeing his father taken into a debtor's prison. Dickens *Little Dorrit* is a hefty tome with a complex plot and abundance of rich characters, so any reimagining of the story would be no mean task. Questors' adaptation is the vision of the director David Hovatter who has created an intense piece of physical theatre with a versatile ensemble of sixteen players.



We are transported far away from the grim London streets of Amy Dorrit, to Edwardian Shimla in the northern Indian hills, replaced by Maya Dorrit, like Amy working as a seamstress for a pittance. But it is still the same little Dorrit, a kind, tender-hearted girl who cares for others and provides the support for her father, a Prince who has lost his fortune but not his airs and expectations.

In an English college, a history student, Arthur Clennam, bumps into a young Asian woman Maya Dorrit who is studying Dickens' novel. As the two shyly become friends, we find ourselves on a journey to India and watching a moving love story.

*Little Dorrit* satirises English society with its mannerisms, narrow-mindedness and snobbery, but David Hovatter's reimagining transfers the satire to India and colonial rule. Hence, the "pass the parcel" bureaucracy of the Department of Circumlocution in a comedic sequence, where the cast acts out the roundabout of buck-passing.

Part of the charm of this production is these effective music and movement sequences.

The set is minimal, a few chairs and eight vintage school desks. These are used frequently and effectively, as in the eye-catching opening sequence where the ensemble delivers cleverly choreographed movement.

This intense production shows a brave approach in interpreting a famous classic novel. If you have doubts about *Little Dorrit* being a successful piece of modern physical theatre, then simply go to see a captivating, beautifully acted and touching love story.



Read Steve Mackrell's review at [www.markaspen.com/2023/01/21/little-dorrit](http://www.markaspen.com/2023/01/21/little-dorrit), and Poppy Rose Jarvis' at [www.markaspen.com/2023/01/23/little-dorrit-prj](http://www.markaspen.com/2023/01/23/little-dorrit-prj)

Photography by Evelina Plonyte

## **Orchids 2023: Cameroon**



Back bigger and better than ever for 2023, Kew Gardens' much-loved [Orchid festival](#) returns to the Princess of Wales Conservatory from Saturday 4 February to Sunday 5 March 2023. Taking inspiration from the beauty and biodiversity of Cameroon, Orchids 2023 is a vibrant celebration

of colour to brighten up the winter months, and is the first time Kew's Orchid festival will celebrate an African nation. Entry included in Kew Gardens admission, with £1 tickets available for recipients of Universal Credit, Pension Credit and other legacy benefits. Time slots must be pre-booked in advance. [Orchids After Hours](#), featuring live performances, cocktails and cookery demonstrations run on Friday 10<sup>th</sup>, Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>, Friday 17<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February.

## **When Flowers Dream**



The perfect escape from grey winter days, *When Flowers Dream* by Pip & Pop showcases an eclectic, playful and immersive mix of vibrant artworks and a brand-new bespoke installation

created especially for Kew Gardens - an imaginary landscape brimming with foods of the future. Runs until 5 March 2023 in the Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art, entry included as part of Kew Gardens admission.

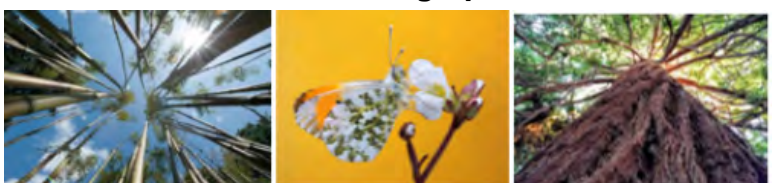
## **Horticultural Highlights**



Horticultural highlights on display this month at Kew include the spectacular Rock Garden, featuring early spring plants including snowdrops and narcissus. At Wakehurst, Kew's wild botanic

garden in Sussex, the Winter Garden is at its peak this season, with an array of colours and textures. Look out for delicate cyclamen popping up throughout the gardens.

