

Twickenham & Richmond Tribune



Christmas, Twickenham Green
Photo by Berkley Driscoll

13th December 2024

T&RT

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Editors: Berkley Driscoll, Teresa Read

TickerTape - News in Brief

Keep yourself and your loved ones strong and healthy this winter

From the NHS

For some, flu or Covid-19 can be very dangerous and even life-threatening. Flu and Covid-19 vaccines reduce the risk of serious illness in colder months. Book your vaccine by Thursday 19 December.

Hear from Dr. Mohan about why flu and covid vaccines can help keep you and your friends and family strong and healthy this winter.

The NHS is encouraging those eligible to take up the offer of vaccination to boost their protection ahead of winter when respiratory viruses are usually at their peak. Not only can vaccines save lives, they can reduce hospital admissions and ease the pressure on the NHS. In the run-up to winter getting vaccinated is one of the simplest things that can be done to stay well and help ensure you don't miss important dates like a landmark celebration or a trip away with family or school.

Anyone eligible can book via the [NHS website](#), the NHS app or by calling 119 for free. The flu vaccine can also be booked by searching online for a local pharmacy and there are walk in sites available to get the Covid-19 vaccine.

People eligible for the flu vaccine include over-65s, pregnant women and children aged two or three years on 31 August 2024, those aged 18 years to under 65 years in clinical risk groups and those in long-stay residential care homes.

Those eligible for a covid booster include people aged 65 years and over, anyone aged six months to 64 years in a clinical risk group and residents in a care home for older adults.

The Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) jab is also available to those aged 75 to 79 and to pregnant women from 28 weeks to protect their child.



The Tree Agency

darryl parkin

The Treehouse
25 King Edwards Grove
Teddington, Middlesex TW11 9LY
Telephone 020 8274 0107
Mobile 07960 123580
Fax 020 8274 0119
info@thetreeagency.co.uk
www.thetreeagency.co.uk

Local Picture Postcard Column - Part 279

Hampton Court Lion Gates

By Alan Winter

We can have a good look at the Lion Gates at Hampton Court Palace as they have appeared on many postcards in the last 130 years or so.

The postcards shown span about 45 years from around 1910 to the 1950's.

Hampton Court Palace was built by Cardinal Wolsey, starting in 1514, although some time in the 1520s it became the property of King Henry VIII.



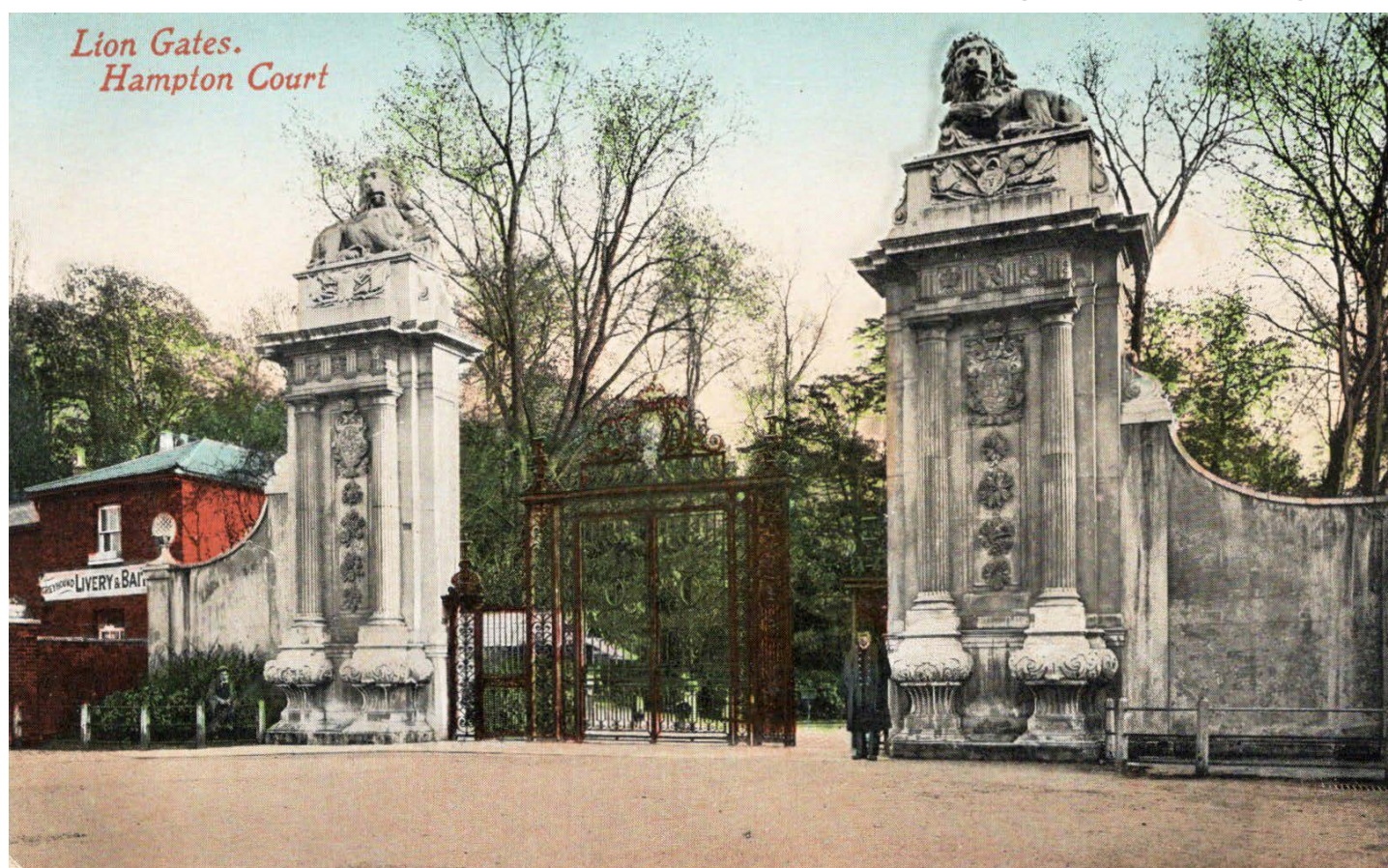
The Lion Gates face the Bushy Park gates and stand next to the Kings Arms Hotel

Built for Queen Anne and designed by Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723) often thought as the greatest English architect, Wren's success was underpinned by his consummate skill as a courtier, retaining the confidence of four monarchs through social and economic disasters and political revolution. Wren's life at court can be minutely reconstructed and shows a man who was first and foremost a courtier serving the architectural whims of the Stuart dynasty.

On one of his trips to London, at the age of ninety, he caught a cold and on 25 February 1723 a servant who tried to awaken Wren from his nap found that he had died in his sleep. Wren was laid to rest on 5th March 1723. His body was placed in the southeast corner of the crypt of St Paul's.



The Lion gates were designed early in the 18th Century, the gates are supported by two Portland stone piers each with paired Doric three-quarter columns with triglyph frieze and cornice, surmounted by armorial plaques and lions. Outer screen walls finished with pineapples. Wrought-iron gates with scrollwork, large central pair flanked by lower gate to either side. The piers have Queen Anne's monogram, the gates that of George I.



Heritage Category:

Listed Building

Grade: I

List Entry Number: **1065442**

Date first listed: **02-Sep-1952**

List Entry Name: **Hampton Court Lion Gates**

My search for old postcards continues. I am always looking for old postcards and old photograph albums etc. The postcards can be British or Foreign, black and white or coloured and of places or subjects. If you have any that are sitting unwanted in a drawer, in a box in the loft or in the garage or under a bed, please contact me on 07875 578398 or alanwinter192@hotmail.com I would like to see them and I pay cash!



58 Church Street, Twickenham TW1 3EA
info@crusadertravel.com 0208 744 0474

Postcard Page

By Alan Winter

Last week's postcard column featured St Augustine's church near the Hospital Bridge Road roundabout on the A316 road. We are told by a regular reader that the church features in a late 1980's comedy-drama film described below.

Wish You Were Here is a 1987 British comedy-drama film written and directed by David Leland and starring Emily Lloyd, Tom Bell, Geoffrey Hutchings, and Jesse Birdsall.

The film follows a girl's coming-of-age in a small coastal town in postwar England. It is loosely based on the formative years of British madam Cynthia Payne.

