

Twickenham & Richmond TRIBUNE

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4th February 2022



TickerTape - News in Brief

Kew Neighbourhood Association is looking for a new trustee

Kew Neighbourhood Association is seeking a trustee with HR skills to join their Trustee Board. Trustees give their time for free, committing to four evening meetings a year, plus Kew Neighbourhood Association's AGM, and use their skills outside of these meetings to support the small local charity, allowing it to run effectively and continue to help Kew's older and more vulnerable residents. Contact Abi on 07951293319 or email mail@kna.org.uk for more information.

Share your views in the Adult Social Care survey

If you receive Adult Social Care services we are asking you to take part in a national survey. Letters with questionnaires have been sent out to around 1,200 people last week and must be returned to the Council by Friday 18 March. The 2021-22 Adult Social Care Survey is co-ordinated by NHS Digital and asks residents to give honest feedback about their experiences. Those contacted will already be using care and support services paid for or arranged by the Council. This means they may live in a care home, attend a day centre, have a care worker, use meals services or have an allocated worker within the Community Mental Health Team. The questions allow residents to evaluate their quality of life, overall health and how easy they find it to access help and information.

Council worker jailed for fraud

A council officer has been jailed, for two years and two months, for the theft of £76,000 from the council's social care budget.

Richmond Carers Centre are recruiting

Richmond Carers Centre are currently recruiting within their Adult Carers Support Team for two roles, Adult Carers Support Worker and Adult Carers Activities Coordinator. Richmond Carers Centre provides information, advice and support for carers aged over 18 and services for young carers aged 5-18 years living or caring for someone in Richmond upon Thames. As an Adult Carers Support Worker you'll be part of the Adult Carer Support Team at Richmond Carers Centre. You will provide carers with advice, information and emotional support either face-to-face, via email and through the dedicated telephone support line. Much of your work will involve actively listening to carers and formulating packages of support. As an Adult Carers Activities Coordinator, you'll be part of a small dedicated team and directly deliver the leisure break activity programme. You will plan, deliver, promote and review a programme of activities for adult carers, including outreach activities and leisure events, as well as group work to help enhance carers' health and wellbeing. Find out more about the roles [HERE](#)



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'If it's Friday, this must be Twickenham Green', quipped TwickerDuck. It's certainly not Belgium, retorted TwickerSeal! Most of your readers won't have a clue as to what you're on about sighed

TwickerMole! Don't worry, our readers know their films said TwickerSeal.

And yes, another Friday and another very large gathering of young people on Twickenham Green. This has become a regular occurrence on the Green, at least once a month. It tends to be rather loud and raucous, with lots of underage drinking; TwickerDuck was worried about a young girl collapsed on the Green vomiting, while a friend held her head up!

Later, a Parks Patrol arrived on the scene and managed to disburse the gathering. TwickerSeal spoke to one of the patrol officers who said they believed these gatherings were organised on Snapchat, bringing people in from a wide area.

TwickerSeal couldn't help but sympathise with these young people. They just wanted to socialise and have some fun; what's wrong with that? In his day there were local cinemas, an ice-skating rink and a Lido. What do the young people have now?

If only there was something like a riverside development that could create a public space with facilities for residents of all ages. Imagine that! If such a thing existed the council would probably just plonk a block of luxury housing on top of it, TwickerMole said cynically.

Don't be silly, said TwickerSeal, the council has residents' best interests in mind ... don't they?



COVID 19

Teresa Read

World Health Organization

Weekly Epidemiological Update

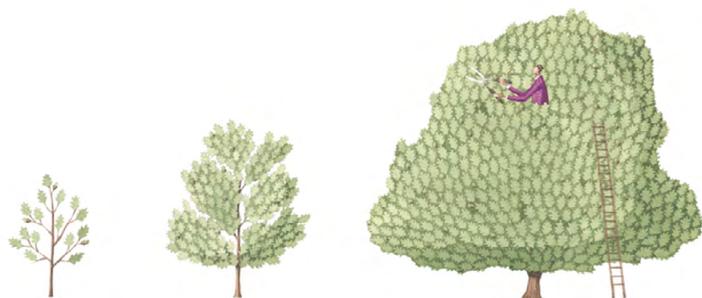
1 February

Globally, during the week of 24 to 30 January 2022, the number of new COVID-19 cases remained similar to that reported during the previous week, while the number of new deaths increased by 9%. Across the six WHO regions, over 22 million new cases and over 59 000 new deaths were reported. As of 30 January 2022, over 370 million confirmed cases and over 5.6 million deaths have been reported globally

At the Regional level, increases in the number of new cases were reported by the Western Pacific (37%) the Eastern Mediterranean (24%) and the European (7%) regions, while a decrease was reported by the Region of the Americas (20%) and the South-East Asia Region (8%). The number of new cases reported in the African Region remained similar to the previous week. The number of new weekly deaths continued to increase in the South-East Asia Region (41%), the Eastern Mediterranean Region (32%) and the Region of the Americas (16%), while the African Region reported a decrease of 7%. The incidence of deaths remained similar to the previous week in the European and the Western Pacific regions

Local Covid total cases to Friday 4th February 2022

Richmond upon Thames	52,431 (47,928 previous week)
Kingston upon Thames	47,693 (43,651 previous week)
Hounslow	81,037 (74,093 previous week)
Wandsworth	95,053 (87,141 previous week)



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The Tree Agency



COVID IN THE NEWS THIS WEEK

Sky News, 4 February 2022: COVID-19: Europe entering 'plausible endgame' to pandemic, WHO director says

Mint: 4 February 2022: South Africa warns of another covid wave, monitors rise in Omicron variant cases

USA Today, 3 February 2022: Boosted Americans 97 times less likely to die of virus than unvaccinated; CDC predicts 75,000 more deaths by Feb. 26

ABC News Daily, 3 February 2022: Queensland, random testing reveals COVID prevalence on Gold Coast

The first News, 3 February 2022: Poland reports 54,477 new coronavirus cases on Thursday, 307 deaths

Reuters, 3 February 2022: Portugal to drop COVID test requirement for arriving passengers

The Times, 2 February 2022: Half-term holidays in doubt as Spain keeps ban on children with one Covid jab.

DW News, 2 February 2022: Germany mulls looser COVID restrictions as cases keep rising.

CNA, 1 February 2022: High volumes of COVID-19 hospital waste threaten health: WHO

The Guardian, 30 January 2022: Schools in England reinstate Covid mask wearing rules as cases soar.

Euronews, 30 January 2022: Britain reports 62,399 COVID cases, 85 deaths.

Barnes residents encouraged to take a jab

As part of a series of COVID-19 vaccine walk-in clinics for areas with a lower take-up rate, residents in Barnes are invited to come to the Castelnau Community Centre next week, meet NHS experts and hopefully then have the jab.

Over 115,000 people have now had the first two jabs and their booster vaccination in the borough. However, there are still some people who are yet to have their first jab. In the Barnes area, we know around 40% of residents aged 16-39 have not yet been vaccinated. We want to make it as easy as possible to access the vaccine, therefore a local walk-in clinic has been organised.

In addition, we know that some people have been hesitant to have the vaccination because they have questions or concerns. To ensure that people have the opportunity to discuss their worries and get the facts, the NHS will also have a private and confidential area for individuals to meet with a health expert. There will be no pressure to have the vaccine on that day, but the facility will be there if people want it.

The information and vaccination event will be at the Castelnau Community Centre on Thursday 10 February between 1.30pm – 6.30pm.

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

Please remember that second doses and boosters are ONLY given to those who received their first dose 8 weeks' ago or more. And if you have had COVID-19 recently, you need to wait 28 days before you can have another jab.

For more information about the vaccine and other walk-ins available, visit the [South West London Clinical Commissioning Group](#)



Secret Richmond upon Thames

By Simon Fowler

It's no surprise that the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, that is Richmond, Twickenham and the other towns and villages which lie along the Thames between Barnes and Hampton, has a very long and important history.

The reason, simply, lies in the location. The cleaner air to the west of the metropolis but with easy access by river first attracted Royalty. The presence of the King brought in the upper and middle classes, who built the villas – Strawberry Hill, Asgill House and the others – that in some cases still line the river. And what once attracted the celebrities of the day, attracted the commuters once the railway arrived.

