

Twickenham & Richmond TRIBUNE

Contents

- TickerTape
- TwickerSeal
- COVID-19
- Happy birthday BOTLHS!
- River Crane Sanctuary
- Kew Village Market
- A Future History
- Hampton North Ward News
- Twickers Foodie Review
- WIZ Tales - Bulgaria

Contributors

- Simon Fowler
- Sammi Macqueen
- Lucilius
- Councillors Geoffrey Samuel and Kate Howard
- Alison-Jee
- Mark Aspen
- World InfoZone
- Richmond College
- Woodland Trust
- Brentford FC
- RFU
- NAO
- Royal College of Emergency Medicine
- LBRuT

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1st April 2022



CEMETERY
 NS OF SOME WHO
 GIBRALTAR AFTER
 DRY IN OCTOBER,
 BRING THE BATTLE
 AT SEA. OTHER



TickerTape - News in Brief

Twickenham Stadium - Saturday 2nd April

The Oxford vs Cambridge Varsity rugby match will be taking place this Saturday. Kick off is at 12:00. Large crowds and heavy traffic is expected.

Boat Race 2022 - Sunday 3rd April

The Boat Race 2022 will be taking place on the River Thames between Putney Bridge and Chiswick Bridge. The main event will take place between 14:23 and 15:23. Large crowds and heavy traffic is expected.

Oil pollution – Richmond Park

The Environment Agency is currently cleaning up an oil spill that is now in Beverley Brook, which flows through Richmond Park.

If you see any dead, distressed, or oily animals (including fish) please call the Environment Agency incident report line instantly on 0800 80 70 60 and the RSPCA on 0300 1234 999.

Hammersmith Bridge to close this Sunday

Hammersmith Bridge will be closed from 10am to 5pm this Sunday, 3 April 2022, due to the University Boat Race.

The annual Oxford v Cambridge boat races return to the River Thames on Sunday 3 April.

Hammersmith Bridge will be closed following safety experts instructing Hammersmith and Fulham Council to close the bridge to pedestrians, cyclists, and e-scooters between 10am and 5pm on the day.

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TwickerSeal has just returned from visiting friends in the beautiful Commonwealth Park in Gibraltar (which, believe it or not, used to be a car park – just like the derelict car park on Twickenham Riverside next to Water Lane, not far from the beautiful Diamond Jubilee Gardens.)

TwickerSeal watched the BBC news while he was away and saw that in Bath a grant has just been awarded for £4.7m from the Heritage Lottery Fund to reinstate a much-loved lido.

He was very excited when he heard from TwickerMole that the Council had scrapped the luxury houses and the pub for Twickenham Riverside and intended to follow Bath and apply for a large grant for a new Twickenham Lido.

In fact, to make sure they got the money the Council had decided to also reinstate the Twickenham Ice Rink and even Twickenham's cinema.

The planning application number is [1/04/FUL](#)



COVID-19

Teresa Read

World Health Organization

Weekly Epidemiological Report

Overview

29 March

Between the end of January and early March 2022, there was a consistent decreasing trend in the number of new COVID-19 cases, which was followed by two consecutive weeks of increase in cases. During the week of 21 through 27 March 2022, the number of new cases declined again with a 14% decrease as compared to the previous week. On the other hand, during the same period, the number of new weekly deaths has increased by 43%, driven by changes in the definition of COVID-19 deaths in countries in the Region of the Americas (Chile and the United States of America) and retrospective adjustments reported from India in the South-East Asia Region.

Across the six WHO regions, over 10 million new cases and over 45 000 new deaths were reported. All regions reported decreasing trends in the number of new weekly cases and four regions reported a decreasing trend in new weekly deaths. As of 27 March 2022, over 479 million confirmed cases and over 6 million deaths have been reported globally.