## **International Garden Photographer of the Year**



Running at Kew Gardens from Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February to Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> March, the International Garden Photographer of the Year exhibition features a selection of winning photographs across categories including Beautiful Gardens,

The Beauty of Plants, Wildlife in the Garden and The World of Fungi, the exhibition takes place in Kew's stunning Arboretum. Winners of the Captured at Kew special award will also be on display, entry included in admission to Kew Gardens.

## **Kew Publishing Book of the Month: *Tell Me About Plants***



Did you know that some plants have been around since the time of the dinosaurs? Sit back, and let expert scientist and CBeebies writer Emily Dodd tell you all about plants with this brand-new title.

Complete with bite-sized text and easy-to-understand explanations, *Tell Me About Plants* is the perfect introduction for readers aged 4 and over.

# Book recommendations for Holocaust Memorial Day

Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January is an international day for remembering the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust, alongside the millions of other people killed under Nazi persecution of other groups and during more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

The Holocaust has been the subject of many fiction and non-fiction books, written by people who have experienced it and other authors.

Richmond upon Thames Library Service have selected a few books, suitable for a range of ages, to give readers an insight into these important periods in world history and the lives of the people who did and did not survive these genocides.

## Adult fiction books

- **The Lost Family by Jenna Blume** - a charming, funny, and elegantly bittersweet study of the repercussions of loss and love that spans a generation, from the 1960s to the 1980s. It is a vivid portrait of marriage, family, and the haunting grief of World War II.
- **The Yellow Birds Sings by Jennifer Rosner** - a powerfully gripping story about the unbreakable bond between parent and child and the triumph of humanity and hope in even the darkest circumstances.
- **The Tattooist of Auschwitz by Heather Morris** - inspired by an astonishing true story, the year is 1942, where Lale Sokolov arrives in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Lale is given the job of tattooing prisoners marked for survival, creating what would become one of the most potent symbols of the Holocaust. The story is a heartfelt tale of love born in darkness.
- **The Dressmaker of Dachau by Mary Chamberlain** - spanning the intense years of war, The Dressmaker of Dachau is a dramatic tale of love, conflict, betrayal, and survival. It is the compelling story of one young woman's resolve to endure and of the choices she must make at every turn - choices which will contain truths she must confront

## Adult non-fiction books

- **Forgotten Voices of the Holocaust by Lyn Smith** - a collection of interviews with Holocaust survivors. Even in this dark time of human history, tales of faith, love and courage can be found. As well as revealing the story of the Holocaust as directly experienced by victims, these testimonies also illustrate how, even enduring the harshest conditions, hope, the will to survive, and the human spirit still shine through.
- **The Escape Artist: The Man Who Broke Out of Auschwitz to Warn the World by Jonathan Freedland** - in April 1944, nineteen-year-old Rudolf Vrba and fellow inmate Fred Wetzler became the first Jews ever known to break out of Auschwitz. Under electrified fences

and past armed watchtowers, they trekked across marshlands, mountains and rivers to freedom. Vrba's mission: to reveal to the world the truth of the Holocaust.

- **When Time Stopped: a memoir of my father's war and what remains by Ariana Neumann** - spanning nearly ninety years and crossing oceans, When Time Stopped is a powerful and beautifully wrought memoir in which Ariana comes to know the family that has been lost - and, ultimately, her own beloved father.
- **House of Glass: The Story and Secrets of a Twentieth-Century Jewish Family by Hadley Freeman** - House of Glass details the lives of Hadley Freeman's grandmother and her siblings across the globe and through a turbulent twentieth century. Addressing themes of assimilation, identity, and home this powerful story of the past explores issues that are deeply relevant today.