The borough's history has been well served by the three local history societies and their publications as well by a range of professional writers. However, the last general history - Janet Dunbar's 'A Prospect of Richmond' - was published forty years ago.

A new book about Richmond landed on my doormat the other day, intriguingly titled 'Secret Richmond upon Thames.' Could this be the new general history that we have been waiting for?

There are eight chapters each looking at a particular story, such as Richmond Palace or Richmond's Rock and Roll Years in the 1960s. Other topics included are: the local parks, the Poppy Factory, famous writers and explorers, and a couple of more specialist subjects, the Mortlake Tapestry Works and, rather oddly, an attempt in the 1860s to close down Kew Gardens.

Sadly, by Richmond-upon-Thames, the publisher just means the parts of the borough on the Surrey side of the Thames.

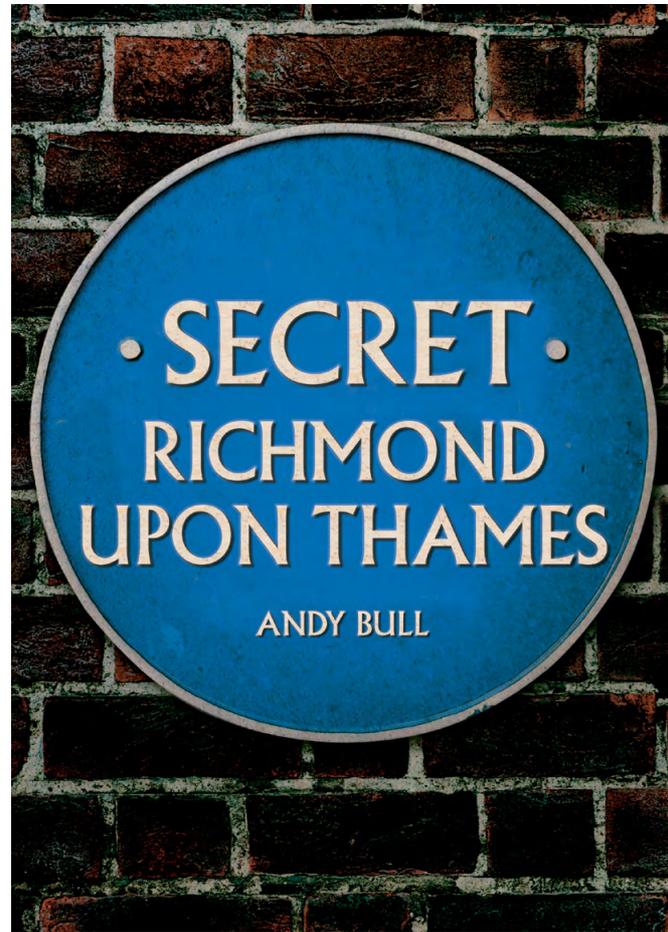
The best chapter is probably the first on Richmond Palace in which the author takes the reader on a tour around the Palace's surviving buildings and what replaced those which were demolished. The least satisfactory is the section on Kew Gardens. There's so much to write about, so why chose this case of bureaucratic infighting by long forgotten politicians.

The book is lifted by the careful illustrations and, especially by the little boxes of text that can be found in each chapter offering little factoids. Did you know that George II hunted flocks of turkeys which were reared in Richmond Park for this purpose? Only the King was allowed to shoot those poor birds who tried to hide in trees.

Were there any secrets I didn't know? Actually, one or two. But in main the author covers ground well-trodden by other local historians.

However, if you are looking for an approachable introductory history of Richmond, then this book for all its flaws might well be of interest.

Andy Bull, Secret Richmond upon Thames (96pp, Amberley, £15.99) ISBN 978-1-4456-9882-3. Copies on sale at the Open Book, King Street, Richmond and other local bookshops.



The Deputy German Ambassador Visits Richmond



Julia Gross, the Deputy German Ambassador, was in Richmond on Wednesday 2nd February at the invitation of the Richmond in Europe Association, which promotes closer links with our twin town of Konstanz in Germany. After lunch at the Petersham Hotel, where Julia was introduced to the first twinning baby, Davina Constance Marsh, REA chairman, Alan Mockford, accompanied Julia on a sightseeing stroll along the Thames to Twickenham, passing two of the new information boards about our twin European towns, the memorial to the Belgian Village on the Thames & Marble Hill House before calling in at Orleans House Gallery.



There was just time to view Eel Pie Island, the memorial to Alexander Pope & the new fingerpost sign outside the civic centre before Julia was welcomed to York House by the Mayor, Cllr. Geoff Acton, Deputy Mayor, Cllr. Suzette Nicholson, & council leader, Gareth Roberts, before being invited into the Mayor's parlour for tea & biscuits.

Julia thought that York House was one of the finest town halls that she had ever seen. She was particularly struck by the gardens & open-air theatre.



Julia was pleased to accept our invitation to become an honorary member of the Richmond in Europe Association & was presented with lapel badges of Konstanz & Richmond plus a reaffirmation commemorative mug for use in the German Embassy. In return she presented REA with a mug depicting Berlin.

Julia has agreed to come to Richmond again in the spring to visit a local school to promote the teaching & learning of German & to meet REA

members. Before her departure there was, of course, the obligatory photograph by the fingerpost sign outside the town hall as the Council of Europe flag flew overhead.



Are Children Playing on Brownfield Land?

It can be seen from the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (LBRuT) planning website that there are a lot of objections to the Council plans for Twickenham Riverside. The objections far outweigh residents' support comments despite the flood of emails sent to residents, by a political party, showing photographs of a derelict car park owned by the Council purported to represent the Twickenham Riverside site for development.

Residents are not the only objectors to the Council's plans. The Twickenham Riverside Trust which has a duty to look after the land, with an initial 125-year lease, is also concerned and is disputing a Council Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO).

However, if the CPO is to go ahead LBRuT must provide an Open Space Replacement – the land is public open space, designated by the Council in 2014.



The Diamond Jubilee Gardens is a prime location overlooking an idyllic spot on the River Thames. Five floors of Hopkins flats are proposed, to be sold by a West End estate agent who has also been assisting LBRuT with affordable housing planning documents. –

the affordable housing is not on the prime site but is to be segregated to the side of Water Lane.

The Twickenham Riverside Trust has recently sent documents to the Council concerning the “Replacement” of the current children’s playground in Diamond Jubilee Gardens, disputing the designation of the land as “Brownfield”, i.e., land which is usually disused or derelict and may have been used before for commercial or industrial purposes. Not so in the case of “Twickenham Riverside”, once the home of many famous people who lived in Richmond House for centuries before the then Council built the popular Twickenham outdoor swimming pool.



Twickenham Lido 1960s, Image courtesy of Alan Winter

Thus, the Trust has asked for a review of the Brownfield Land Register as the land has been used as parks and recreation areas. This includes the revitalization of the area for public use in 2005 with the opening of the children’s playground, a café and a landscaped area, followed by further enhancement of the area as public gardens and public open space.



And, with regard to the current play area, those who visit Diamond Jubilee Gardens will see that not only is there an enclosed space used for play but there is a large space for free outside play where children can be seen playing ball and running around. Add this child usage to children from the proposed 45 residential units, the proposed play areas will need to be greatly increased in size. And, of course, there is the proposed pub on the site and some customers will bring children.

Kew Village Market

This month's Market takes place on Sunday 6th February between 10am and 2pm in Royal Parade and Station near Kew Gardens station. It's the first of the year.

There will be over forty stalls selling a variety of foods and crafts. Four of whom are new to the Market: Bliss Brownies will be heaven sent for anyone with a food intolerance – they're gluten free, vegan friendly, kosher and come in a choice of yummy chocolate flavours. Superb sushi is Aki Maki's speciality – fish, chicken or vegetarian, all prepared at the market for ultimate freshness (and a fascinating glimpse of experts at work). On the home front, Flax & Fleece Company offer tactile luxury with sumptuous sheepskin rugs and lovely Irish linen throws. And – not forgetting our four-legged friends – Pads & Paws will be selling all-natural home-made dog treats for the waggiest tails.



www.kewvillagemarket.org

Join the Mayor for the Mayor's Concert featuring the Kew Wind Orchestra

The Mayor of Richmond upon Thames, Cllr Geoff Acton, will host an evening of fine music with the Kew Wind Orchestra on Saturday 5 March 2022 in aid of the Mayor's charities.