Total cases Locally

Richmond upon Thames	63,518 (62,387 previous week)
Kingston upon Thames	57,399 (56,366 previous week)
Hounslow	91,438 (90,291 previous week)
Wandsworth	112,334 (110,579 previous week)

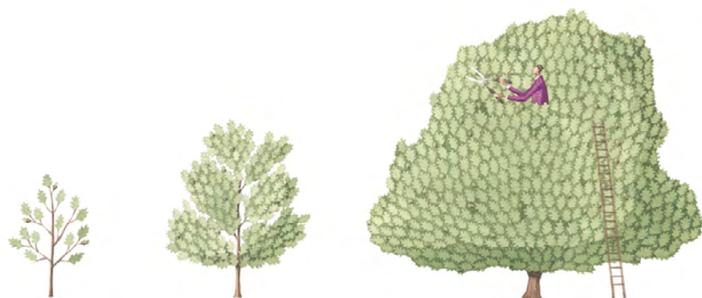
COVID IN THE NEWS

BBC, 31 March 2022: Last day of free tests in England fuels concern

SwissInfo.ch, 31 March 2022: Shanghai urges COVID lockdown patience as case numbers drop for first time in 2 weeks

The Jakarta Post, 31 March 2022: COVID-19 cases in Asia surpass 100 million

The Washington Post, 30 March 2022: Biden presses Congress for new covid funding, gets second booster shot.



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The Tree Agency



Happy birthday BOTLHS!

By Simon Fowler

The Borough of Twickenham Local History Society, known to one and all as Bottles, celebrates its sixtieth anniversary this month. It studies the history of Richmond-upon-Thames on the Middlesex side of the River. The name reflects the fact that the Society was founded before the establishment of the present counter. Members sought to 'awaken and foster an informed interest in the historic past of...Twickenham [and] to bring together all persons and bodies having an interest in the history and antiquities of the Borough.' Something to which BOTLHS still aspires today.

BOTLHS has a long tradition of publishing books and booklets. Well over a hundred cover subjects from angling to war memorials. In addition, there is a quarterly newsletter. So good, indeed, that it won a prestigious award from the British Association for Local History a few years ago. As well as including members research and news about society activities, there are also often members' reminiscences of growing up locally.

Eighty people turned up for the inaugural meeting of the Society at Strawberry Hill on 9 April 1962. The first speaker was W C Cunnington, the Borough Librarian of Heston, speaking about Historic Isleworth. Since then, there have been getting on for five hundred talks, mostly on the history of the area, with some very eminent speakers including Tracy Borman, Bamber Gascoigne and Simon Thurley. This March members heard an entertaining presentation on the birth of council housing in London from Martin Stillwell, and on 4 April Ken Howe will be talking about John Charles Buckmaster, the 'Father of Teddington Library.'



*John Paul Dean, Ferry Lane, Twickenham (c1810)
Credit: Orleans House Gallery (ref LDORL: 00178)*

The Society has been engaged in a variety of other activities. Most notably it was instrumental in establishing Twickenham Museum in 2001, after fifteen years of campaigning and fundraising. In the early years members took part in several archaeological digs in central Twickenham. Recently they investigated a newly uncovered Victorian rubbish pit.

There have also regular visits to places of historic interest locally and across the South-East. One of the first was to St Albans House in Hampton in February 1964, shortly before it was demolished. The newsletter reported that: 'The grey February day, poor state of decoration and lack of furnishings did not improve one's impression, and only the Dining and Drawing Rooms seemed worthy of note.'

Borough of Twickenham Local History Society
www.botlhs.co.uk; www.facebook.com/BOTLHS

Meetings are held at St Mary's Church Hall, Church Street, Twickenham at 8pm generally on the first Monday of the month between October and May. Membership is £8 per annum. There are also active local history societies in Richmond (www.richmondhistory.org.uk) and Barnes and Mortlake (www.barnes-history.org.uk). Both run regular lectures and have active publication programmes. All the societies of course offer a warm welcome to new members.



Comma Butterflies and Holly Blue Butterflies are two of the visitors seen locally

The urban decline of butterflies/insects has been well reported and the need for appropriate nectar rich plants and habitat. I read recently that thinking about 'baby food' is essential as caterpillars are fussy eaters and for populations to increase particular plants are required and sought out by adults to ensure the best start for their young. [Save butterflies info.](#)



Mother's Day swim for a family of Seven!