Inadequate community toilet provision

This week the Council published a press release about the LBRUT Community Toilet Scheme (CTS):

“London’s first community toilet scheme expands to more than 70 toilets throughout out the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames” – But, looking at the Council website it seems that more participants in the scheme are needed to provide toilet facilities for the public: Barnes High Street, Richmond Hill, Ham Parade, Hampton Hill High Street and Whitton High Street. https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/roads_and_transport/toilets

CTS Opening times may be restricted due to the closure of participating shops, pubs and clubs at various times and days.

“Payment is based on the number of days that toilet facilities are available to the public with a minimum payment of £800 and a maximum of £1,000 (plus VAT) per annum. Details are available at communitytoilets@richmond.gov.uk.”



Example of public toilet in a park (A park that was formerly a car park)

LBRUT’s Cllr Julia Neden-Watts states “Our goal is simple: to ensure no one in Richmond upon Thames has to worry about finding a toilet while out in our public spaces.”

The downside of this scheme is experienced by some residents, and gardeners in public grounds, who need to clean areas following visits by those who do not know where to find the nearest community toilet, or do not have time to check the Council website. Public signs and individual signs for a CTS are not always visible. In some areas the Council has ignored requests to provide permanent notices indicating where to find a community toilet.

However, **public toilet buildings** are easily seen and people become familiar with their location. I am sure there are those of us who have memories of earlier dedicated toilet facilities such as the modern toilets in Diamond Jubilee Gardens, and there are some of us who have seen public toilet buildings in other countries or even other towns in the UK.

Going into pubs is not an option for all. Toilets may be upstairs or not easily accessible. Presumably, there are children and young people who would not be able to use a pub toilet on if out on their own?

Of the locations mentioned, some are not open seven days a week and some have restricted opening times.

Of course, the Council will no doubt remember the Equality Act 2010 that requires disabled people to have access to the same toilet facilities as non-disabled people.

Pioneering Community Toilet Scheme expands to more than 70 locations

From Richmond Council

People visiting high streets in Richmond upon Thames can take advantage of over 70 free-to-use toilets, as we expand our pioneering scheme, the first of its kind in London, which first launched in 2004.

The scheme, which has been adopted by some other councils across the capital, offers members of the public access to a wide network of toilets in participating local businesses and public buildings, including libraries.

Cllr Julia Neden-Watts, Richmond Council's Deputy Leader, said:

"Our goal is simple: to ensure no one in Richmond upon Thames has to worry about finding a toilet while out in our public spaces.

"For many people, the availability of a public toilet can mean the difference between being able to enjoy their day out or feeling constrained by the concern of not knowing where to go. Our Community Toilet Scheme is part of our ongoing work to create an inclusive and accessible place where everyone feels welcome, while supporting our local economy by making our high streets attractive to visitors and residents alike. Whether you're out shopping, visiting a park, or enjoying a day out with family, we want to ensure there's a safe and accessible toilet nearby.

"We invite more local businesses and venues to join the scheme and help us build a more connected and accessible borough for all. We additionally call on other London Councils to join us in helping to create as strong a network of public conveniences as possible for residents and visitors to the capital."

The initiative, which allows the public to use toilets without having to make a purchase, aims to provide greater accessibility for those out and about in the borough. In exchange, participating businesses receive compensation from Richmond Council for the cost of opening their toilets to the public during normal opening hours.

The expanded scheme features an [interactive map](#), making it easier for people to find participating locations by area and filter options for accessibility features like wheelchair-friendly facilities and baby changing stations. Over half of the venues currently offer these services.

In addition, each participating venue will clearly display a special window sticker at their entrance, marking them as official partners. Printed maps showing the locations of participating toilets will be available from early 2025 at Council buildings, libraries, leisure centres, and tourist information centres.

We are encouraging more local businesses and venues to join the scheme and looking to increase provision in key areas listed on its website. Further information is available on the [Toilets](#) page, or by contacting the Community Toilet Scheme team directly at communitytoilets@richmond.gov.uk.



Winter Carriage Rides in Bushy Park

Enjoy a magical horse drawn carriage ride in the beautiful Bushy Park...

This Christmas, experience [Bushy Park](#) like never before. Enjoy a glorious carriage ride with The Royal Parks Shire horses, with proceeds supporting conservation initiatives in the park.

- The experience begins at The Pheasantry Car Park TW11 0EQ, Bushy Park.
- £15 per person includes one carriage ride plus booking fee.

[Book Now](#)



Please note:

- The rides take place from 21 - 24 December 2024, from 10.30 to 14.00.
- Proceeds from the horse drawn rides will help fund sustainable conservation initiatives with the working Shire horses in The Royal Parks.
- £15 per person includes one carriage ride plus booking fee.
- Children under two years can ride on adult's lap for free.
- We operate in all-weather unless the Park issues a safety warning so please check the weather before you come and dress appropriately.
- Refunds are not available unless we need to cancel.
- We regret that because this is a traditional vehicle we cannot accommodate wheelchair users.



Barnes running group celebrates largest cohort completion

From The Barnes Runners

The Couch to 5k group in Barnes, initiated by Cllr Millum and The Barnes Runners, completed its third and largest cohort of runners.

The running group has been a tremendous success in encouraging residents to train for a 5k run. Participants, aged 12 to 70, have faced various fitness or health challenges, and many have reported improvements in their mental health. Even experienced runners have used the group for rehabilitation purposes.



Let's hear from one of the runners: *"I am amazed that I managed to complete the 9 weeks of C25k. I really enjoyed it even though it was hard to head out for a run when the weather was a bit grim but it was worth it for that good feeling when the run was over."*

Another participant also shared: *"I hadn't run for many years and had let my fitness slide. When this group came up it was just what was needed. I was nervous I would be the slowest most unfit in the group and didn't want to hold the group back. I soon felt very reassured, encouraged and pulled along by the camaraderie."*

The Couch to 5k Programme is a safe, friendly group with no judgement, perfect for starting your exercise or fitness journey again.

Although the Barnes running group has completed their last session of the current cohort, there is a parkrun at Richmond Park every Saturday. The free running group aims to encourage residents to get off the couch and achieve their goals at a reasonable pace. In this free community event, all are welcome to walk, jog, run, volunteer or spectate.

Find out more about [Richmond parkrun](#).

Council Reports

SEND Futures Plan and Safeguarding Under Fire

By James Knight

Richmond Council's latest Education and Children's Services Committee meeting, held on Wednesday, December 12th, highlighted the shortcomings of the SEND (Special Education Needs and Disabilities) Futures Plan and the significant safeguarding challenges and failures. These raise critical questions about the effectiveness and sustainability of local policies.

Safeguarding: serious gaps in children's safeguarding exposed:

Richmond Council's Safeguarding Children Partnership report revealed troubling gaps in data sharing and oversight, particularly regarding high-risk cases. Committee members censured some schools for failing to meet basic safeguarding requirements, such as renewing DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks every three years. The Director of Children's Services, Ian Dodds, reiterated that while the council can discuss matters with the schools concerned, it no longer controls most of them, limiting its powers.

Earlier this year, abuse was uncovered at a school in the borough, and this underpinned much of the councillors' questioning; however, as the matter will be going to court, they were not able to go into specifics so as not to prejudice the trial.

Officers acknowledged the difficulty of guaranteeing complete safety but emphasised efforts to ensure "eyes and ears" across the community remain vigilant. The council also highlighted the need for robust mechanisms to manage offenders and risks, particularly in households with children. Compounding the safeguarding challenges is an ongoing issue: The police and West Middlesex Hospital have not shared all the data they should with the multi-agency partnership. This lack of coordination leaves critical gaps in assessing and responding to risks. Officers assured the committee that steps are being taken to improve data-sharing protocols, though progress remains slow.

The committee also praised recent initiatives, such as the SAFE program, a drug-awareness campaign featuring testimonials from young people. While impactful, questions were raised about the long-term sustainability of such campaigns and the growing prevalence of substance abuse among adolescents. Dodds said that the issue these days is that children don't need to know a dealer; they can click a button on the internet and have drugs couriered to their door.

SEND Futures Plan: a failure to prepare.

Designed to improve outcomes for children with SEND while addressing systemic financial challenges, has been plagued by delays, escalating costs, and a need for local specialist placements. One of the key updates delivered during the meeting was the approaching end of the government's "Safety Valve" funding program, set to expire in March 2025. This program aimed to alleviate local authorities' mounting deficits related to SEND provision. With no replacement scheme, council officers warned of a likely deficit resurgence despite past financial injections. "Funding on its own doesn't fix it," admitted one officer, a sobering acknowledgement of the lack of specialist places based in the borough.