The event takes place at the The Clarendon Hall in York House. Doors on the night will open at 7pm with music starting at 7.30pm.

Tickets are priced at just £20 per person with a raffle on the night, cash bar and welcome drink upon arrival.

All proceeds raised will go towards supporting this year's Mayor's charities, Habitats & Heritage and A Dose of Nature. These charities have been chosen to help raise awareness of the impact of climate change and biodiversity loss within the borough, and also the practical and realistic steps residents and businesses can take to make a positive difference.

Book your tickets [HERE](#)



BOROUGH OF TWICKENHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

MONDAY 7th FEBRUARY. DOORS 7.30 TALK STARTS AT 8.00

A TALK BY LOCAL HISTORIAN ALAN WINTER “WANDERING AROUND EAST TWICKENHAM IN POSTCARDS”

ALAN WILL TAKE YOU ON AN ANECDOTAL WALK AROUND EAST TWICKENHAM & ST. MARGARETS USING POSTCARD IMAGES FROM THE LAST 125 YEARS. SEE HOW IT'S ALL CHANGED (OR HASN'T)

AT ST MARYS CHURCH HALL IN CHURCH STREET, TWICKENHAM.
NON-MEMBERS WELCOME - £2.50 OR JOIN UP ON THE NIGHT

Strawberry Hill House announces new tours

Strawberry Hill House have announced a new programme of events for 2022 including Gothic Romance and LGBTQ+ Heritage tours.

On the evening of 14 February, immerse yourselves in a world where romantic beauty and gothic fantasy combine. Take an atmospheric journey into the past, hearing remarkable stories from across the centuries, complete with intrigue, passion, mystery, and drama.

Guided by resident experts, the Strawberry Hill Gothic Romance Tour will reveal how his own fairytale castle inspired Horace Walpole to write the very first Gothic romance novel, *The Castle of Otranto*. Discover the tangled histories of his family as you explore different rooms and parts of this atmospheric house.



As part of LGBTQ+ History Month this February, Strawberry Hill is hosting a series of LGBTQ+ tours. Each tour will seek to explore more about Horace Walpole's sexuality by investigating the correspondence between his network of friends and acquaintances, and how this might inform our interpretation of his house and collection.

As visitors are led through the house, the tour guides will reveal how Strawberry Hill enabled Walpole to build a unique identity for himself by his radical use of architecture, design, and antiquarianism.

Find out more and book your tickets [HERE](#)

The Duchess of Cambridge has become Patron of the Rugby Football Union (RFU)

The patronage, which has been given to The Duchess by Her Majesty The Queen, closely aligns with Her Royal Highness' longstanding passion for sport and the lifelong benefits it can provide, both within our communities and on an individual level.



“It is a great honour to welcome The Duchess of Cambridge as our Patron,” said RFU CEO Bill Sweeney. “Our aim is to enrich lives, introduce more people to rugby union, develop the sport for future generations and create a successful thriving game across the country.”

“As rugby clubs have re-opened across the country, players, officials and volunteers are celebrating being back in the game together, and we know the support of The Duchess will be greatly valued from our grassroots clubs and fast-growing women and girls’ game, right up to our elite men’s and women’s England teams.”

Alongside the RFU, The Duchess has also been named Patron of the Rugby Football League.



On a cold and frosty morning

Layered up and with their breath steaming in the winter air, they shout “Ready, ready, ready” and they clearly are more than ready as each week they develop their skills for a Richmond on Thames junior school league and the annual Richmond Schools tournament.

Coaches Tom Rose and Jack Pannett put them through their paces as dog walkers stop to admire the skills and the children’s enjoyment of sport.

“If the ground is frozen, we take a session at school and run through tactics,” says Tom. “But otherwise the boys and girls are there keen to get involved. One or two have some experience of rugby but many have never played before and some of those have real potential.”

Among the new players is Adejowa Adeyemo, who has a great turn of speed and good handling skills. She says “I was surprised at how quickly I learned the rules and became part of a team. Playing sport in the morning is great because it’s easier to go into school feeling energised.”



And Hampton Hill Junior School headteacher, Alan Went, added: “The opportunity for children to be offered and to engage in high quality, encouraging and inclusive sport coaching is a key life experience. The opportunities that come with competitive sport are wonderful: a chance to participate, to try to learn new skills, to be challenged, to feel good about yourself, to feel good about others, to win and to lose, to support others and to visit places you haven’t visited before (even other schools!) - so much to celebrate.

“Heightened by a sense of loss caused by the impacts of Covid 19, the positive benefits of competitive sport are lifelong and immeasurable.”



Celebrate the richness of Costa Rica with Kew Gardens' annual orchid festival

Our stunning horticultural displays bring to life the incredible biodiversity of Central America through the culture and colours of a country home to 6% of the world's flora and fauna species.



Transport yourself to the tropics in our route weaving through the [Princess of Wales Conservatory](#), and don't miss our vibrant installations of monkeys, sea turtles and the native quetzal bird – a symbol of Costa Rican forest protection.

Along the way, discover *Ethereal Nature*, a series of installations by Costa Rican artist Dino Urpí which explore the balance, beauty and harmony of the natural world and 'bountyfulness of our planet'.

The glasshouse pond will be filled with brilliant oranges and yellows to imitate a rising sun, and the national flower *Guarianthe skinneri* will be on show in its vibrant pink glory.



Costa Rica is a role model for biodiversity conservation – it was recently awarded the inaugural [Protect and Restore Nature Earthshot Prize](#) – and a major orchid habitat.

Orchids 2022 showcases the collaboration between local experts and Kew scientists in their mission to understand Costa Rica's wonderful plant life. Book [HERE](#)

Weekends

Every Saturday*, We Are Costa Rica in the UK will present traditional Costa Rican folk dance performances at 11am and 1pm outside of the Princess of Wales Conservatory.

'Growing up in Costa Rica, being part of a traditional folkloric dance group and learning the unique dance and marimba sound passed down the generations, was a source of great pride. Living in the UK, we missed dancing, so we formed our group to celebrate Costa Rican traditions and share our culture with others.' – Costa Rica in the UK.

**Please note, the performances are weather dependant*

Council responds to resident ideas as new high street improvement schemes are progressed

A number of high street improvement projects agreed by the Council are being progressed across Richmond upon Thames, following ideas shared by local residents during the Council's 2021 Community Conversation events.

The Community Conversation is Richmond Council's engagement programme, giving residents and businesses an opportunity to meet their local ward councillors and have their say on what matters to them locally via ward specific events.

The 2021 programme was a series of dedicated discussions on the future of our high streets and town centres.

Residents were invited to join the Council and have their say, sharing their vision and ideas through small group workshops.

Some of the key feedback from all events included:

- Loss of key services (banks, post offices etc) is seen as detrimental to an area
- Small businesses and start-ups need to be supported, encouraged, and incentivised
- Sustainable options are seen as important and the way forward, such as zero-waste or repair shops
- A good balance between pedestrianised spaces and travel routes is seen as important
- Spaces should be used flexibly to provide places for interest groups, classes and hybrid working
- Visitor economy is important, especially to businesses in some areas and sectors and play an important role in helping to keep businesses open and available to local people
- 'Green and Clean' high streets are a priority

View further feedback from Community Conversations [HERE](#)

Since the Community Conversations, which ran June to October 2021, a number of public space improvement projects are already moving forward.

- **Ham Parade** - Scheme to improve trading environment for businesses and the market by enhancing the area alongside improved access for pedestrians and cyclists. Subject to further development and public consultation
- **East Twickenham** - Scheme including improvements for cycling, greening, a public mural and a city tree. Public consultation has been completed and works are due to begin this year.
- **Broad Street, Teddington** – Proposals have been submitted by local councillors and Teddington Together, including decluttering, renovation of street furniture and pavement repairs. An urban designer will review proposals and create a vision to work towards.
- **Heathfield** - Public realm work and shop front improvements on Powdermill Lane and Hanworth Road, and signage linking the two parades. Urban designers have been commissioned to work on plans.
- **Whitton** - Shopfront improvements to key shops, which would have a transformational effect on the street as a whole.
- **Hampton Hill** - A number of initiatives to create a "square" which can be used regularly for local events and become a focal point for the parade. A naming exercise for the square is currently underway.

Further consultation will take place on the detailed design and delivery of the schemes through the Council's usual arrangements.