### Children's books

- **Little People, Big Dreams: Anne Frank by Maria Isabel Sanchez Vegara** (Children's Non-fiction-6+) - discover the life of Anne Frank, the writer whose diary captured the hearts of the public, in this true story of her life
- **When The World Was Ours by Liz Kessler** (Teen-11+) - a powerful and heart-breaking story about three childhood friends living during the Second World War, whose fates are closely intertwined, even when their lives take very different courses.
- **Fritz and Kurt by Jeremy Dronfield** (Children's Non-fiction 9+) - in this extraordinary true story, Fritz and Kurt must face unimaginable hardships, and the two brothers wonder if they will ever return home.
- **Anna at War by Helen Peters** (Children's fiction 8+) - a brilliant and moving wartime adventure. Anna At War is a poignant story of Anna's flight from persecution to intrigue in the Kent countryside.



## John Bicourt RIP

St Mary's is saddened to learn of the passing of alumnus and former lecturer John Bicourt (1945-2023). John was a highly-regarded middle-distance athlete who competed at two Olympic Games in the Steeplechase, as well as his roles in academia and athletics governing bodies.



Former St Mary's Vice-Principal Emeritus Professor Richard Fisher has shared his reflections on John's life and career at St Mary's and the world of athletics:

*John Bicourt was a Physical Education student at St Mary's from 1967 to 1970 and later returned to St Mary's to lecture in Athletics. As a student he was already a good athlete but also showed abilities beyond just performing, once organising the British PE College's Cross Country Championships from the College. He taught in London in the 1970s not just PE but also O-Level and A-Level Sociology*

*John became a world class steeplechaser and remains one of our finest exponents of that event. Athletics Weekly pointed out that he still ranks 14th in the all-time British list for steeplechase and was regarded by all as a fine technician. He represented GB in the Olympic Games of 1972 in Munich and again in the 1976 Games in Montreal as well as running in the*

*1974 European Championships in Rome. In the Commonwealth Games that year he gained a highly creditable 4th place in a race won by the fine Kenyan athlete Ben Jipcho.*

*John then pioneered the evolution of athlete management setting up Athletes International Management in 1982, which he led until 2004 looking after athletes from a number of countries as well as Great Britain. He was also a founder member of the International Association of Athletes' Representatives (IAAR) and an elected board member.*

*John stood out as a coach, teacher, lecturer and advocate for athletics as well as a strident voice on the organisation, funding and future of the sport. Those whom he influenced and worked with attest to his commitment to excellence, his willingness to give time to athletes, both advising and supporting them, and his genuine love for the sport. He referred occasionally to his health issues but his rather sudden death from cancer came as something of a surprise.*

*St Mary's has had many outstanding endurance athletes over the years going back to Gordon Pirie competing the 1950s and 1960s and later a student, David Bedford in the 1970s and more recently Sir Mo Farah. John Bicourt was also one of St Mary's finest.*

*Emeritus Professor Richard Fisher*

Our thought and prayers are with John's family, friends, and members of the athletics world whom he supported through his career.

May John rest in peace.



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London



# SQUIRE'S PLANTS A TREE FOR QUEEN ELIZABETH II “With thanks for a lifetime of service”



Above from left: Sarah Squire (Chairman, Squire's Garden Centres) and (second from right) Julie Leatherdale (Centre Manager, Twickenham) with members of the Squire's Twickenham team.

Squire's Garden Centres in Twickenham has planted a special tree, Queen Elizabeth's Tree, in remembrance of Queen Elizabeth II, in a planting programme which took place at all its 16 centres across Surrey, Sussex, Berkshire, North and West London.

Following the passing of Her Majesty, each centre chose a British tree to plant in its centre as a way of marking the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, accompanied by a special dated commemorative plaque, titled 'Queen Elizabeth's Tree'. Sarah Squire, Chairman of Squire's Garden Centres, comments: "The planting of a British tree in each of our centres, is a small way of thanking our late Queen for her long and outstanding service to our nation. Each centre team selected a native tree that would be appropriate to be planted in their grounds and in a space that could be enjoyed for many years to come by our customers and future generations."

Julie Leatherdale, Centre Manager at Squire's Twickenham, comments: "We planted a Sorbus ('Vilmorinii') which we are sure will be a wonderful addition to Squire's Twickenham's outside area. We are sure it will be welcomed by our customers as a fitting tribute to Her Majesty as well as bringing much pleasure in years to come."