Central to the SEND Futures Plan is developing in-borough specialist education facilities, including the much-delayed London River Academy at the former Barnes Hospital site. The delays, blamed on construction and funding hurdles, have exacerbated the shortage of placements, forcing many children to be educated outside the borough at considerable financial and emotional cost.

Many parents have been asking why the council has yet to follow the approach in Surrey, where new SEND schools have been set up in temporary locations while their permanent accommodation is constructed. Others have questioned the wisdom of keeping the former Clarendon School in Hampton empty when it could have been employed to reduce the multi-million-pound cost of sending pupils out of the borough. The committee addressed neither of these points and just tried to blame the national Government for their woes, highlighting what some say is the current administration's refusal to be held accountable for their actions and omissions.

Moreover, the meeting exposed an alarming disparity in therapy provision, with a specific focus on CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services). Rising demand for mental health services has outstripped capacity, leaving vulnerable children waiting for support. This gap, combined with the increased prevalence of social, emotional, and mental health issues among pupils, part of the impact of Covid lockdowns, paints a picture of growing unmet needs in the borough and poor co-ordination with the NHS.

A notable feature of Richmond's SEND Futures Plan is its adoption of a new banding system for funding SEND pupils. While this system is intended to ensure consistency and fairness in resource allocation, critics argue that it withdraws support for children based on comparisons with other children rather than meeting individual needs.

Financial pressure has also increased because specialist schools, essential for many SEND children, continue to raise fees due, leaving councils and families scrambling to afford placements. Private sector establishments are reluctant to increase the number of places due to concerns that demand will decline in the medium term due to the impact of VAT on school fees and the plans to reduce the number of children sent to them by councils, thus creating a supply crunch.

A Call for Reform and Action:

As Richmond Council awaits further announcements on national reforms by the newly elected Labour Government, local officials and parents alike are left questioning whether the SEND Futures Plan and safeguarding measures can deliver on their promises. With unresolved funding issues and insufficient specialist provisions, the future of Richmond's SEND children and safeguarding systems remains precariously uncertain.

You can see the papers of the meeting by clicking [HERE](#)

New Elleray Hall Community Centre starting to take shape

From Richmond Council

Construction of a new Elleray Hall community centre is well and truly underway as the local community joined Richmond councillors to lay bricks for the building.

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

“Community facilities are the beating heart of any thriving community and we must make sure they are fit for purpose. Being able to see Elleray Hall taking form, tops off a year of investment in our local centres, including £7 million committed to new Ham community facilities.

“It’s exciting to see the shared vision for Elleray Hall becoming a reality. With flexible indoor and outdoor space, it will bring benefits to residents of all ages for many years to come.”



Once the service has moved into the new hall, the second phase will see the demolition of the existing community centre to make way for affordable housing units.

The new centre is part-funded by the sale of the existing Elleray Hall site for 100% affordable housing. The new housing scheme will deliver sixteen residential units, as well as:

- Private gardens and communal amenity space
- Car-free units with the exception of the two accessible wheelchair units
- A car club space

You can [read more about Elleray Hall reprovion.](#)

Contractors for the project, Beard, and architects McBains have contributed £250 each to the Elleray Community Association to support their Christmas activities at the current Elleray Hall.

Tom Jenkinson, Director of Beard Guildford office, said:

“We are delighted to support the Elleray Community Association in their endeavour to relieve isolation and loneliness among those living in the community. We hope this donation helps bring some festive joy to the Teddington area.”

Squire's Twickenham Thanks Customers For Their Patience With Christmas In Full Swing!

Squire's Garden Centre Twickenham is delighted to announce that its centre is fully open and is enjoying welcoming customers for the festive season following building works to renew the shop roof and improve energy efficiency.

The centre has remained open since August, when the major work to replace the centre's somewhat elderly roof started to take place. Squire's would like to thank its customers for their patience and understanding during the last few months. **The Tribune** visited the centre recently to meet Centre Manager, Julie Leatherdale, and Felicia Baily, who is responsible for the garden centre group's sustainability programme.



The refurbishment programme included significant upgrades, namely a fully insulated roof, a new warm air heating system as well as modern dimmable LED lighting, which responds to the natural light levels coming into the building. **Felicia Baily comments:** *"These improvements not only enhance the shopping experience for customers, making the store feel warmer in winter and cooler in summer, but also reduce the store's environmental impact, something the team at Squire's is passionate about."*

"Other upgrades have included a more efficient gas-powered heating system, anticipated to reduce CO2 emissions by over 13,000kg annually. Air source heat pumps have replaced roof vents as the main source of climate control."



Further benefits include 130 solar panels which are expected to generate 30% of the centre's electricity on-site. The electricity generated will all be used at the centre and there is capacity for battery storage for the future too. Other sustainable measures include the installation of new guttering and looking at water storage solutions for the future.

Julie Leatherdale, Centre Manager at Squire's Twickenham, comments:

"We're so grateful to our customers for bearing with us during the last few months, for what has been an enormous undertaking for our Twickenham centre. We're thrilled to now be fully open, offering a brighter, welcoming environment and we're enjoying being able to present Christmas to our customers."

"The centre looks and feels amazing, and the improvements will make a real difference to not only our customer visits, but to the environment too. We've got a wonderful selection of gifts, houseplants and decorations – as well as fresh seasonal containers, Christmas trees and wreaths, while our café and restaurant make a welcome stop when you shop. We can't wait to give our customers a warm seasonal welcome in the centre in the run-up to Christmas!"



In addition to the completed works, customers can look forward to a few other new additions in the new year, including new flooring set to enhance the centre and giving it a really fresh feel.

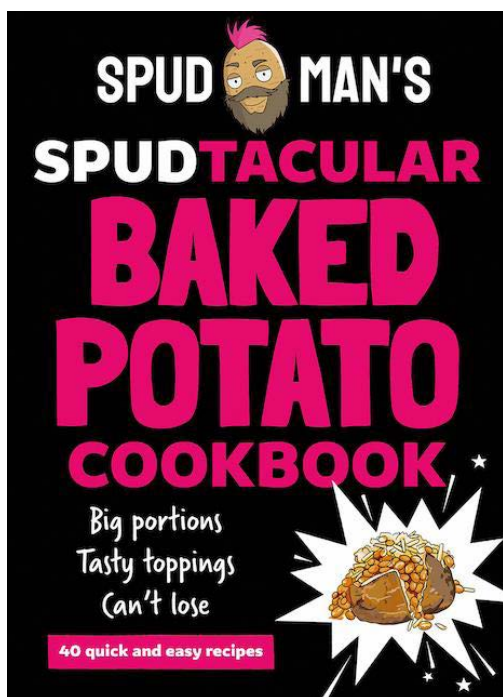
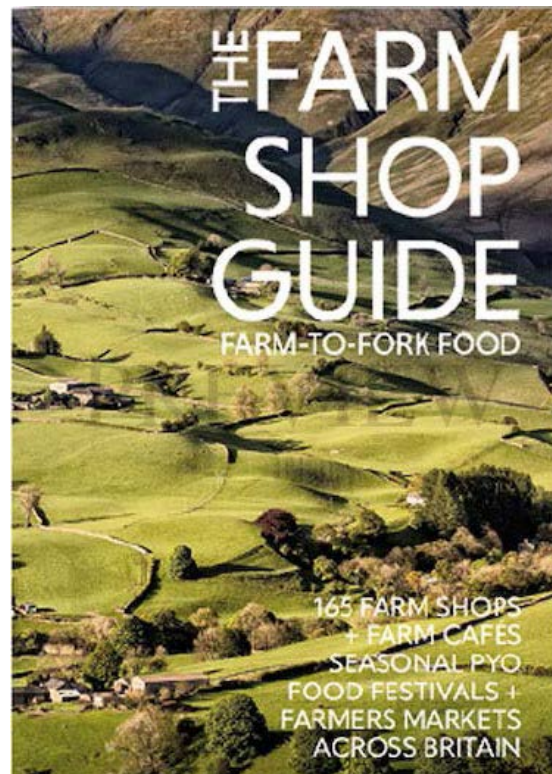
Julie adds: *"Our customers will be able to visit our centre on New Year's Day for a browse to start making their gardening plans for 2025 as well as perhaps a visit to our Café Bar for a warm drink or welcome breakfast to start the new year with Squire's."*