Find local town centre and business contacts [HERE](#)



Winter Warmer Online Talk: All About Butterflies

Did you know that butterfly wings are actually transparent? or that butterflies taste with their feet?

Join May in this fascinating talk and explore the hidden world of butterflies. From migration to mimicry, we will uncover the intricate world of butterflies and their important role in our ecosystems.

Tuesday 8th Feb 2022

6:30pm - 7:30pm

Free

Register your interest [HERE](#)



Our 'Winter Warmer' online talks are free to join but please consider making a £5 donation to support our organisation. The Royal Parks is a charity that supports 5,000 acres of green space in London for the 77 million visitors each year. Your support makes all the difference!

Please note:

Our online talks are presented via Microsoft Teams and you will need a Microsoft account in order to access them. Sign up for a new Microsoft account (or sign into your existing account) [here](#).



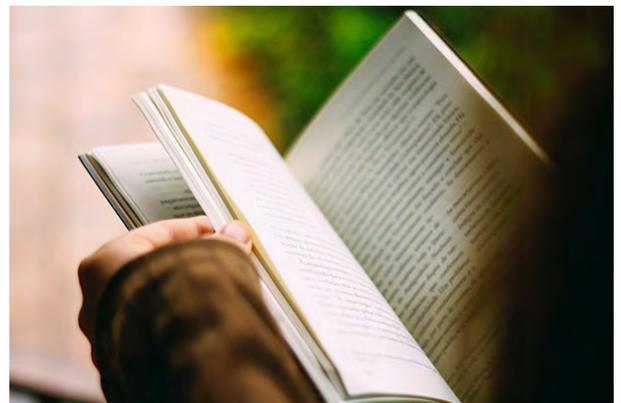
Join the Landmark Arts Centre's Lunchtime Book Club

Hosted by staff from Waterstones, the friendly lunchtime sessions are the perfect way to meet like-minded readers and discover exciting new reads.

The book club explore short stories, novels, non-fiction, poetry, and bestsellers. This month's book is Shuggie Bain by Douglas Stuart.

This month's book club takes place on Friday 25 February, from 1 to 2pm at the Landmark Arts Centre, Ferry Road, Teddington.

Book your place [HERE](#)



Have your say on the proposed new outdoor gym at Hounslow Heath

Richmond Council's Parks Team are proposing to install a new outdoor gym at Hounslow Heath and we want to hear your thoughts on the proposal.

The proposal is part of the Council's continued commitment to improving our parks and open spaces.

The proposed location of the gym is within Hounslow Heath and will be fully accessible.

The Council is proposing that the equipment installed should be a mix of items that are suitable for both those that have mobility difficulties, and other uses. It is proposed that the equipment will include a mixture of static and moving items. These items have not yet been finalised and so it is encouraged that participants of the consultation leave any suggestions they may have in the comments box for consideration.

Richmond Council would like to hear resident's views about the proposals.

Check out the full proposal and have your say [HERE](#)

If you would like a paper copy or another format, please contact consultation@richmond.gov.uk



Richmond Rugby take on Cornish Pirates this weekend

Richmond Rugby are back in action at the Athletic Ground in Richmond this Saturday as they look to bounce back following last weekend's defeat to Jersey Reds.

Get out and show your support for your local team this Saturday 5 February, as Richmond Rugby take to the field in the next round of the RFU Championship with a 2pm kick-off at the Athletic Ground.

Tickets can be bought online and will be available on the day at the gate but only card payments will be accepted.

Buy your tickets for the match [HERE](#)



The Scotland v England Six Nations match will be shown live in the club house after the game.

Richmond Council finalises plans for new bicycle hub at Richmond Station

Richmond Council has announced additional funding to ensure the delivery of a new bicycle hub at Richmond Station which will be sustainable, in line with the Richmond Climate Emergency Strategy.

The new hub will have space for 700 bicycles and will encourage residents to take more active travel options for their journeys while providing a safe and secure location for residents to park their bicycles. The new hub will have a smart technology system in place advising users of available spaces within the hub in real time.



The new multi-storey bicycle hub will be delivered in partnership with South Western Railway with investment from both Richmond Council and the Department for Transport. Richmond Council has committed £364,863 to the project, on top of an initial £300,000 investment, while the Department for Transport has allocated £2.7m to deliver the project. The additional funding will come from Richmond Council's Climate Change budget.

The Council has outlined a number of climate change aspirations for the project including:

- That the hub will have Photovoltaic Panels (PV Solar Panels) to provide a sustainable energy source to power the hub
- A system to capture and reuse rainwater to service the hub within the maintenance areas for the cleaning of bikes

The project is expected to begin work in August 2022 and to be completed in March 2023.

Cllr Alexander Ehmann, Chair of the Transport and Air Quality Services Committee, said:

“As a Council we are committed to providing more active travel options for our residents. I am delighted that funding has been agreed between all parties concerned to ensure the delivery of the Richmond Station bicycle hub.

“We know that Richmond Station remains one of the busiest public transport links in the borough. The delivery of a new bicycle hub will help to reduce resident's reliance on cars and reduce unnecessary journeys being made by car, making it easier to choose active travel options and helping to reduce congestion and improving local air quality.”

FEEL THE 'LURVE'

The adverts and window displays have already started to appear - yes, it'll be Valentine's Day soon folks, and I've been checking out some gift options. At least this year we have the freedom to enjoy the option of dining out, or even going for a romantic getaway weekend before or after. So do, please, consider supporting our hospitality industry; after all, it's been through a very rough time in the last couple of years.

Budget-wise for gifts, the sky appears to be the limit, but let's be sensible about this; you can buy a card (or make one) and give a lovely box of chocolates (heart shaped ones too) for a very reasonable price. Looking at chocolate hearts, there are lots of different hearts to choose from: **Divine**, the only Fairtrade chocolate company co-owned by its farmers, produces a very reasonably priced pack of solid chocolate, foil wrapped, hearts. Choose between vegan-friendly, Rich Dark Chocolate, Milk Chocolate, or White Chocolate with pieces of real dried strawberry. £3 an 80g pack from Waitrose, Ocado, Traidcraft or [Divine Online](#). Another favourite of mine is **Montezuma's** and their Valentine truffle hearts are delicious. With prices from £7 - you can see the full range online [here](#). But if, like me, you also enjoy a top quality marzipan heart, look no further than these **Nideregger** ones from John Lewis (£8 for a 125g box).



I know champagne is usually the drink of Valentine's Day, there are other options, like this delicious South African sparkler from Stellenbosch. **Van Hunks Rosé MCC** is fresh, unexpectedly dry, with a rich and long flavourful finish. It's Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinotage - a grape variety created in South Africa in the 1900's. Produced using the traditional method identical to Méthode Champenoise, the rosé is bottle fermented in small batches and matured in contact with the lees for approximately 30 months. Perfect for sending your loved one - in a beautiful wooden gift box too from [Not On The High Street](#) £30 each or £60 for two bottles.



If you really love someone, then bloody well tell them! And what better way than with a stonkingly great Bloody Mary from **Bloody Drinks!** As a long-term aficionado of this particular cocktail, I've tried a few over the years, and can vouch for these being bloody good! **The Bloody Box** (£25) is the ideal Valentine gift for the Bloody Mary lover in your life. It contains everything needed for the perfect Bloody Mary, complete with garnishes and snacks. You can even personalise your Bloody cans to make your gift that extra bit special - and delivery is free - see this gift pack and other options from the company at its website [here](#)



If a different cocktail is more to your taste, Pritesh Mody, founder of **World of Zing** and Channel 4 Sunday Brunch cocktail expert, has created some accomplished cocktails, including a cocktail in a card! Ranging from Salted Caramel Espresso Martini to perennial favourites such as Rhubarb Cosmopolitan and Bordeaux Cask Negroni, this is a romantic surprise through the postbox with a cute boozy card. (RRP £10 per card from worldofzing.com) The website has a whole range of cocktails and sizes for most spirit bases, including a travel pack (£15) and ready-to-pour bottles in a host of different classic cocktails from around £14 for 250ml. Giving 3-4 serves, it's great value when you compare the price of a cocktail in a bar or restaurant.