**SQUIRES**  
GARDEN CENTRES

# THE PERFECT VENUE



Our hall is a popular venue for birthday and anniversary parties, wakes, exhibitions, as well as regular classes and theatre rehearsals.

It is a modern building, with a kitchen, toilets and is wheelchair-friendly.



**TO FIND OUT MORE CONTACT THE  
CHURCH OFFICE ON 020 8941 6003**

# Frank and Raya nominated for Premier League awards

**Head coach Thomas Frank and goalkeeper David Raya have been recognised for their contributions in January; Brentford began 2023 with victories over Liverpool and Bournemouth and a draw with Leeds United**

Written by Brentford Football Club

Thomas Frank and David Raya have been shortlisted for Barclays Manager of the Month and EA Sports Player of the Month respectively.

The pair have been recognised for their contributions in January.

Brentford began the month with a memorable [3-1 win against Liverpool](#).

This was followed up with a [2-0 victory over Bournemouth](#) at the Gtech Community Stadium, and a [goalless draw with Leeds United](#) on Sunday 22 January.

Frank is on the Barclays Manager of the Month shortlist alongside Mikel Arteta (Arsenal), Steve Cooper (Nottingham Forest), Roberto De Zerbi (Brighton and Hove Albion) and Unai Emery (Aston Villa).

[Vote for Frank](#).

The Bees conceded just one goal in the Premier League in January and that was in part thanks to Raya, who made 11 saves.

Raya is the only goalkeeper on a seven-player shortlist.

Included alongside the Spanish stopper are Dan Burn (Newcastle United), Brennan Johnson (Nottingham Forest), Riyad Mahrez (Manchester City), Solly March (Brighton and Hove Albion), Marcus Rashford (Manchester United) and Bukayo Saka (Arsenal).

[Vote Raya for EA Sports Player of the Month](#).

Voting closes at **12pm** on **Monday 30 January**, with winners announced on **Friday 3 February**.



# RFU Statement Tackle Height

The RFU Board, Council and executive staff apologise for the anger and concern that has been created among the rugby community by announcing the decision to lower the tackle height from next season.

In our desire to act quickly to reduce head impacts and concussions in the community game, which represents 99% of the rugby playing population in England, we have upset many of you who are the champions, volunteers, and ambassadors of our game.

We fully acknowledge we got the engagement wrong, and we are truly sorry.

In making our decision we were aware that France have lowered the tackle height, New Zealand will be doing so and [World Rugby supports this approach](#).

We, like the French, used the term “waist and below”; this has caused misunderstanding and confusion.

We would now like the game to help us define how we describe a lower tackle height to reflect what the research is telling us in a way that is understood by all. Consequently, the risk of head injuries should be reduced if tackling below that optimum height.

We will now begin a series of forums and workshops with players, coaches, match officials and volunteers, to explain and develop the details of the domestic law variation.

A large body of scientific evidence\* demonstrates the risk of head injury and concussion for players can be reduced by lowering the tackle height to prevent head on head contact.

However, we also accept that the rugby community has other concerns that this change may bring and we need to listen, understand and respond to those concerns.

We will start inviting players, coaches, match officials and volunteers to these forums from early next week, so that we can all work together.

[\\*Rationale and evidence paper](#)

[\\*Tackle height science presentation](#)



# ENGLAND MEN'S U20 TO PLAY IN RETURNING WORLD RUGBY U20 CHAMPIONSHIP

England men's U20 will compete in the World Rugby U20 Championship, which returns for the first time since 2019 following COVID-forced cancellations.

The tournament features the world's top twelve U20 nations with the 2023 edition to be played in Cape Town and the Western Cape, South Africa from 24 June-14 July.

While England took part in the U20 Summer Series in Italy last year, the return of the World Rugby U20 Championship heralds further opportunity to develop the country's pathway players in another elite tournament.