We purchased a compost bin and tiger worms from the Council years ago when we moved from a flat and had a garden at last. It has been an amazing resource to help improve the heavy clay soil and to compost our kitchen and garden waste. It is a fun way to include children in connecting with nature and environmental issues and the worms have been our 'pets' along with all the other wildlife who give so much joy when they visit our pesticide free space. Place water bowls in safe spots and wildlife friendly plants/weeds/overgrown lawn and see who pops in! Our Council now offers the following link to products for local residents interested in getting more sustainable and nature friendly: [Compost Bins and More](#) Add Composting worms for £8.



[Website River Crane Sanctuary](#) [Instagram](#)

Dear Editor,

Glossy LibDem leaflet

I have recently received through my door a glossy little pamphlet from the LibDems – a triumph of style over substance! What a shame they didn't put the same care and attention into the appearance of our Borough over the past four years by repairing the deep potholes in our roads and replacing our cracked pavements, which are now a dangerous trip hazard.

Yours sincerely,

A disillusioned resident
(Name and address supplied)

Charity awards at Kew Village Market

The community market in Kew takes place this **Sunday between 10am and 2pm**. Visitors will find forty or so stalls crowded into the streets near the station selling a wide range of gifts and food.

At 12.15 there will be a presentation of cheques to five local charities. In the decade since the Market was set up over £80,000 has been given to charities. This month:

- Down's Syndrome Association will get £1000 for a mental health project
- Otakar Kraus Music Trust also £1000 for online group sessions for young people with disabilities
- Pensford Field Environmental Trust £300 to buy a new gazebo and for annual party expenses
- Rotary Club of Kew Gardens £1000 for extra food for Richmond Foodbank
- Spear will receive £980 for exercise equipment for hostel clients



All of which adds up to the most we've given away in one go in over five years and brings our total charity donations since the market launched to a whopping £82,310

PS Our music maestro Ralph is looking for someone who can share the load of booking bands and helping with running the stage. If you're interested please email: music@kewvillagemarket.org or ask at the KVM stall on Sunday.

A Future History

Coming Home to Roost

By Lucilius

Richmond-upon-Thames, April 2026

Having increased their majority in the May 2022 local council elections, the Lib-Dems have pushed through their plans to eradicate trees in Twickenham.

In spite of 98% of residents being against it, Twickenham Riverside is now a concrete wasteland. The children's playground sits under three feet of flood water and the luxury flats remain empty. Since the Russo-Ukrainian War oligarchs haven't been able to buy them; sanctions have forbidden it.

The majestic chestnuts on Twickenham Green have all been felled to make way for the thousands of drunken revellers to party there every evening. It has been deemed too expensive to install public loos, and now all the grass has withered too.

Since they were deemed to be dangerous obstacles to the hordes of 40mph electric scooters racing along the pavements, courtesy of the Council's free hire scheme, all the street trees have been removed.



Now the local animal rights charities are up in arms and civil unrest is threatened. Is it because the dogs have nowhere to cock a leg? No, it is this.

Psittacula krameri manillensis have exterminated all the song birds; well, every bird except a few feisty belligerent magpies.

BUT ... when they come to roost each evening, the 8,600 breeding pairs of ring-necked parakeets have only got one tree left!

Photography by Kerry Walters

Kew next on hyper-local COVID jab tour!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Hampton North Ward News

Councillors Geoffrey Samuel and Kate Howard

THE WHITE HOUSE

It is now two years since The White was last fully operative. We were therefore pleased to have a meeting with senior Council officers. Whereas we fully understood the problems involved [including the fact that the YMCA which we had brought in to manage the Centre had decided some months ago not to continue], we feel very strongly that Hampton North needs an active Community Centre. The present intention of the Council is to commission a full report on The White House which can consider all the possible 'ways forward' and, perhaps, make a recommendation. The Council is open to a number of solutions. We support this in principle – although it could have happened months ago. It remains our strong view that a 'campus' solution is needed. This area includes a now derelict MUGA [multi-use games area] which the NHS is about to vacate on the closure of the Covid facility: a Youth Centre in huge premises: The White House. The situation is not helped by the decision of AfC [the Education Department] to take back this Centre from the YMCA. We have not yet received the answer to our Council question on this decision. We believe that the YMCA is not only the best 'option' but the only realistic one. An overall management of the three sites could provide economies of scale and offer a viable solution. We continue to make this one of our priorities.