Beer isn't perhaps usually considered that romantic, but online drinks specialist **Flavourly** has partnered with **Arcade Beerworks** and the **Secret Garden Distillery**, UK's largest grower of the Apothecary Rose, to create a 'romantic', limited edition, craft beer. The **Rose Pale Ale** is brewed using distilled rose water giving the beer a delicate floral 'bouquet'. This is a modern, hazy pale ale with bold flavours of citrus, passion fruit and grapefruit, balanced with a subtly sweet malt body and interwoven with delicate rose notes. It's infused with distilled rose water derived from the Apothecary Rose, the only medicinal rose in the world, (as used in Apothecary Rose Gin). Available exclusively from Flavourly, Rose Pale Ale (4% abv) costs £19.95 for 6 - 330ml cans, £29.95 for 12 or £44.95 for 24 including two free Flavourly glasses and snack. Delivery to your loved one is free - you just need to decide if you want to make it anonymous or declare your feelings!

Talking of roses, I recently tasted a delicious pairing of strawberry cream with Tequila. It really is silky smooth, unusual and fun. Whether on the rocks, in a creamy cocktail, or just poured over ice cream, it makes a lovely Valentine's (or Mother's Day) gift.

Tequila Rose is very reasonably priced too - at around £12 a 70cl bottle - from Tesco, Sainsbury's or Amazon. My mind is already spinning with serving ideas for summer and the strawberry season!



If you're planning a stay-at-home romantic get together, you could perhaps surprise your loved one with a delivery from 44 Foods. There's a fabulous range of top quality foods in easy bundles, (you can make up your own, of course). Breakfast bundles start from £24 and there are also Staycation bundles, Date Steak Night, and a Valentine's Fish Meal for two. **44 Foods** delivers fresh, seasonal, tasty food direct from the farm to your door. Food that's packaged sustainably and with minimum waste, and at a

price that's fair to farmers and customers. Everything is top notch quality from independent producers - and the eggs were the freshest and most delicious I have had for years.



Of course you can head to the supermarket, for one of those special Valentine meal deals - they will all be offering them. According to The Good Housekeeping Institute's taste test, Aldi comes out on top this year! The budget retailer beat the likes of M&S (in second place), Co-op (third place) and Tesco.



Ben Hur

by Patrick Barlow

Richmond Shakespeare Society at the Mary Wallace Theatre

Trumpets: “David Veil Theatre Collective” producing *Ben Hur* at Twickenham’s Mary Wallace Theatre! Intriguing, given that *Ben Hur*, in my memory, was an epic 1950s movie which held records for budget and cast, while the Mary Wallace is a somewhat more modest venue, “hosting” this company of four.



Ben Hur is in the tradition of chaos comedy, which draws on influences of farce, slapstick, and commedia dell arte, whilst never becoming entrenched in any one of them. Think *The 39 Steps* or *Dick Barton*. Everything about it is presented with comedy in mind and the cast are comfortable and adept at handling the occasional blip that goes with such fast-paced, gag-laden material. The guiding principle seems to be “Tell the story, of course, but if there’s a gag to be had, sling it in there and see what happens”.

Each actor takes on multiple characters, sometimes dashing off stage for a swift costume change and switching between in situ. The four players in the cast are listed as “Edgar T. Chesterfield”, “Crystal Singer” (a reference to *Little Shop of Horrors* there, perhaps?), “Omar Lord” and yes, “David Veil” himself. These are *noms de guerre*, of course and the witty and informative programme reveals actual identities in the list of understudies as Simon Bickerstaffe, Lily Tomlinson, Tom Nunan, and Hugh Cox, respectively.

This is a top-drawer, high-energy team, with bags of talent, a thorough understanding of comedy and absolute trust in each other. In my book, those are the essential elements for a production like this. It would be both impossible and churlish to attempt to single out any one cast member, but the script provides ample opportunities for each to shine and when they do, it’s a blinder.

Read Vince Francis’ review at www.markaspen.com/2022/01/30/ben-hur

Photography by Pete Messum





The Red Lion

by Patrick Marber

Teddington Theatre Club at the Coward Studio, Hampton Hill until 5th February

Taking us through scenes of Noon, Dusk and Night, we encounter three angry men in a vicious battle of wills, destroying each other and themselves in a football changing room. Although an intense play, *The Red Lion* evokes these clashing rivalries with hard-edged humour.

Matt Beresford who plays Kidd, the ambitious football manager of the Red Lion FC, gives us elements of aggression and desperation. Beresford has an unforgettable stage presence, as he moves about the aching space with an animal instinct.



The Ian Attfield, playing Yates, the seasoned former manager, who irons football shirts with pathetic tenderness, is no less sharp. He commands the stage with moments of sadness, bitterness, and glimpses of repressed homosexuality. The static between these actors, whose characters are about to lose everything, is tangible.

Despite his bright future, the young footballer Jordan, played by Arthur Holmes, comes unstuck. Holmes takes a while to come into his element, but it is well worth waiting for. They pull together into a trio of pathos and anger. Although the basis is grim, we still can still root optimistically for a brighter outcome.

The direction by David Shortland is sensitive and the lighting, designed by Rob Arundel, atmospheric, particularly when Yates recalls his glory days. The detailed, changing room set designed by Fiona Auty, truly represents the three men's core existence. As Yates says, this is all he has. There is a poignant moment when Yates packs his tomato sauce and unscrews his coat hook.



Despite being a big admirer of the writer Patrick Marber, I did not think this was his best work. Although beautifully handled, I found the text weighty and without his usual crafting. However, it was impressively brought to life.

Read Heather Moulson's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/02/02/red-lion

Photography by David Shortland

La bohème

by Giacomo Puccini, libretto translated by Amanda Holden
English National Opera at the London Coliseum, until 27th February

There's no doubt that ENO's revival of *La bohème*, directed by Crispin Lord, is a joy. It's easy to share the boisterous bonhomie of Rodolfo (David Junghoon Kim) and his roustabout chums as they lark through interwar Paris, the setting having been transplanted a generation or two by Dr Miller. Whether conniving against their landlord, avoiding a ruinous bill or dancing in their garret, they display a recognisably fun and engaging laddishness.



Rodolfo is visited by neighbour Mimi (Sinéad Campbell-Wallace) who wants a light for her candle. No sooner have they made eye contact than they are mooning at one another in the moonlight. Allowing that the lunar glow is insufficient to find the key she drops, though, why do they not switch on the overhead lamps to shed some light? I guess energy prices are always a concern ... And as soon as their shadowed hands touch, they are in love.

When the mood turns after the interval, it is not only the promise of early love that is lost but also some of the emotional intensity. The arias of Acts III and IV are on the whole well performed but at a social distance. Perhaps after so much recent real-world deprivation and bereavement, the repercussions of poverty and Mimi's illness have to be kept at one remove.



But as I said, it's still joy that pervades this *La bohème*. The liveliness of the cast, Alder and Rice especially, enthralls the audience, and makes clear that milord Lord is quite taken by the self-mythologising of the artistic set. One leaves the Coliseum buzzing in the mild February air.

Read Matthew Grierson's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/02/03/la-boheme-eno

Photography by Genevieve Girling

Peggy for You

by Alan Plater

Hampstead Theatre Original at Hampstead Theatre

Well, whose head wouldn't spin from an insight into the iconic Peggy Ramsey's office?

The heads of the overworked secretary, an aspiring playwright and two weathered writers, who appear in this intelligently written portrait of the famous literary agent, must have been spinning like a top.

Skilfully recreating the claustrophobic yet hallowed office off St Martins Lane, a temple many of us once dreamt of entering, the set is the next best thing to getting a picture of those who could. Peggy for You recreates a day in the working life of a very prominent agent.



Only Christian names of writers were used and referred to. If like me, you look forward to googling like mad in the interval, forget it. It is a red herring. The enchanting writer and former client of Peggy's, Alan Plater, assures us that this was a deliberate ploy, and there is nothing to read into these names. Besides, Peggy apparently called her clients by their surnames. If anything, Plater is being autobiographical, writing in such beautiful detail about his one-time agent and close friend.

Tamsin Greig, a very natural actor, took on the forceful and complex figure of Peggy Ramsey, who was one of the leading literary agents of the twentieth century. Although the very young playwright and the put-upon secretary gave their best, and had a good stage presence, I really felt Greig effortlessly out-acted them. An exception was Trevor Fox, who was marvellous as Henry, an embittered Geordie playwright, who also tells Peggy some earth-shattering news.