Christmas Book Gifts For Foodies

Whether you're planning to slip one of these into a stocking or maybe pop in the post as a letterbox gift, here's something for foodies of all ages:

The Farm Shop Guide, a new foodie travel guide, from **Printslinger** (edited by Alastair Sawday), promotes Britain's homegrown food networks. It features 165 independent (and often smaller and family-run) farm shops across England, Scotland, and Wales – along with their first-rate cafés and restaurants. The guide has everything from shops that drip with awards to muddier, down-to-earth places where the person at the till has just come in from the fields. The guide also promotes 15 food and farming charities to raise awareness of their vital work, and 1% of its sales will go to the **Sustainable Food Trust**. With Pick-your-own, food festivals, farmers' markets, dog friendly and even info on EV charging, this is such a good foodie gift. £18 from Amazon, or directly from [Printslinger](https://www.printslinger.com) but here's a **discount code** for you, valid on individual books, till the end of March

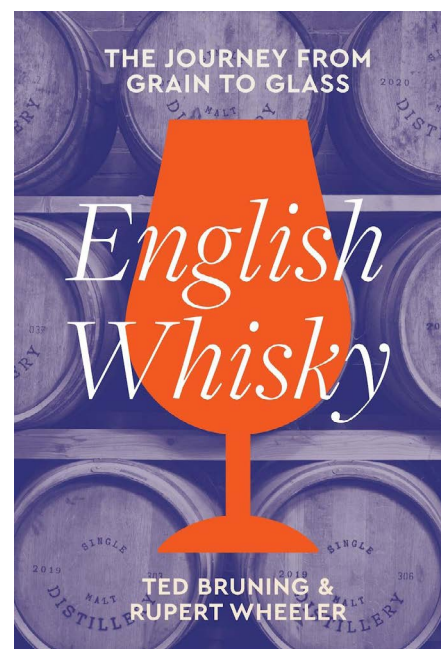
foodie10%

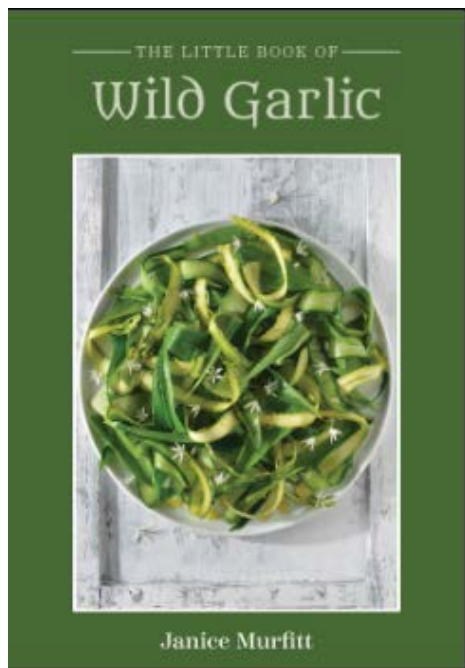


With an army of social media followers and a pink Mohican, **Spud Man**, aka Ben Newman, turned the baked potato into an artform – and his book teaches those of us who can't make the potato pilgrimage to his van. **Spud Man's Spudtacular Baked Potato Cookbook** has 40 recipes for a-peeling, delicious, baked potato combos and various spin-off dishes. It's about embracing the humble spud and unleashing its full flavour potential. Published by **Harper North** at £12.99 as an A5 hardback.

Here's one for the whisky aficionado: Whisky-making has entered an exciting new era. From

distilleries in beautiful parts of the country to urban areas with a hip cocktail vibe. **This** new book **English Whisky, the Journey from Grain to Glass**, tells the exciting story of English whisky as it becomes established as a serious player on the world stage. Covering topics such as: how the industry was kickstarted 20 years ago by the English Whisky Company; how rye is competing with barley as a grain of preference; the importance of sustainability; the use of peat and oak, and the increase in high-end tourism. Published by **Pavilion** at £20 for a hardback.

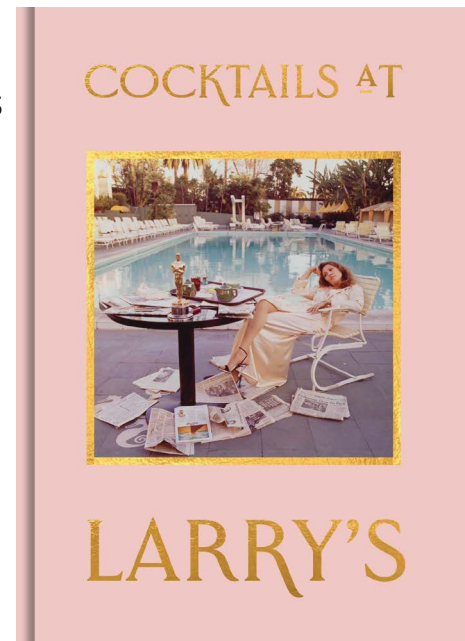




I know it's too late for this year, but looking ahead to next autumn...**The Little Book of Wild Garlic** - is a comprehensive guide on how to bring wild garlic from the heart of the woodland to your kitchen. Growing vigorously throughout the woodlands, every part of this amazing plant is edible, and opens the doors to so many diverse culinary uses. Filled with original recipes ranging from dips to soups, rice, pasta and pastry dishes along with meat, fish and many vegetarian options – this book by Janice Murfitt helps embrace the vibrant flavour of an ingredient that elevates meals to new heights. £8.99 A5 paperback published by **Austin Macauley** and available from major bookshops.

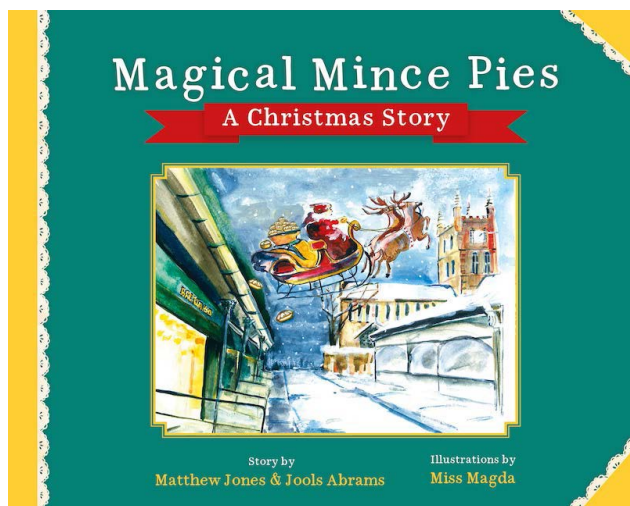
Larry's Bar, the award-winning speakeasy at the heart of the National Portrait Gallery, has recently published **Cocktails at**

Larry's. It features iconic works from the National Portrait Gallery's Collection and the cocktails inspired by the collection, and the menu at Larry's, by **The Daisy Green Collection** of restaurants and bars. From the regal gin cocktail 'The Cecil Beaton' to the award-winning dirty martini McBean cocktail. These fabulous cocktails evoke bygone eras and the creative spirit of London's West End, which is known for its hub of creativity and pioneering jazz scene. This beautiful hardback has an introduction to Larry's Bar and the story of its namesake, Sir Laurence Olivier. It then showcases each of Larry's bespoke cocktails, telling the stories behind their inspiration, ingredients and design. Every story is illustrated with images of each drink and portraits of iconic figures - ranging from Audrey Hepburn to Francis Bacon - from the Gallery's Collection.



All proceeds received from Cocktails at Larry's will be provided to the National Portrait Gallery by The Daisy Green Collection. A5 hardback £15 from major bookshops and Amazon

And finally one for the kiddiwinks: **Magical Mince Pies**. Embark on a festive baking adventure with **Magical Mince Pies**, a charming storybook and baking guide from London's **Bread Ahead** bakery. This festive book blends captivating storytelling with hands-on baking, inviting young bakers to join Francis, his Dad, and the social media sensation Leopoldas Maximus the Cat on a quest to make the perfect mince pie for Santa on Christmas Eve. Beautifully illustrated,



Magical Mince Pies is filled with rhythmic storytelling that children aged 3 and up will enjoy. Sprinkled throughout the book, Leopoldas the Cat shares fun facts and fascinating tidbits about the history of mince pies, dating back to the time of King Henry V, as well as Bread Ahead's legendary mince pie and mincemeat recipes. The book includes practical baking tips and will inspire young minds to be creative in the kitchen. Written by Bread Ahead founder Matthew Jones and acclaimed author Jools Abrams, it features illustrations by Magdalena Rys-Styszko, £8.99 from breadahead.com

Stocking Fillers For Foodies

Here is a selection of suggestions for the foodie in your life:

Let's start with a cracker. **Pierre Marcolini's Petits Bonheurs Christmas Cracker** is a delightful little gift. Packed with mini chocolate surprises, these luxurious crackers are sure to add a touch of magic. Delicately wrapped, the Petits Bonheurs contain: Hazelnut praline: Coffee almond praline: Caramel praline and Piedmont hazelnut praline. The cracker is also perfect for the table settings and is available at £15 online here or from the Marylebone Boutique, counters in Selfridges, Harrods, and via the [E.store](#).