POLLING STATION – ALL SAINTS CHURCH

This has been a local Polling Station for many years. Local residents – especially the elderly and disabled – have made good use of the Car Park. However after an 'incident' some six years ago, the Council then banned the use of the Car Park to the dismay of residents. With cross-party support we protested and thereafter a section – but only a section – of the Car Park was opened up. We have objected to the new Returning Officer and asked for a new 'health and safety' report as we believe the whole car park should be available.

ARUNDEL CLOSE WILDLIFE SITE

The Friends of this site held an open event last week to celebrate their work and unveil the plaque which describes the site. They have done an excellent job – which shows that the formation of a Friends Group can achieve so much. That is why we would like form a Friends of the Park next to the little Sainsburys.

CROSSOVERS

It is understandable that some car-owning families would like to park their cars on their own site. It is sometimes the deciding factor when a family considers an electric car which could then be 'charged' on the driveway. We have been supporting a resident on **Hanworth Road** on this for many months. We are also supporting two new residents. They understandably find it really unfair that they have been refused whilst neighbours under the old 'rules' were given permission. Let us know if you want us to support an application. If it seems reasonable and is acceptable to neighbours, we will do our best on your behalf.

SAINSBURYS

Last month we reported on the response we received from Sainsburys to the request we made on behalf of local residents who wanted proper check-outs to remain. Sainsburys told us that they would retain two. However – and we do not care for this – they tell us that although there will remain two dedicated check-outs, there will be times when only one of them is operative

BURTONS ROAD

We continue to receive so many objections. A resident of **Uxbridge Road** has vehicular access from Queens Road. But the Council has now closed entry to Queens Road from Uxbridge Road.! We are supporting his reasonable complaint.

SHORTER ITEMS

- **Turing House School** is soon moving. We have involved Nick Rogers, our GLA member, in trying to sort out some travel issues
- Residents of **Buckingham Road** are asking about the toilet arrangements for teams using the new pitch. We are pursuing this
- We are delighted that funding has now been found for the new pedestrian crossing in **Broad Lane** which we have actively supported
- We have raised with the Headmistress of **LEH** an issue of concern to a resident of **Hanworth Road** who lives opposite the school
- The Council is considering a new CPZ in Hampton Hill which could have some impact on our residents. Let us know if you are concerned
- We are actively involved in supporting a resident of **Stanford Close** who is understandably unhappy about an out-sourced building regulations decision on a local building
- A resident of **Sparks Close** went weeks without receiving the 'green collection' for which he had paid. We secured immediate service – and a visit to apologise!
- We are supporting a resident of **Hanworth Road** who wants an electric car charging point near her home
- We are concerned to learn of fly-tipping between **Wordsworth Road** and **Browning Close** and have asked for immediate remedial action
- We are still awaiting the answers to three important questions which we asked at the March Council meeting. We will report them in the April edition of this Newsletter.

Keep in touch with us by phone or gjshn@btinternet.com: tell us of issues which concern you: we are both here to help

The Kew Bookshop Raffle for Ukraine

Enter The Kew Bookshop's raffle to help support the people of Ukraine and for your chance to win a collection of signed books.



Like most people, The Kew Bookshop have been watching with despair as the terrible events in Ukraine unfold. The team all want to help and will be donating every penny raised from the raffle to the Disasters Emergency Committee Ukraine Appeal.

Tickets are only £2 each and can be [bought on their website](#) or in The Kew and Sheen Bookshops. Online ticket purchasers will have their ticket numbers emailed to them in advance of the draw.

The prize draw will take place on Thursday 14 April and the winner will be notified on the same day.

Enjoy an evening of gin tasting at Turner's House

Turner's House, in partnership with St Margaret's Wines, will host an evening of gin tastings in Twickenham.

Turner's father was known to exchange a glass of gin for a lift into London on local market-gardeners' wagons, while Turner produced a series of watercolours of smugglers bringing in kegs of gin.

Happily you won't need to travel by wagon, nor bring your gin in surreptitiously. Instead, join a sommelier from St Margret's Wines for a tasting of vibrant and characterful gins in the relaxing surroundings of Turner's country retreat.