Even as this devastatingly sad news broke, the frantic pace barely paused, Peggy refusing or trying not break down

Read Heather Moulson's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/01/30/peggy-for-you

Photography by Helen Maybanks

WIZ TALES - The COOK ISLANDS

Teresa Read



Last week's WIZ Tales article featured Hawaii, the island where Captain James Cook met his death in a skirmish with islanders. In 1773 Captain Cook explored the "Cook" islands naming them the Hervey Islands; fifty years later the Hervey Islands were renamed in Captain Cook's honour.

The Cook Islands consist of fifteen islands in the South Pacific. Avarua on Rarotonga is the capital.

Rarotonga is also the location of "Marae Arai-Te-Tonga" an ancient sacred site with remains of Polynesian stone structures.

In 1888 the Cook Islands became a British Protectorate. At the beginning of the twentieth century the islands passed to the administrative control of New Zealand. The Cook Islands Constitution Amendment Act in 1965 changed the status of the Cook Islands to a State in free association with New Zealand.

In 2017 the Cook Islands opened the world's largest marine reserve covering one million sq. km of the Pacific Ocean.



Information on the Cook Islands:

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

Captain James Cook

Captain James Cook died in a skirmish with islanders on 14 February 1779 at Kealakekua Bay on his third visit to Hawaii; Cook had circumnavigated the world twice charting previously unknown territory.

James Cook was a captain in the Royal Navy, a navigator, cartographer and explorer, born on 27 October 1728 in a village in Yorkshire, Cook served in North America where he surveyed and charted coastal waters.

In 1768 Captain Cook was sent to the Pacific by the Admiralty on a scientific voyage. Cook was tasked with setting up an observatory in Tahiti to observe the transit of Venus - a rare astronomical event. The observations were needed in the calculation of the size of the solar system that would assist nautical navigation. In 1770 Captain Cook went on to chart New Zealand and Australia's Great Barrier Reef. He made the first recorded crossing of the Antarctic Circle in 1773.

Captain Cook is also remembered for discovering breadfruit in Tahiti along with Sir Joseph Banks, the famous botanist, who sailed with Cook on HMS Endeavour. Of course, a later expedition, led by Captain William Bligh to transport breadfruit to the Caribbean from Tahiti is well known as the story of the Mutiny of the Bounty.

Breaking News:

DW News, 3 February 2022: Captain Cook's famed Endeavour found off Rhode Island, say Australian researchers

Sky News, 3 February 2022: Australian experts say they have found Cook's Endeavour but US scientists say 'not so fast'.



St Mary's University

St Mary's Announces Appointment of New Provost

St Mary's University, Twickenham has today announced the appointment of Prof Symeon Dagkas as its new Provost and Chief Academic Officer.



Prof Dagkas joined St Mary's in 2018 as Dean of the now Faculty of Sport, Allied Health and Performance Science. He has held the position of Acting Provost for the past six months, following the retirement of Professor John Charmley, the University's first Provost.

He has had an extensive career in Higher Education working at institutions including the University of Birmingham, University of East London, and Canterbury Christchurch University. He has an international reputation for his work in the Sociology of Sport, Physical Activity, Health and Physical Education, specialising in issues of social justice and equality.

Since joining St Mary's, Symeon has established a comprehensive suite of Allied Health programmes and led a range of student focused projects including a large-scale review of the academic portfolio. He is

the University's Lead for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. In 2021 he was appointed an evaluator panel member to the Knowledge Exchange Concordat.

Speaking of the appointment, St Mary's Vice-Chancellor Anthony McClaran said, "I am delighted to announce that, following a global recruitment process, St Mary's University has appointed Professor Symeon Dagkas to the position of Provost and Chief Academic Officer, with effect from 1 February 2022.

"As part of the University Senior Leadership Team, the Provost will provide coordinating leadership across all academic functions and will play a key role in determining and implementing University strategy. I welcome Symeon to the Senior Leadership Team and very much look forward to working closely with him as we move forward our ambitious Vision 2030 plans for the University's growth through partnership, research, outstanding teaching and superb student experience."

Prof Dagkas said of his new role, "It's a great privilege to be appointed Provost of St Mary's University. I have seen first-hand the energy, commitment and talent of our staff and students who work to ensure that we not only achieve great outcomes but do so in a spirit of collaboration and trust. The St Mary's community is a strong, supportive network and I look forward to continuing to work with colleagues as we drive our change agenda forward. I am grateful to the Vice-Chancellor and the Board for the trust they have placed in me. With the ongoing support of colleagues, I will do all I can to ensure St Mary's, as an inclusive Catholic university, goes from strength to strength.



St Mary's
University
Twickenham
London

Richmond upon Thames Council website mostly inaccessible to disabled borough residents, new study finds

Richmond Council has failed to fully meet a legal obligation to make its website accessible to visually impaired residents, according to a new study.

New regulations require public organisations to make all content published after September 2018 fully accessible, allowing websites and mobile apps to be used by as many people as possible, including those with impaired vision, motor difficulties, cognitive impairments or learning disabilities, deafness or impaired hearing. The deadline for websites to comply with the regulation passed last September.

Richmond Council is among dozens of London authorities that are still not compliant with UK regulations and globally-recognised accessibility standards, with the error affecting hundreds of documents and forms. This means that London residents who live with visual impairments or reading disabilities are denied access to important information and services and unable to complete forms they cannot read.

codemantra, a UK document processing company, checked Richmond Council's website against internationally-recognised accessibility standards and found that out of 500 documents, 496 were non-compliant, giving the website a total accessibility score of just 1/100 for documents. More than 11,892 of errors were found among 7,506 of pages that were scanned. Important documents found to be non-compliant on the Richmond Council website included details on the borough's Records Management Policy.

codemantra's Mark McCallum said: "While many councils have adapted websites to comply with digital accessibility regulations, we've found that the documents and forms that lie within the webpages have been largely ignored. In some cases, councils' accessibility statements do accept they have failed to make documents accessible – but this hardly helps the website users. This failure is akin to providing wheelchair access into a building, but not having an elevator once inside. Particularly as COVID infections are rising, it is crucial that sight disabled Londoners are able to access information and find support where they live."

As well as councils facing potential reputational and legal risks for non-compliance, productivity losses due to excluding individuals with vision impairment or burdening them with unnecessary barriers can be enormous. According to 2021 data published by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), there are 5,900 people in Richmond Council living with sight loss and 485 who are registered blind or partially sighted. The estimated cost of sight loss in the borough each year, including direct and indirect costs, is £75,210,000.

Mark added: "By addressing all the content on their websites and ensuring it is available to all regardless of disability, local authorities can make their communities a better place and create wider benefits."

Accessibility testing of council websites was undertaken by codemantra between November 2021-January 2022. Codemantra uses an AI-driven platform that automates digital document accessibility compliance, and transforms documents into accessible formats.

London Libraries with Spread the Word announce pan-London creative reading and writing programme City of Stories Home

- 33 London Library Services celebrate libraries as the place to make and share stories
- Original commissioned short stories from Writers-in-Residence Natasha Brown, Caleb Azumah Nelson, Jarred McGinnis and Amer Anwar
- Londoners invited to get creative at 33 free online creative writing workshops and
- enter the City of Stories Home competition



London Libraries, in partnership with Spread the Word, is pleased to announce City of Stories Home, a free six month creative writing and reading programme taking place across every London Borough and the City of London between February to June 2022. City of Stories Home celebrates libraries as the place to make and share stories in our local communities.

Caroline Rae, President of London Libraries, says:

“London Libraries are delighted that we will be working with Spread the Word to deliver City of Stories Home. With the largest network of public libraries of any city in the world, this project will take creative writing opportunities into the heart of neighbourhoods across London. Libraries are both venues for Londoners to discover culture on their doorstep and hubs of creativity where many artists and writers begin their journey. We look forward to seeing the stories that emerge from this project.”

Ruth Harrison, Director, Spread the Word, says:

“We’re proud to be working with London Libraries on City of Stories Home celebrating the essential role libraries have in our local communities from supporting people during Covid-19 to providing welcoming and accessible spaces where London’s diverse communities can be inspired to write their stories, discover new stories to read and create connections across the city.”