Any foodie will appreciate finding a tub or two of specially blended spice mixes from **Just Spices** on Christmas morning. Maybe even something they can put straight to use. I'm pleased to see that they are more widely available now and stocked by retailers such as Waitrose. Think Speculoos Spice; Scrambled Egg Seasoning; Turmeric Latte Seasoning; Avocado topping; Roast Potato Seasoning. £4 a tub from Waitrose and also available online [here](#)

This funky set of **Vinyl Record Coasters** from **Rex London** is the perfect quirky item for any music or drinks lover! The set contains six coasters, each designed like a classic LP. Made from silicone, each coaster has a light and flexible feel, ideal for protecting surfaces from scratches and splashes. The set comes in a fully recyclable cardboard presentation box in the style of a turntable. So, if you know someone with a penchant for cocktails, or who lives for their vinyl collection, this is the gift for them. Very reasonably priced at £7.95 from [rexlondon.com](#).



An indulgent slab of chocolate, encrusted with delicious flavoured popcorn will be a welcome find for a chocoholic of any age on Christmas morning. These ones from **Joe & Seph's** are really delicious - popped corn smothered in Belgian milk and creamy white chocolate. New this year is an Orange Chocolate flavoured popcorn slab. £8 for 115g from [Joe & Seph's](#).

Another festive treat that will feel really intriguing at the foot of a stocking is a fat, heavy jar of **Opie's** fruits preserved in Luxardo® liqueur. Choose from peaches steeped in a 12-year-old brandy, black cherries in Kirsch, baby pears in Amaretto £6.75 from Waitrose.



Talking of alcohol, **Hayman's Sloe Gin** has wonderfully fruity notes from wild-foraged berries combined with its award-winning London Dry Gin. It's even been voted best English sloe gin and you can buy a hand gift wrapped bottle that's perfect for slipping into a Christmas stocking or popping under the tree. It has notes of sloe berry, almond, subtle plum, flavourful fruity, rich, tangy and slightly warming spice. 26.0% ABV Available [here](#) in 5cl, 20cl, 70cl and 70cl wrapped.

GIBRALTAR

sunborn

5 - STAR YACHT HOTEL

CASINO RESORT



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The card factory is now closed for Christmas

By Shona Lyons

The card factory is now (almost) closed for Christmas (we close early, with the drawing in of the winter nights) There are a few strays that I have just noticed I didn't send, so in the next few days, a few more will probably be made, but the lids are going on the paint pots and are going to be put away for a week or so.



It has been lots of fun, and the biggest part of the fun is when I get a face book post or what's app picture of a card that has been received, and the excited response of the person / people I sent them too and that means the world to me 😊 They are all fridge magnets, and most people have understood that, although someone did get very confused and did not at all understand the fiddly reason for the clip, that had of course fallen off and told me that their fridge wasn't the kind to put a magnet on anyway!?! 😊



I must have made hundreds in the last few months, and I have been in my element, with my dad and my cat sweetly sitting watching TV with me, whilst I paint, cut and stick away. I think almost all our clients have one now and many neighbours and friends, even have little boxes of cards ready to send on as well 😊

Wishing all the readers of the Tribune a very happy Christmas. With love from Shona.

Good Friday – A Strange Story

By Bruce Lyons

As long as I can remember Shona has told me to forget BLACK FRIDAY. “waste of time” “The deals are never deals” and so on – Don’t write about it, please. and so on. Strangely the National Media often agreed with Shona – often proving you could buy whatever it was for less.

Oddly enough 2024 changed all that.

Number 1: The deals this year were more transparent, they really were deals, and right across the Travel Market Place too.

Number 2: Maybe because of “the cost of living crisis” a lot of clients booked, really nice adventures as well, such as a £13,000 Galapagos trip with 29% off and loads of regular trips with £100/£200 and £500 discounts.

Black Friday has gone now, a few offers linger on but right ahead of us is what the UK Travel Trade is called the “PEAKS”. The “PEAKS” is I think unique to the UK Travel Scene, Peaks springs into action as Christmas lunch is cleared away, and as you are bewitched with the travel documentaries, and wooed by television adverts along with mouthwatering offers on BOOK BY dates. There are many variations, with free travel for the children, half board upgrades on bed and breakfast offers, book four nights for the price of three.

On cruises, there are often free cabin spend allowances, some companies offer three weeks for the price of two, there is no limit to their creativity and they even have low deposits.

Merry Christmas everybody – pop down to the Church Street square for a game of Chess – be our guest with Mulled Wine, Mince Pies, Brandy Cream and more.



Ok Twickenham...take down your Christmas trees...let's do Christmas PROPERLY shall we?

By Deep Patel

~Life through the eyes of a Twickenham shopkeeper~



Much of the talk this past week in my shop has once again centered around the season to be jolly... well there is absolutely no denying it now is there...whether you like it or not, it is coming...Christmas 2024. This year however, everything seems to be a lot slower...so many of my customers still haven't started their Christmas shopping or even thought about their Christmas tree...it seems to have somewhat "crept up" on us this year don't you think? Part of my reason for writing this article today is down to an argument (heated debate shall we call it) that I had with my brother this past week and the other part is down to the wise words of wisdom from a lovely lady whom we deliver newspapers to...

Those of you that know my family and my shop will also know that it is a family business established by my parents 40 years ago when they were only teenagers themselves...those of you who know us will also be familiar with the fact that our shop is named after myself (Deep) and my brother (Meet) hence "Meet & Deep Newsagents" (you have gotta love your parents when you know they named their entire business and livelihood after you right?)...those of you who know us will also of course be familiar with the fact that it's not uncommon to walk into our shop and catch myself and my brother arguing (let's say debating as it makes it sound better) about absolutely anything and everything, and I mean anything...it could be about whereabouts the KitKat bars should be placed on the chocolate shelf or it may be about which out of the two of us gives the better customer service in our shop (obviously me by the way), but none the less, we love a good old debate my brother and I (who doesn't?) and they usually get a little too "heated" as my mother will tell you when neither myself or my brother want to give up their stance or point of view. Now I don't know my brother's reason for not wanting to give up his stance or point of view so I can't comment on that, but what I can tell you is my own reason for not wanting to give up my stance or point of view, and that reason is very simple, it is primarily because I am usually always right and he is usually always wrong. See simple, just like I told you. Just a very simple matter of right versus wrong.

Anyway, this past week, one such topic that we were "debating" on was that of when we should decorate our shop with Christmas decorations and when we should put up the Christmas tree.