The gin tasting evening will take place on Thursday 21 April from 6.30 to 8.30pm. Tickets are priced at £60 which will include a selection of gins, food and admission to the house

[Book your place](#)





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Richmond Council to offer free lifeguard training courses

Would you like to kickstart your career as a lifeguard? Would you like to work flexibly to suit your schedule? Richmond Council is offering residents the chance to train and gain a National Pool Lifeguard Qualification (NPLQ) free of charge.

Richmond Council is actively looking to train and recruit new lifeguards living and working in the borough. 95% of all UK pool lifeguards in the UK are qualified through the NPLQ which complies with industry requirements and is internationally recognised. Working as a lifeguard offers the flexibility of working to suit your own needs.

The NPLQ qualification is a recruitment requirement for a wide array of leisure jobs ranging from Pool Lifeguards to Sport Centre Managers. NPLQ courses are held throughout the year at both Teddington Pool and Fitness Centre and Pools on the Park in Richmond.

Those interested in becoming a lifeguard can apply now to complete the training free of charge. Once qualified residents will be encouraged to apply for a position within Richmond Council's Sport & Leisure team who are actively seeking to hire new lifeguards living, studying or working in the borough with flexible full-time, part-time and casual positions available to suit residents' needs.

The course is open to all residents aged 16 and over with free places limited and subject to initial assessment and interview. To register your interest in taking part in the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification please email leisure@richmond.gov.uk or call 020 3772 2999 for more information.

Find out more about the [National Pool Lifeguard Qualification](#).



EASTER CHOCOLATE TREATS

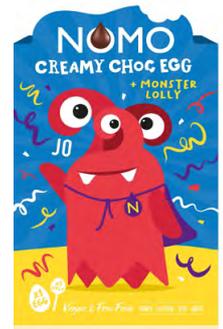
It's not long now till Easter weekend! So I thought it wise to suggest a few Easter goodies that will suit youngsters, foodies and even the more sophisticated gourmands among you.

Let's start with what must be one of the most iconic names in British chocolate history: **Cadbury**. The company has really gone to town this year, with lots of great new products, all reasonably priced too. There's a **Cadbury Dairy Milk Hot Cross Bun Bar** (that's very moreish). This new cinnamon crunch flavoured chocolate is just £1.40 for a 110g bar and it's widely available nationally. The famous **creme egg** has been joined by **Oreo White Filled Eggs**, (Asda exclusive) and Orange mini filled eggs. (Tesco exclusive). If you've a Peter Rabbit fan to buy for, then head to Waitrose for a gift tin or Sainsbury's for a Dairy Milk egg with Peter Rabbit mug -



Rabbit mug - both for around £6.

Vegan and free-from chocolate brand **NOMO** has announced a new edition to its Easter range, the Creamy Choc Egg and Monster Lolly, the latest iteration of NOMO's Kids Nomsters range. Last year, the UK's number one free from chocolate brand sold a mammoth 297.9 tonnes of chocolate, the equivalent weight of 24 double decker busses! NOMO's Creamy Choc Egg and Monster Lolly is available from Holland & Barrett, Sainsbury's and Tesco with an RRP of £3.



A vegan favourite of mine for gifts for the little folk is the **PLAYin CHOC** range. The Rabbit ToyChoc Box is perfect for Easter and just £2.50. This ethical gift is vegan, allergen free, organic, and each box comes with 2 mini chocolates, a rabbit puzzle and a fun facts card. These are just great for Easter hunts and there's a host of other animals - 66 in fact

- to collect! I was delighted to see that Ocado is now stocking PLAYin CHOC, but the full range of products and other stockists is on the PLAYin CHOC website.

Another ethical brand is Tony's Choclonely (every purchase supports Tony's mission to make all chocolate production 100% slave free) New for 2022: the [Egg-stra Special Chocolate Egg Mixed Flavour Pouch](#), [Egg-stra Special Chocolate Egg Sea Salt Caramel Pouch](#), and [Egg-stra Special Milk Chocolate Egg Pouch](#), available from their online Choco Shop and a range of independents, as well as Waitrose, Sainsbury's, Ocado and Booths.