Alan Dickens' side has been drawn in Pool B alongside Australia, Ireland and Fiji. The full match schedule can be found [here](#).

England has featured in the final of the World Rugby U20 Championship a record nine times, winning the tournament on three occasions.

The news comes ahead of the side's Under-20 Six Nations campaign, which kicks off against Scotland at Twickenham Stoop in just eight days' time on Friday, 3 February.

## **Speaking about the announcement, England men's U20 head coach, Alan Dickens said:**

"This is the first time since 2019 that we'll be able to play against all the world's best Under-20 nations and we're looking forward to that competitive test.

"Playing against top tier nations in a format similar to a Rugby World Cup across three weeks will provide a very valuable development experience for the players.

"Pulling on the England jersey is always an honour for these young men, and the World Rugby Under-20 Championship will be a particularly special highlight during their rugby journeys.

"While our attention is right now firmly focused on our Under-20 Six Nations opener against Scotland at the Stoop in eight days' time, we're also looking forward to getting out to South Africa and continuing to develop the squad."



# AS NATIONAL GRID ASKS FOR LIGHTS OUT BETWEEN 5PM-6PM LEADING ENERGY EXPERT REVEALS.....

HOW TO SAVE £110 ON YOUR ENERGY BILLS A MONTH - WITHOUT TURNING ANYTHING OFF.

BRITS are being urged to flick off the lights between 5pm and 6pm - to save energy and pocket £10. The National Grid's Demand Flexibility Service aims to combat energy usage during peak hours.

It will see people signed up to the scheme paid to boycott energy-guzzling appliances - all while reducing pressure on the grid during increasingly cold nights.

But the scheme has been criticised by some, saying it risks dragging the country back to the dark ages.

And one leading property expert today says Ministers and energy bosses would be better off encouraging households to be more energy efficient throughout the day - rather than for an hour.

Tom Cranenburgh, from Get An Offer, said: *"Asking millions of people to turn off devices at one of the busiest times of day is doomed to fail. But the good news is there are things you can do to save money and reduce the level of these crippling bills. By making a few small changes you can literally save hundreds of pounds."*

Offering his 17 top tips which add up to almost £1,500 a year in savings, [Tom](#) explains how it's done...

Boil what you need when you make a brew. Nothing more. Nothing less. By avoiding overfilling your kettle you could save £11 a year on your electricity bills.

Change the temperature on your thermostat by a couple of degrees. Experts say 19 degrees is about the norm in the UK. Some people do like their homes a bit warmer, but as a rule of thumb, every degree you turn your thermostat down you will save about £50 a year

Daytime energy costs can often be far higher. Although most energy suppliers charge the same rate for electricity used throughout the day, some electricity tariffs offer cheaper prices for off-peak electricity used at certain times during the evening and at night. Check with your provider. More timely energy-use could see you save up to £35-a-year.

Using an eco-function equals money saved. Turning your dishwasher onto the "eco setting" or "energy saving mode" could save £14 a month or £160 a year.

Aim to be in and out of the shower in four minutes. Taking a four-minute shower every day,

rather than the average eight minutes, can help save more than £100 over the course of a year.

Gaps inside the home can leave a huge hole in your finances. By draught-proofing windows, doors and blocking cracks in floors and skirting boards you can save around £45 a year on energy bills.

Have one less bath a week.. Swapping a shower for a bath once a week can help you to save around £12 a year, as long as you keep it short!

Invest in a smart meter. They will help you keep on top of your energy usage. Seeing your costs in real time can inspire the whole family to make adjustments. Some users have reported saving as much as £45 a month or a whopping £500 a year while using them.

Keep the tumble drier switched off. Instead aim to air your clothes on a washing line or clothes horse. According to the Energy Savings Trust this will help save you £60 a year.

Microwaves are a great way to save money at meal-times. Mixing up and using other appliances will help too. By switching to using a slow cooker and a microwave four times a week you can save £58 a year.

Only use the washing machine when it's full. A washing machine uses around 1kWh of energy per cycle, costing about 28p. By only putting it on when you have a full load you can save £41 a year.