City of Stories Home will be launched with original commissioned short stories on the theme of home and top tips on writing short stories from Writers-in-Residence Natasha Brown, Amer Anwar, Jarred McGinnis and Caleb Azumah Nelson and short stories from emerging writers, Lizzie Damilola Blackburn, Ruth Goldsmith, Iqbal Hussain and S. Niroshini.

Londoners are being invited to get creative at their local library by taking part in 33 free online creative writing workshops during February 2022 led by writers, including Tice Cin, Maame Blue, Amita Murray, Arun Das, Charlotte Heather and Lorraine Brown amongst others. They will be able to enter the City of Stories Home competition, judged by the Writers-in-Residence. Winning writers will have the opportunity to have their story published in the City of Stories Home Anthology and take part in masterclasses from the Writers-in-Residence.

Natasha Brown, writer, says:

“London’s libraries are a fantastic resource. As a lifelong Londoner, I’ve enjoyed libraries both as gateways to new literature and serene places to work. I’m thrilled to join the City of Stories Home project, helping readers and writers to create and uncover new stories about the city we call home.”

Amer Anwar, writer, says:

“Libraries were so important to me when I was young, allowing me access to books when I might otherwise not have had it. They are such a vital resource, in so many ways, and I am very pleased and proud to be involved in a project that celebrates them and also encourages people who have been inspired by their local libraries, just as I was, to try their hand at writing too.”

The City of Stories Home Anthology will be launched in June 2022 at celebration events in local libraries. The Anthology will be available for readers and reading groups in every London library service alongside an accessible collection of short story titles from London’s independent presses curated by librarians.

City of Stories Home’s partners include Libraries Connected and RNIB Library and is supported by Arts Council England and Cockayne Grants for the Arts.



Brentford confirm signing of Christian Eriksen

Denmark international midfield player to link up with Bees for rest of season

Brentford FC can confirm the signing of Denmark international midfield player Christian Eriksen, subject to international clearance. The 29-year-old signed his contract after completing a medical assessment. He has signed until the end of the 2021/22 season.

Christian has been playing at the top level of European football for more than a decade. He excelled in the Premier League with Tottenham Hotspur and was part of the squad at Internazionale that won Serie A last season. Christian played 26 games for Inter as the Milan side won the Italian top flight for the first time in 11 years.

Christian has also been a mainstay of the Denmark team for more than a decade. He has earned 109 caps and scored 36 goals. His last appearance was against Finland in a UEFA European Championship match in Copenhagen in June, during which Christian suffered a cardiac arrest. He has been out of the game for the last seven months.

The attacking midfielder player is well known to Brentford FC Head Coach Thomas Frank. Christian played for Denmark's Under-17 side when Thomas was coach of that group. He progressed quickly through the international ranks, making his full debut for Denmark aged 18.

Thomas Frank said: "I am looking forward to working with Christian again. It has been a while since I last coached him, and a lot has happened since then. Christian was 16 at the time and has become one of the best midfield players to appear in the Premier League. He has also won trophies all over Europe and become the star of the Danish national team.

"We have taken an unbelievable opportunity to bring a World Class player to Brentford. He hasn't trained with a team for seven months but has done a lot of work on his own. He is fit but we will need to get him match fit and I am looking forward to seeing him work with the players and staff to get back towards his highest level.

"At his best, Christian has the ability to dictate games of football. He can find the right passes and is a goal threat. He also has very, very good set piece delivery, both from corners and direct free kicks. He is a player you can find with the ball, and he will come up with a solution to the problem in front of him. Christian will also bring experience of top level football to the Club. I expect him to have an impact in the dressing room and at the Training Ground.

Discussing the process of signing Christian, Phil Giles, Brentford Director of Football, said: "We first discussed the possibility of Christian joining Brentford when we heard that he would be leaving Inter. It is fantastic that he is now with us.

"Naturally the process of signing Christian was more elongated than most transfers. I understand that many people will have questions about the process. In order to respect Christian's medical confidentiality, we won't be going into any details. Brentford fans can rest assured that we have undertaken significant due diligence to ensure that Christian is in the best possible shape to return to competitive football. Now Christian has made the decision to sign for Brentford, all parties want to focus fully on football.

"We are sure that Christian will make a big impact at Brentford and on the Premier League between now and the end of the season."

Christian has been training with young players at AFC Ajax, in Amsterdam, as he builds his fitness. The move was completed with the midfielder still in The Netherlands. Christian has recently received his COVID-19 vaccination and, in order to comply with rules regarding entry to the UK, he will travel to West London in the coming days and will not train with Brentford this week.

Christian's first professional football came at Ajax, where he spent five years – winning three league titles, a Dutch Cup and a Dutch Super Cup – before moving to Tottenham. The Danish international played 226 Premier League games for Spurs, making 305 appearances in total, including one in a UEFA Champions League Final, in six-and-a-half years in North London. The five-time Danish Footballer of the Year had 18 months with Inter but left the current Italian champions in December.



England team announcement

Scotland v England, Guinness Six Nations 2022

Eddie Jones has named his England side for their opening Guinness Six Nations match against Scotland this weekend.



England will travel to Edinburgh on Thursday [3 February] as they continue preparations for the Calcutta Cup tie on Saturday (4.45pm KO).

Tom Curry will captain England, with Luke Cowan-Dickie (hooker), Ellis Genge (prop) and Henry Slade (inside centre) named as vice captains. Ben Youngs is at scrum half, Marcus Smith is at fly half and Elliot Daly is outside centre.

Joe Marchant has returned to the side after completing COVID isolation protocols at left wing, with Max Malins on right wing and Freddie Steward at full back. Kyle Sinckler starts at prop and Maro Itoje and Nick Isiekwe are locks. Lewis Ludlam is blind-side flanker and Sam Simmonds is No. 8.

Jamie George, Joe Marler, Will Stuart, Charlie Ewels, Alex Dombrandt, Harry Randall, George Ford and Jack Nowell are named as finishers.

Jones said: "As the first game, this match is hugely important to both sides and we will both want to get off to a winning start. We have a good, young team but we understand the task ahead and we'll be ready to go after it from the first kick. Tom Curry will captain the side for this game and has the respect of the team around him, in Owen and Courtney's absence. He also has the support of the vice captains and other leaders in the team such as Maro Itoje and Ben Youngs. We have prepared really well for this game. We've had a number of obstacles thrown at us, but we've overcome them as a more together group and we're looking forward to getting started."

Scotland v England is live on BBC 1 and BBC Radio 5 Live.

ENGLAND XV

- | | |
|--|---|
| 15. Freddie Steward (Leicester Tigers, 5 caps) | 2. Luke Cowan-Dickie (Exeter Chiefs, 31 caps) |
| 14. Max Malins (Saracens, 10 caps) | 3. Kyle Sinckler (Bristol Bears, 47 caps) |
| 13. Elliot Daly (Saracens, 52 caps) | 4. Maro Itoje (Saracens, 51 caps) |
| 12. Henry Slade (Exeter Chiefs, 43 caps) | 5. Nick Isiekwe (Saracens, 3 caps) |
| 11. Joe Marchant (Harlequins, 7 caps) | 6. Lewis Ludlam (Northampton Saints, 10 caps) |
| 10. Marcus Smith (Harlequins, 5 caps) | 7. Tom Curry (Sale Sharks, 36 caps) (C) |
| 9. Ben Youngs (Leicester Tigers, 112 caps) | 8. Sam Simmonds (Exeter Chiefs, 9 caps) |
| 1. Ellis Genge (Leicester Tigers, 31 caps) | |

FINISHERS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 16. Jamie George (Saracens, 61 caps) | 20. Alex Dombrandt (Harlequins, 4 caps) |
| 17. Joe Marler (Harlequins, 74 caps) | 21. Harry Randall (Bristol Bears, 2 caps) |
| 18. Will Stuart (Bath Rugby, 15 caps) | 22. George Ford (Leicester Tigers, 77 caps) |
| 19. Charlie Ewels (Bath Rugby, 26 caps) | 23. Jack Nowell (Exeter Chiefs, 34 caps) |

RCEM commend Emergency Medicine staff amid continued system pressures

The latest [Urgent and Emergency Care Daily Situation Report 2021-22](#) for the week ending 30 January 2022 shows:

- One in five ambulances were delayed in offloading by 30 minutes or more
- Bed occupancy remained high at 92.3%
- On average nearly four in 10 patients residing in hospital for 21 days or more no longer met the criteria to reside each day
- On average nearly six in 10 patients who were ready to be discharged remained in hospital each day

Commenting on these figures, Dr Katherine Henderson, President of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, said:

“It may be welcome to see some very slight improvements in performance but improvements from rock bottom do not equate to much; the health service continues to face serious pressures. Ambulance offload delays remain high, preventing ambulance crews from returning to the community and responding to emergency calls. Meanwhile the number of long stay patients residing 21 days or more, particularly patients fit to be discharged, also continue to be exceptionally high.