Now, as I said earlier, Christmas has kind of crept up on us this year, so we are admittedly a little

behind with this sort of stuff compared to usual...however my brother vocalized publicly in the shop that I had “ruined Christmas this year” by not putting up the decorations earlier in December, when he suggested it. Well, I felt that he was the one ruining Christmas, not just for me, but also for himself by missing the whole point of Christmas, the fact that it is a festival marking the arrival of the baby Jesus, or the arrival of light to dispel darkness...but once I said that line, he immediately retaliated with “well in that case, lets blooming put up the lights to celebrate the arrival of light?”. As he got more and more wound up, I reminded him once again that it wasn’t about our Argos lights to bring the Christmas spirit into our homes and lives, it was about letting light into our minds to remove the darkness...into our hearts to bring love and into our souls to foster peace and good will towards all. He immediately said back to me “yes but let’s start with the fairy lights and all that later shall we” totally dismissing my point I felt. Anyway, we were both a little annoyed at each other, and at exactly that point came into the shop a lovely woman whom we deliver newspapers to. She was coming in to settle her bill. She is one of those wonderfully wise and balanced people, they type that are somewhat rare these days, and she had overheard part on mine and my brothers debate...she said she understood both our views, however as she was a devoted, practicing Christian, she pointed out to us that in reality, from the 1st of December and up to Christmas eve, we are actually in the period of lent, not Christmas as such. Although different practices vary, she highlighted that for a rather large majority of Christians, this period was NOT for decorating their houses or indeed their Christmas trees, and that historically in fact, as per a widely held practice within the Catholic and wider Christian belief, there is no mention in teachings of putting up your Christmas tree before the 19th of December, and certainly not decorating it once it is up until the 24th of December, on Christmas eve itself as after lent ends (on Christmas eve), that is when Christmas REALLY begins...so THAT is the time we should both respectively put up and decorate our trees...NOT at the start of December like so many people do, as it just isn’t Christmas then, it’s the period of lent...Christmas in from the 24th December! So I was right (as usual), well, at least in the eyes of many of the followers of the Catholic faith, and that was good enough for me, especially if it meant I had somehow (divine intervention maybe?) managed to prove my brother wrong (once again), “when will he learn” I found myself thinking to myself, so I glanced across the crisps aisle of my shop at him where he was standing and he was already shaking his head and smiling at me. He said “how do you always do it?!” and I simply looked up and said, well, it’s all in a day’s work of being a shop keeper in Twickenham...you get a “hunch” for these things you know and inevitably the universe guides you...so if you are reading this right now and have not yet got your Christmas decorations and tree up, don’t worry...maybe you are not wrong...but are only doing as per God’s own will...have you ever seen it that way perhaps?

If any of you happen to be passing by Meet & Deep Newsagents on Hampton Road, TW2 5QB during the festive season, do pop in and say hello...you never know...we may even have our Christmas tree up by then....

Remember...

***“Try your best...
and God does the rest...”***

MY CREATURE-KINDNESS TIP OF THE WEEK...

STOP RATS/MICE KINDLY (GOOD KARMA):

Place empty bowls filled with white vinegar around places where you don’t want them to come...they will go without you having to harm them...use humane mouse & rat traps and release them back in our parkland areas. Use electronic plug-in deterrent with good reviews around your house to stop them coming (the smell of white vinegar also stops ants kindly).

For ANY specific tip to stop any “pest” or insect KINDLY (for good karma/blessings), email me:

thedeepatel@gmail.com or join my Facebook page: “INSECT LOVERS UNITE”



The Pirates of Penzance

by W.S. Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan

English National Opera at the London Coliseum until 21st February

Far from the perils of walking the plank, *Pirates of Penzance* is a buoyant “topsy-turvydom” of vivacity, of absurdity, and of life, leaning wholeheartedly into its comic incongruities and delivering a high-energy romp that is as dazzling visually as it is musically enthralling, and balancing festive frivolity with musical mastery.

Frederic, the naive and dutiful accidental apprentice to the titular pirates, anchors the show. He is portrayed with charisma and boundless energy by William Morgan, who cuts a confident path, equally able with the comedy and the melody, alongside the spectacle of swashbuckling pirates, virtuosic maidens, bumbling constables, and, of course, the iconic modern Major General himself, a game Richard Suart. Alongside him, Isabelle Peters as Edith delivers stunning vocal agility with impeccable comic timing.



John Saviourin’s Pirate King offers a masterclass in larger-than-life faux-villainy. Yet the balance of sketch-show skills with deep resonant vocals, exudes a warmth that belies his character’s criminal profession.



Nevertheless, it is the ensemble that elevates *Pirates of Penzance* to genuine greatness. Sullivan’s score, performed in a happy, tinsel-tinted timbre, fills the cavernous Coliseum with infectious melodies. The ENO orchestra, masterfully conducted by Natalie Murray Beale, is a triumph, oscillating between thunderous crescendos and delicate, nuanced passages with the precision of a ship navigating a storm.

Complementing this auditory brilliance is a bold set design, centred on a giant circular façade, reminiscent of a porthole of the Pirates’ ship. This dynamic feature frames the action with remarkable versatility, shifting focus between expansive, high-energy group scenes and intimate moments of introspection. The design makes clever use of the Coliseum’s soaring stage height, with ship-inspired elements

lending an appropriately seafaring sense of scale to the production.

The visual vibrancy has a synesthetic impact, combining colour, light, and melody into a unified sensory experience. Revival director Sarah Tipple has put Mike Leigh’s ship to sea again, praiseworthily maintaining a balance between chaos and control.

The vibrant melodies and mischief of ENO’s *The Pirates of Penzance* continued swirling in my mind, this technicolour triumph a tonic against the chilly December evening as I returned to the streetlights of suburbia.



Read Brent Muirhouse’s review at www.markaspen.com/2024/12/03/pirates-penz-eno

Photography by Craig Fuller



Robin Hood and the Christmas Heist

by Chris Bush

Rose Original and Youth Theatre at the Rose Theatre, Kingston until 5th January

Robin Hood and the Christmas Heist is a play that not only encapsulates the very heart of Christmas in a natural yet surprising way, but is filled with so many twists and turns, that it takes the audience on an emotional Sleigh Ride!

Toe tapping pieces cleverly choreographed by Olivia Shouler and marvellous musical numbers, masterfully made by maestro Matt Winkworth, using traditional Christmas songs and carols, make a hearty fully festive treat for all the family.



Anisha Fields' design is simple and beautiful, allowing for focus more on the action. The effective use of props, sound (Annie May Fletcher) and lighting (Jai Morjaria) seamlessly create visually breathtaking scenes.



Rudolph, the great stag, lights up the stage and adds to the magic of any scene he is in. He moves so naturally that Rudolph transcends being a mere prop. The castle heist has one group of outlaws breaking into the castle via the chimneys, while others distract the guards by wassailing. With its use of spot-lit style, it is film noir meets Johnny English!

No Robin Hood tale would be complete without the Sheriff, and boy did we get THE Sheriff whom everyone loves to hate. Andrew Whitehead's camp and ostentatious performance is hilarious yet dark and twisted; and his musical number *New Broom* is a *Chicago-cum-Cabaret* treat! Emma Manton makes a marvellously maternal Marian, and Matthew Ganley portrays Robin Hood's sincerity, his politics ... and his dry humour.

Everyone weeps, laughs and is fully involved in the tale told by the Rose Youth Theatre. Its energy and perfect portrayals, such as Ellie's Searle's superlatively strong willed Scarlett, make this a four-dimensional story. Louie Mckillop's comedic timing and jittery body language makes his hilarious Prince John a weirdly relatable star. Amelia Forster is moving as the sweetest Sprout, whose kindness even to the evil Sheriff seems natural and genuine.

Whitehead's portrayal gives the Sheriff's story a touching development that will warm the coldest of hearts. It really highlights what Christmas is all about, and is the catalyst to the biggest twist of the whole story.



Read Viola Selby's review at www.markaspen.com/2024/12/07/robin-hood-xmas-heist

Photography by Mark Douet

Messiah

by George Frederic Handel, libretto by Charles Jennens from The Bible and Prayer Book
Wild Arts at Smith Square Hall, Westminster, and on tour until 19th December

Now, here is a *Messiah* that speaks. Handel's most popular work often is a spectacle that shouts or a recital that whispers. But when Handel, in a frenetic three weeks and three days wrote these quarter of a million notes, they burst from him as a statement of his faith, spoken to his fellow human beings. The concept of this production, and its simple staging by established director Tom Morris, is to speak directly to the audience. The singers and musicians are intimately part of the audience, seated around them. From the harpsicord, Orlando Jopling conducts a dozen musicians, some with period instruments. Violins and viola stand throughout, providing an immediacy with the audience to whom they too speak.



There are just eight singers, who also comprise the chorus. No longer an anonymous crowd, they are individuals, who speak as us. Christ, the Messiah, features in the work only by reflection in the emotional involvement of the ordinary person, embodied in the chorus.

However, in the comparative intimacy of Smith Square Hall, once "Queen Anne's Footstool", all eight sing as soloists, giving the opportunity to appreciate the timbre of each voice. There are some remarkable examples from amongst the best of our mid-career opera and concert singers.

Messiah is best known for its choruses, and the performers bring out the meaning and emotion of each of these large set-pieces. Often overlooked though are the final choruses that lead into the *Amen* chorus. With the preceding bass air "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be rais'd", and an angelic fanfare from a pair of natural trumpets in the organ loft, it really packs a punch.