Plug holes in exterior walls. Have a look around the exterior of the house and block up any non-essential holes. Effective insulation will save you at least £100 a year.

Reduce the temperature of your boiler flow system. Its default setting is usually too high. Turn it down a bit to between 55 and 60 and your home will feel just as warm, but you could cut your energy bills by 8% and save up to £70 per year.

Switching shower heads will freshen up your finances. Replacing your current one with a more efficient model can save you £55 on your gas bills each year.

Thermostat charges might leave you at boiling point. But changing the temperature by a couple of degrees can make a big difference. Experts say 19 degrees is about the norm in the UK. Some people do like their homes a bit warmer, but as a rule of thumb, every degree you turn your thermostat down you will save about £50 a year

Vacuum your fridge and save cash. Dust on the condenser coils at the back can prevent a fridge or freezer from cooling properly. Not keeping your fridge freezer clean could cost a whopping £45 more each year.

Eco efficient light bulbs and other LED saving options are also a great way of saving cash. You can save £2-3 per year for every traditional halogen bulb you switch to a similarly bright LED bulb. If the average UK household replaced all of their bulbs with LEDs, it would save about £40 a year on bills.

# Plain clothes military launch migrant patrols on Kent beaches

GB News footage also shows British military personnel on boats heading out to patrol off Kent beaches

PLAIN clothes members of the military have been patrolling some of Kent's beaches, on the lookout for any small migrant boats that make it past Border Force and Royal Naval patrols in the Channel, a GB News probe can reveal. Military rigid inflatables have also been patrolling the coastline, as UK authorities step up their efforts to tackle the small boats crisis.

Mark White, GB News Home and Security Editor, said sources have confirmed that plain clothes military personnel are now routinely out on some of Kent's beaches, where some small boats have managed to make it to shore in recent months. The discreet patrols are being backed up by other military teams on rigid inflatable boats. [GB News](#) captured images of some of those as they zipped in and out of Dover harbour yesterday.

The move comes just weeks after Prime Minister Rishi Sunak promised a crackdown on the Channel migrant crisis, which he said would be a top priority for his government. Almost 46,000 people crossed in small boats last year, piling huge pressure on the government to do something.

More than two months of winter storms in the Channel have only given way briefly to a few days of better weather, allowing the criminal gangs to launch their boats. That has taken some of the immediate pressure off the government.

But yesterday's brief weather window showed how every time conditions improve, the boats come back in force. The story comes as almost 500 migrants were taken to Dover on Wednesday, after taking advantage of a break in the weather to make the crossing. At least eight more small boats attempted to cross but failed to make it into UK waters.

Two of the inflatables were punctured by French police officers on a beach near Calais, and around 100 migrants ran off into the nearby dunes. The first boatload to reach the UK after several days of bad weather arrived in Dover harbour just after midnight yesterday. It was followed by a steady stream of small boats attempting the crossing throughout the day.

[GB News](#) understands a total of nine migrants boats managed to make it into UK waters and were picked up by Border Force. Around half a dozen other inflatables, with low powered outboard motors, struggled against the prevailing tides and were forced to turn back to France after failing to reach UK territorial waters.

The Border Force and British naval vessels out in the middle of the Channel on Wednesday, were backed up by other patrols back in Kent.



**BRITAIN'S NEWS CHANNEL**



# Chancellor to use Brexit freedoms to tackle poor productivity

- Chancellor Jeremy Hunt will set out a long-term plan for prosperity made possible by Brexit.
- Hunt will make the case against “declinism”, with the UK growing faster than France, Japan and Italy since 2010.
- He will also confirm post-Brexit reforms to unlock £100bn of private investment this decade will be implemented in the coming months.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Jeremy Hunt will today set out his approach to tackle poor productivity and boost growth, using the new freedoms won by Brexit as a catalyst. Following the Prime Minister New Year address outlining his five priorities which include growing the economy, halving inflation and getting debt down – the Chancellor will speak about how this will be accomplished.