“In the face of extremely challenging circumstances we applaud the hard work and dedication of all Emergency Medicine staff, who continue to deliver care and work to ensure the safety of patients. Under unprecedented pressures across the system, with huge swathes of staff absences related to covid, Emergency Medicine staff have, as always, ensured the lights stayed on and patients can be seen.

“The pandemic is not over and covid has by no means disappeared. Even before the pandemic we were seriously struggling with capacity and the current high bed occupancy figures continue to be made worse by covid. Trusts must do all they can to free up beds in the system and to improve timely discharge, to support Trusts, the government must urgently address the social care crisis and provide resources and support. Discharging patients in a timely way will free up beds and promote flow throughout the hospital, alleviating ambulance offload delays and Emergency Department waiting times.”

Supporting local economic growth

A report by the National Audit Office (NAO) has found that the government's policies to stimulate local economic growth are not consistently based on evidence of what interventions are likely to be most effective, increasing the risk that billions of pounds awarded to local bodies will not deliver the intended benefits.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), working with other government departments, has responsibility for "raising productivity and empowering places so that everyone across the country can benefit from levelling up". As at November 2021, central government had committed £11 billion through policies to support the regeneration of towns and communities across the UK between 2020-21 and 2025-26, including £4.8 billion for the Levelling Up Fund, £2.6 billion for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and £3.2 billion for the Towns Fund.

DLUHC has a limited understanding of what has worked well in previous local growth programmes due to a lack of consistent evaluation or monitoring. By failing to conduct evaluations, DLUHC has wasted opportunities to learn lessons to inform future interventions, and it does not know whether previous policies achieved their aims. Instead, it has built its evidence base for what works in local growth by drawing largely on external sources such as academic studies and evaluations conducted on place-based funding from the European Union.

The NAO found that DLUHC has not consistently applied knowledge and key policy principles from this evidence base. For example, the way the interventions work makes it hard for local authorities to plan the joined-up investment strategies that the Department's research suggests are needed to promote local growth. DLUHC has received expert advice that major physical regeneration could significantly improve local economic outcomes, but the smaller-scale infrastructure investments it is funding through the Levelling Up Fund do not usually drive significant growth. DLUHC says it has intentionally designed the Levelling Up Fund to allow investment in small-scale infrastructure that improves everyday life as well as to support recovery and that major physical regeneration is largely funded through other routes.

DLUHC, with HM Treasury's approval, did not produce all three standard stages of the business case process for the Levelling Up Fund, instead consolidating the stages into a single business case. While there may have been good reasons to move quickly, bypassing the earlier stages of a business case review limits the amount of scrutiny and independent challenge. The business case it did produce, and that HM Treasury approved, did not document the substantive comparison of alternative options for achieving ministerial aims as it should have.

DLUHC has committed to improve how it monitors and evaluates its most important local growth policies. This includes a new intention to evaluate one of its past interventions designed to stimulate local economic growth, the Local Growth Fund, after previously saying it had no plans to do so. The Department has also made a promising start on monitoring and evaluating the Towns Fund. However, these plans are at an early stage, and there is significant further work needed to translate these good intentions into practical changes. DLUHC has also yet to make any progress on its commitment to an overarching local growth framework, with common metrics for evaluating local growth initiatives.

To ensure that future interventions achieve maximum impact, the NAO recommends that departments ensure they follow the guidance on developing and appraising business cases at key decision points, documenting how they have evaluated different alternatives to delivering a desired outcome. Government should coordinate the full range of its local growth programmes across Whitehall to manage dependencies between departments' work and avoid conflicting initiatives. DLUHC should also set out and publish how it intends to formally evaluate the Levelling Up Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

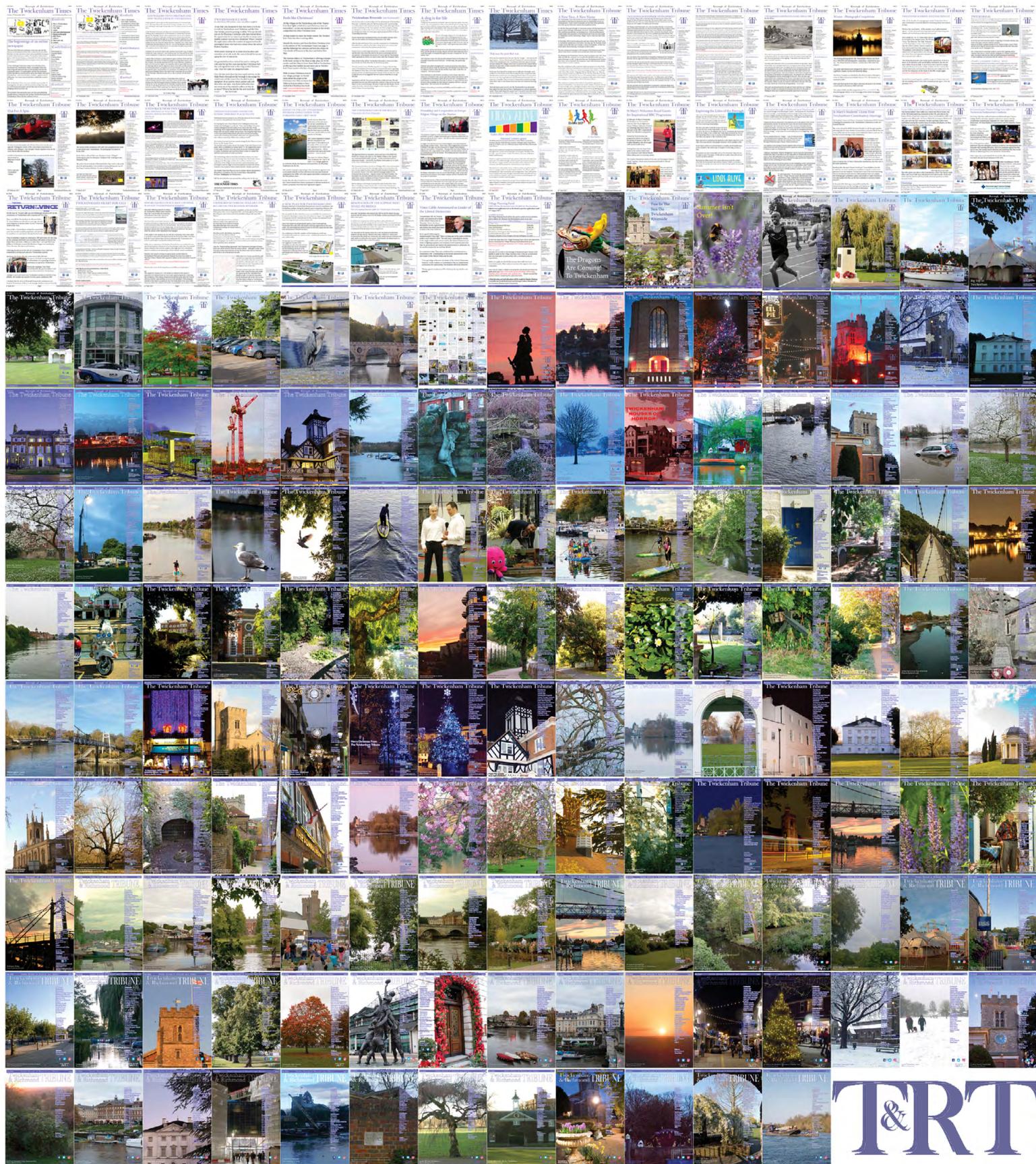
Gareth Davies, the head of the NAO, said: "The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has not consistently evaluated its past interventions to stimulate local economies, so it doesn't know whether billions of pounds of public spending has had the impact intended. With its focus on levelling up, it is vital that the Department puts robust evaluation arrangements in place for its new schemes to promote local growth."

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



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