Messiah is a Christmas staple, yet the Christmas story is only referred to tangentially. It more looks forward to Christ's defeat of death and the second coming. In our "confused and broken world" it points to an optimistic future. Handel and Jennens had no uncertainty about their faith and no doubt that, in the fullness of time, the world would be changed for the better.



However, there is no doubt about the future of Wild Arts' *Messiah*. It will certainly be back next year and into the future. It is a triumph!

Read Mark Aspen's review at www.markaspen.com/2024/12/09/messiah

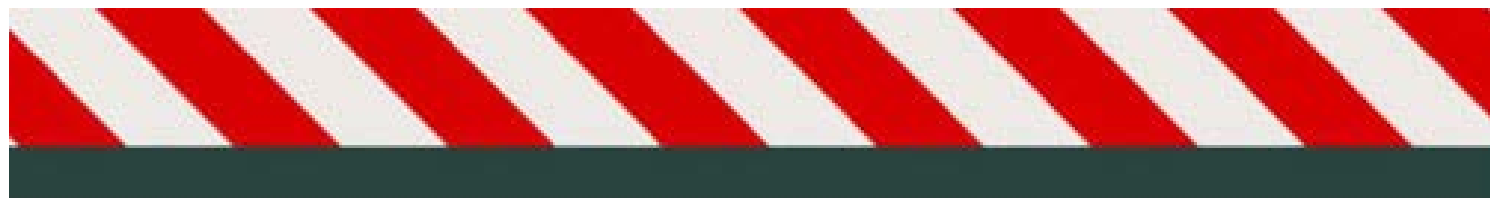
Photography by Steve Gregson

Free Christmas event at Whitton

Community Centre

From Chronically Marvellous

This Sunday 15 December, local charity Chronically Marvellous is hosting a free Santa's grotto with a Christmas lunch for residents and their little ones.



Join Us for a Festive
Christmas Party!
Hosted by Chronically Marvellous



The free event will feature a delicious carvery and an afternoon packed with kids' entertainment. The little ones will also have the chance to meet their favourite mascots.

What's more, the Deputy Mayor of Richmond, Cllr Kuldev Sehra, will join local families to celebrate this wonderful occasion. Come along with your family and friends and fill the day with festive cheer!

- **Date:** Sunday 15 December
- **Time:** 1 to 4pm
- **Location:** Whitton Community Centre, TW2 6JL

[Chronically Marvellous](#) is a local charity providing emotional and practical support for people living with a long term health condition or chronic illness and mental health at every stage.



St Mary's University

St Mary's Athletes Win Team Medals at European Cross Country Championships

Five athletes from the EPC and EA Talent Hub at St Mary's University have won team medals with Great Britain at the SPAR European Cross Country Championships.

Alumna Izzy Fry came 14th overall in the Senior Women's race, and won a Team Silver medal with GB in that category.



Five athletes from the Endurance Performance Centre (EPC) and England Athletics (EA) Talent Hub at St Mary's University, Twickenham (SMU) have won team medals with Great Britain at the [SPAR European Cross Country Championships](#).

[Seven current and former athletes](#) from St Mary's were selected to compete at the European Championships which took place on Sunday 8th December in Antalya, Turkey.

Current student Mia Waldmann and alumna Megan Gadsby took home the Team Gold medal with GB in the Women's U23 category. In the race, Mia came in 6th place overall and Megan at 23rd.

In the Senior Men's race, alumnus Ellis Cross and EA Talent Hub athlete Rory Leonard took home the Team Bronze medal with GB. Rory finished in 9th place, while Ellis came in at 25th.

For Ireland, current student Frank McGrath came in 62nd place in the Men's U20 category.

Speaking on these results Performance Coach and EPC Co-ordinator Craig Winrow said, *"We're thrilled to see such excellent individual results for all athletes, as well as five athletes winning team medals for Great Britain. St Mary's has a strong tradition of excellence at the European Cross Country Championships, and it's great to see that legacy continue."*



Travel & Tourism Student Wins Jack Petchey Award for Dedication, Ambition & Leadership

Level 1, Exploring the Aviation Industry student, Darius Neamtu, won a Jack Petchey award this term for his dedication, ambition, and leadership skills. He is described by his classmates and tutor as destined for greatness!

The Jack Petchey Achievement Award Scheme recognises the positive contributions, efforts, and endeavours of young people aged 11-25 across London and Essex.

These achievements include being a great role model, volunteering, overcoming personal challenges, and supporting others over and above expectations.

Each term exceptional students are nominated by their classmates and teachers to win a Jack Petchey award. The winner receives a £300 grant, which can be used for anything that will benefit the class outside of necessary materials, which are provided by the college.

Darius's tutor, Keivin, commented on his achievement:

"Darius has shown unwavering commitment to his studies, with his eye firmly set on a future in aviation as a pilot. His determination is inspiring, and his focus on achieving his dream is matched by his kindness and ability to bring out the best in those around him.

Not only does he excel academically, but he is also a natural-born leader. His classmates look up to him for guidance, and his supportive and inclusive nature creates a positive environment wherever



he goes. He is a shining example of what it means to chase your dreams while uplifting those around you. This is a totally well-deserved recognition, and we look forward to seeing him soar—both figuratively and, one day, literally. Well done, Darius!"

The class will be using their award money to take a trip to The London Dungeon, exploring one of the capital's popular tourist attractions, followed by a game of bowling to work on their team building skills.



[Check out our courses and how to apply for 2025 entry here.](#)

Rotary's STEM project to support school children in Ukraine

From Rotary Kew Gardens

Rotary clubs in Kew, Kyiv and Kharkiv have been working in partnership to assist the education of Ukrainian children. This year, they launched a STEM project to help rebuild Ukraine.

The charity's first [project for schools in Ukraine](#), launched in January 2023 and raised £100,000 to help Ukrainian children whose schooling has been disrupted by damaged schools and long-distance learning due of electricity cuts and missile alerts.

The donations have supplied over 100 laptops, storage batteries to three schools to provide electricity during power shortages, and other educational items including a manikin for practicing artificial respiration and a colour printer. This project is ongoing, with logistics handled by Rotary UK and a Rotarian in Kyiv.



Recently, a member of Rotary Kew Gardens visited 12 schools in Kharkiv, Kyiv and western Kiev. During their two-week stay, they inspected the donated items and developed plans for future donations.

Rotary's new STEM project

This year, Rotary Kew Gardens launched a new project to help the education of children in Ukraine. The charity decided to start rebuilding Ukraine via the Science, Technology, Engineering and

Mathematics (STEM) education of secondary pupils, initially at one school and then expanding to others.

The charity has reviewed the available laboratory and engineering equipment at the first school and is planning to acquire further top-quality equipment to support this school in achieving outstanding STEM education in biology, chemistry, physics, and engineering. The objective is to nurture future engineers and entrepreneurs to help rebuild Ukraine.

This project is unique, and Rotarians do all their work pro bono, so 100% of all donations are committed to the project. The charity is now raising another £50,000 for 3D printers at some schools, and will equip one school with STEM educational items to achieve outstanding results.

If you would like to make a donation, visit [Rotary's Crowdfunder page](#).



Hampton Kempton Waterworks Railway receives significant donation

From Hampton Kempton Waterworks Railway

The generous donation from Middlesex Freemasons Twickenham Lodge will provide essential furniture and visual displays that tell the story about how the railway played a vital part in the provision of clean drinking water to London in the early 20th century.

As part of their community engagement project, Hampton Kempton Waterworks Railway (HKWR) volunteers recently completed their new visitor hub, designed for local schools, educational institutions, and visitors to learn more about HKWR's rich industrial history.



Robert Heath, Treasurer of Twickenham Lodge, presented a cheque to David Allan, President of HKWR who said,

"We are delighted to receive this donation that will make such a difference to HKWR's endeavours to further inspire and engage with the local community about the railway's historical purpose, as well as its future ambitious restoration plans"

HKWR is embarking on a £1.8 million fundraising programme to further extend and reinstate the railway to give visitors a more enhanced and interesting steam passenger journey through open country and woodlands, and pass by a reservoir which is a bird sanctuary and Site of Special Scientific Interest.

HKWR volunteers organise events at the railway regularly.

Find out about [Hampton Kempton Waterworks Railway](https://www.hamptonkemptonwaterworksrailway.com).



England XV to Face France XV at Allianz Stadium

England Rugby has today announced that an England XV will take on a France XV at Allianz Stadium, Twickenham, on Saturday 21 June 2025 (kick-off 3.15pm).