Delivering the speech at Bloomberg’s European headquarters in London, Mr Hunt will caution against an attitude of “declinism” about Britain and set out the case for optimism as the UK aims to play a leading role in Europe and across the world in the industries of tomorrow. Since 2010 the UK economy has grown faster than France, Italy and Japan, and since the EU referendum the UK economy has grown at around the same rate as Germany.

The Chancellor will also confirm that post-Brexit reforms to Solvency II will be implemented in the coming months, which could unlock £100 billion of additional investment into the UK’s most productive assets this decade – such as clean energy and UK infrastructure.

## **Chancellor Jeremy Hunt is expected to say:**

*“Our plan for the years that follow is long term prosperity based on British genius and British hard work.*

*“[And] world-beating enterprises to make Britain the world’s next Silicon Valley.”*

## **The Chancellor will also caution against declinism, with the UK aiming to play a leading global role:**

*“Declinism about Britain was wrong in the past - and it is wrong today.*

*“Some of the gloom is based on statistics that do not reflect the whole picture.*

*“Like every G7 country, our growth was slower in the years after the financial crisis than the years before it. But since 2010, the UK has grown faster than France, Japan and Italy. Since the Brexit referendum, we have grown at about the same rate as Germany.*

*“If we look further ahead, the case for declinism becomes weaker still. The UK is poised to play a leading role in Europe and across the world in the growth sectors which will define this century.”*

The Chancellor will focus on key growth industries, including Digital Technology, Green Industries, Life Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing and Creative Industries – areas where Britain has a competitive advantage to build on further.

Mr Hunt will also set out some of the challenges the UK faces, including poor productivity, and set out a plan to long-term prosperity, using the UK's new-found Brexit freedoms to support growth and entrepreneurship.

In the Autumn Statement, the Chancellor set out the government's strategy for boosting growth by investing in our people, in the infrastructure that connects our country, by creating the right environment for business investment, and by supporting our world-leading financial services companies and innovators.

To further support investment across our economy, the Chancellor also announced a decision to proceed with reforms to Solvency II – an EU Directive that governs the amount of funds British insurers are required to hold in reserve. The Association of British Insurers suggest the Chancellor's reforms are expected to unlock up to £100 billion of private investment this decade into UK infrastructure and clean energy, such as nuclear power.

And in December, the Chancellor went further and announced the Edinburgh Reforms – a package of reforms to drive growth and competitiveness in the UK's financial services sector, while retaining our commitment to high international standards. This included the publication of our ambitious plan for repealing and reforming EU law for financial services.

**The Chancellor is also expected to say:**

*“Confidence in the future starts with honesty about the present, and we should not shy away from the biggest challenge we face which is our poor productivity. Our plan for long term prosperity tackles that challenge head on.*

*“It is a plan necessitated, energised and made possible by Brexit which will succeed if it becomes a catalyst for the bold choices we need to take.*

*“Our plan for growth is a plan built on the freedoms which Brexit provides. It is a plan to raise productivity. It is a plan to use the proceeds of growth to support our public services at home, to support businesses in the new low carbon economy and to support democracy abroad. It is the right course for our country and the role in the world to which we aspire.”*

With a UK tech sector worth one trillion dollars the Chancellor will call on other businesses to consider the UK as a place for investment by tech entrepreneurs, life science innovators and energy companies.

The UK is an attractive location for tech investment; the recently announced digital markets regime aims to open the UK's digital markets up to greater competition and spur increased innovation across the sector. The regime is an alternative to the EU's Digital Markets Act – the UK's proposals are widely regarded as more proportionate, targeted and flexible than the EU's.

This month PwC surveyed more than 4,400 top chief executives in 35 countries and found that the UK has risen the joint third most important country to invest, behind only the US and China and equal with Germany.