The game forms part of the preparations for England's three-Test summer tour to Argentina and the United States, with further details to be revealed in the coming weeks.

Commenting on the game, England Men's Head Coach Steve Borthwick, said:

"This game presents an exciting opportunity to see some of the rising stars of the game in action.

"It's always an incredible occasion when England faces France, and we're looking forward to creating a memorable experience for everyone involved."

"The match will be a valuable opportunity for the players to test their skills against a tough opponent and strengthen their chances for tour selection."

Tickets for the clash will go on sale on Monday 13 January 2025, via the England Rugby website. Early-bird prices will start at just £20 for adults and £10 for under-16s.

As part of the ticket, supporters will also have the opportunity to watch the RFU County Championship Finals, setting the stage for a perfect day of rugby for fans of all ages.

The action kicks off at 10am with the Jason Leonard County Championship Under 20s Division One final, followed by the Gill Burns County Championship Division One Women's final at midday.

After the England XV vs France XV match concludes, the day will wrap up with the Bill Beaumont County Championship Division One Men's final at 5.15pm.

Kent's senior men's team, Yorkshire's senior women's team and East Midlands men's U20s will be looking to defend their titles after their impressive victories in last year's competition.



Match Preview: Chelsea v Brentford

Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know ahead of Brentford's Premier League game against Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Sunday (7pm kick-off GMT)

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford travel to face Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Sunday evening (7pm kick-off GMT).

The Bees, having made it 22 points from a possible 24 at home with a 4-2 win against Newcastle United last weekend, will be looking for another positive result in the capital against the title-chasing Blues.

Analysis, team news, match officials and more. Here's everything you need to know ahead of the game.

Pre-match analysis

Stephen Gillett, Playmaker Stats: Christmas cracker expected from Premier League's best attacks

Brentford's clash against Chelsea promises to be a cracker, as it pits the Bees against the only side to score more Premier League goals than them this season.

Thomas Frank's side have a 100 per cent winning record at Stamford Bridge since their promotion to the top flight in 2021, but Chelsea currently sit second in the table and have gained momentum this season under former Leicester City boss Enzo Maresca.

With 35 goals already this season, Chelsea are the most prolific team in the Premier League and - much like Brentford this term - they have been devastating from open-play situations.

The Blues have scored 27 goals (77 per cent) of their goals from 'live' situations - and they are currently the only team in the top flight to score more in this phase of play than Brentford (24).

Although plenty of column inches have already been written about Cole Palmer, it is worth devoting a few more paragraphs to the undoubted orchestrator of Chelsea's attack.

A ridiculously cheeky panenka penalty in his side's epic 4-3 win at Tottenham last weekend brought up Palmer's 50th Premier League goal involvement for Chelsea, and the 22-year-old has been sensational since moving to west London from Manchester City prior to the start of last season.

Palmer's aforementioned half-century of goal involvements consists of 33 goals and 17 assists, meaning he has been the most productive player in the Premier League since he joined Chelsea, which is some achievement given that Mo Salah (31 goals and 18 assists) and Erling Haaland (40 goals and six assists) trail in his wake.

Something of a throwback to playmakers of old, Palmer's ability to make difficult things look easy marks him as a special talent.

Although deployed as a No.10 on paper, Palmer can drop deep and spray killer passes - he currently leads the league for key passes (40) - or sprint into channels to pose a goal threat himself, and Brentford's task this Sunday is to get a handle on Chelsea's will-o'-the-wisp.



As Brentford head coach Frank will no doubt reinforce to his troops, however, the Bees have more than enough weapons at their disposal to cause Chelsea big problems.



Bryan Mbeumo (nine goals and two assists) and Yoane Wissa (nine goals and a single assist) both clicked into double figures for Premier League goal involvements after last weekend's 4-2 win over Newcastle, and Chelsea will have a job on their hands keeping them quiet.

High-quality chance creation and clinical finishing have been key to Brentford's prolific start to the campaign, and Mbeumo

and Wissa have set the benchmark. Notably, both players have a goals/shot-on-target rate of 0.67 - which, in other words, means 67 per cent of their shots on target have rippled the back of the net.

Given the firepower both sides possess, it is easy to predict goals on Sunday. It will be fascinating, however, to see how Maresca and Frank set about trying to defuse the strengths, and exploit the weaknesses, of in-form opposition.

Scout report

Dan Long, Sky Sports: Maresca has Chelsea on the path to success

A semblance of normality returned to Stamford Bridge last season.

Having finished in the relatively unknown territory of 12th in 2022/23, despite much of the season camped in mid-table, under Mauricio Pochettino, Chelsea lost just one of their last 15 Premier League games to finish sixth and secure a return to European football after a rare season away.

With breakout star Cole Palmer at the heart of it all, they reached the semi-finals of the FA Cup and the final of the Carabao Cup, too.

"They're going to be much better next season," Pochettino said after the final day win over Bournemouth. "They're going to have one year experience, tough experience. That's the advantage of being solid and consistent and not too many changes."

Speculation swirled about the Argentine's future towards the end of the season, amid rumours of tension behind the scenes and, on 21 May, his exit - by mutual consent - was announced. After Graham Potter, he was the second Blues manager in succession to last less than a year in the job.

Fresh from leading Leicester back to the top flight at the first time of asking, Enzo Maresca replaced him a fortnight later. "He is a highly-gifted coach and leader that we are confident can help fulfil our vision and competitive goals for the club," said the club's ownership group after handing the Italian a five-year deal.

The sale of homegrown talent Conor Gallagher to Atlético Madrid did not go down well, nor did the freezing out of Raheem Sterling, but Maresca likes to work with a far smaller squad than Chelsea are used to and he quickly set about making the necessary adjustments. The club had a net spend of around £30 million as a result, despite plenty of movement in the market.

What has happened since has shown that Pochettino's prediction was absolutely right.

Let's start with the Conference League. Maresca has often totally rotated his side in Europe, giving players like Renato Veiga, Mykhailo Mudryk and João Félix a chance to shine - and even the second string are far too strong for this competition.

They have won all four of their games so far, scoring 18 and conceding only three. Eight of those came in the 8-0 demolition of Armenian club Noah, which set a new record for the biggest win in the competition's history.

They are out of the Carabao Cup but will fancy their chances of progression in the FA Cup given they face Morecambe, who are fighting for their lives at the bottom of League Two, in the third round next month.

Now, to the Premier League. In recent weeks, Maresca has made it clear he does not believe his side are in the title race. When pressed on the issue - which he has been many times since - he has been keen to stress the likes of Liverpool, Arsenal and Manchester City have more experience than his newly-constructed side.

But when they sit second in the table, as the joint-top goalscorers, with the third-best defensive record alongside Nottingham Forest going into the weekend, it is easy for even the most casual fan to disagree. Such a record so close to the midway point of the season is to be commended.

Maybe it is a mind game from Maresca, designed to ease pressure, but - though he is Pep Guardiola's former assistant - he does not seem the type. It does not feel as though there is internal pressure anyway; success will come if they stay on the path they are on now.

If it is not the Premier League, a domestic or European trophy will certainly earn Maresca plenty of credit. The Conference League - which they are favourites for - would certainly do the trick.

But the fact Blues have been singing, "We've got our Chelsea back" is, arguably, the biggest success of all so far.

In the dugout

Enzo Maresca

Enzo Maresca played in the academies of AC Milan and Cagliari in his native Italy before turning professional in 1998... with West Brom.

After a season-and-a-half at the Hawthorns, the midfielder signed for Juventus. He only played 37 league games for the club in four years, though, and spent time on loan at Bologna and Piacenza.

Maresca - a 15-time Italy Under-21 international - then spent time at Fiorentina, before joining Sevilla in 2005. It was in Spain that he spent the most successful years of his career. Across a four-year period, he won the UEFA Cup twice, the Copa del Rey, the Spanish Super Cup and the Super Cup.

He went on to play for Olympiacos, Malaga, Sampdoria, Palermo and Hellas Verona before retiring from professional football on his 37th birthday in February 2017 - and being appointed assistant at Ascoli four months later.

Less than a year after starting work as Man City's Elite Development Squad manager, Maresca was headhunted by Parma in May 2021, but he lasted only 14 games as head coach before being sacked. He later returned to City as Pep Guardiola's assistant, but departed again one year later to take up the vacant managerial position at Leicester.

In June 2024, after leading the Foxes to the Championship title, he was announced as the successor to Mauricio Pochettino on a five-year contract at Chelsea.



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