**HM Treasury**

# Department of Health and Social Care

## Annual report and accounts 2021-22

Gareth Davies, the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) and head of the National Audit Office (NAO), has today issued a qualified audit opinion on the 2021-22 accounts of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

A lack of sufficient, appropriate audit evidence and significant shortcomings in financial control and governance meant he was unable to provide an audit opinion on the accounts of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

DHSC has overall accountability to Parliament for the wider health group. Its accounts cover the Department, and over 500 other health bodies, including its Executive Agency, UKHSA. This is the first set of accounts from UKHSA, which was established in April 2021 and became fully operational from October 2021.

From its inception UKHSA faced a challenging operating environment responding to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It was heavily reliant on temporary staff, including in key senior roles, and experienced high levels of staff turnover.

The C&AG could not sign off on transactions related to UKHSA in DHSC's accounts. He has issued a "disclaimer of opinion" on UKHSA's own accounts, meaning he was unable to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence upon which to form an audit opinion.

The NAO found that there was a lack of adequate governance, oversight and control at UKHSA. Throughout 2021-22, there was no Board or Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in place, meaning that UKHSA did not comply with HM Treasury and Cabinet Office guidance on governance arrangements. Non-executive directors were not appointed until 28 April 2022, 7 months after UKHSA became operational, and the Advisory Board and Audit and Risk Committee did not meet formally until June and July 2022 respectively. This lack of formal governance arrangements exposed UKHSA to a high level of risk, with no clear oversight structure in place for its first six months of operation.

DHSC did not sufficiently support or oversee UKHSA to resolve issues it inherited from its predecessors and establish its administrative functions. UKHSA was unable to provide the NAO with sufficient evidence to support balances relating to £794m of stock, and £1.5bn of accruals from NHS Test and Trace, which were transferred from DHSC, or to support £254m of stockpiled goods transferred from its predecessor organisation, Public Health England (PHE). DHSC had not resolved issues with its management systems, financial controls and records, which the C&AG reflected in his report on DHSC's 2020-21 accounts.

Critical elements of internal control were not in place during UKHSA's first six months, for example, UKHSA did not carry out effective bank reconciliations. Shortcomings in the introduction of a new accounting system, combined with a reliance on temporary staff, meant that UKHSA was not able to provide the NAO with evidence to support key balances and

transactions in the accounts.

For the Department of Health and Social Care's group accounts, the C&AG was unable to obtain the evidence needed to support £1.36bn of stock, due to issues related to inventory management.

DHSC did not complete an effective programme of year-end stock counts to verify the quantity and quality of items including PPE and lateral flow tests, as it was unable to access 5 billion items (which cost £2.9bn) that were stored in containers, and did not have adequate processes in place for accessible stock held in warehouses.

DHSC estimates that there has been a £6bn reduction in the value of items procured in response to the pandemic. This comprises:

- £2.5bn write-down on items costing £11.2bn that DHSC has already purchased, but no longer expects to use, or for which the market price is now lower than the price paid.
- £3.5bn write-down on PPE, vaccines and medication which DHSC has committed to purchase, but no longer expects to use.

Taken together with the £8.9bn written-down in its 2020-21 accounts, over the last two financial years, DHSC has now reported £14.9bn of write-down costs related to PPE and other items. DHSC estimates that ongoing storage and disposal costs for its excess and unusable PPE will be £319m. At the end of March 2022, the estimated monthly spending on storing PPE was £24m.

The NAO recommends that DHSC and UKHSA should work with HM Treasury to agree and implement an action plan to get UKHSA on track to deliver auditable financial statements for 2022-23.

DHSC should also put in place adequate controls over its remaining COVID-19 inventory. This should include processes to physically verify the amount and condition of the items held in containers and warehouses.

Gareth Davies, the head of the NAO, said:

“Even taking into account the challenging context, it is unacceptable that UKHSA has not been able to produce auditable accounts and provide the transparency and assurance that Parliament needs.

When setting up new bodies, it is essential that basic governance arrangements are put in place. DHSC and UKHSA must work with HM Treasury to get on track to produce auditable accounts”

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



National Audit Office

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