Aldi has launched some 'letterbox' eggs this year - these Egg Slabs are great value at £3.99 and they look very sophisticated! Available in three flavours: White & Blond Chocolate; Dark Chocolate with Raspberry or Milk & White Chocolate.

Marzipan isn't just for Simnel cakes at Easter! The delicious marzipan eggs

from top German marzipan company **Niederegger** are classics, and just perfect for Easter gifts, egg hunts or a table gift at Easter Sunday lunch. John Lewis has a great range starting from £8 for a 100g box of six eggs, also available online and from Lakeland.



Moving up the 'sophistication ladder' you could give an assortment of chocolate praline eggs. This lovely gift tin of Milk Chocolate Praline Mini Eggs is £9 from farhi.co.uk (there are lots of other unusual gifts on the website). If you're looking for a show stopping Easter gift, how about pushing the boat out with this fabulous selection box of chocolate covered and filled Medjool dates stuffed with unique fillings like zesty orange peel, marzipan,

as well as a selection of nuts - they are egg shaped after all! £35 from **Farhi**. The company also has products such as jellied fried eggs - a fun gift for someone who can't eat chocolate.



How about chocolate in your favourite tippie? I've discovered a very unusual - and rather delicious - chocolate flavoured gin. It's not a liqueur - it can be used for a subtly chocolatey G&T or the perfect Easter Martini! From **Zymurgorium** - the Manchester-based distillery - **Choc-O-Bloc gin** is a blend of Madagascan chocolate, vanilla, rounded all spices, pink pepper and light citrus tone. The Choc-O-Bloc gin is made using Grand Cru de Sambirano chocolate from Chocolat Madagascar which has previously won the prestigious Golden Bean award from the **Academy of Chocolate**. This highly innovative gift for gin lovers is £25 online from Zymurgorium and also available from the Co-op.



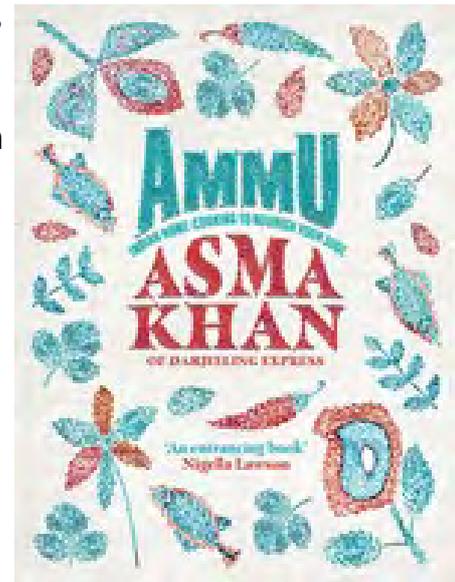
And last of all, here's a fun item that's also really useful, not just for boiling eggs - an Easter bunny timer! Just £5.70 from Horwood, it's made by Judge, and is one Easter gift that's not fattening, but will last for many years after those other yummy treats are just a distant memory.

AMMU: INDIAN HOME COOKING TO NOURISH YOUR SOUL

Asma Khan is the chef and owner of **Darjeeling Express** in Garrick Street, Covent Garden, and was the first British chef to feature on Netflix's Chef's Table. **Ammu**, just recently published, follows her debut award winning cookbook **Asma's Indian Kitchen** and is a delight. It's a collection of childhood recipes that celebrates the power of home cooking and the inextricable link between food and love. Asma is a firm believer in



the healing power of food, and through lockdown, she began to turn more often to the food of her childhood, and through this felt comfort and connection to distant loved ones. With over 100 recipes of simple comfort food, recipes for special occasions, quick everyday dishes, and personal memories, Ammu is a celebration of the food Asma herself loves cooking, and of the woman who nurtured her and taught her to cook: her Ammu.



Ammu is a lovely hardback, just published at £26 by Ebury Press, with photographs by Laura Edwards. Here are a couple of recipes from Ammu for you to try, and to tempt you to buy the book itself.

NAVRATAN KORMA (Nine-Jewel Korma) Serves 6

Navratan is a traditional South Asian style of gem-setting based on nine different precious stones. This korma is made up of nine colourful vegetables. It's a great way to use up odd veg from your fridge. Try red, yellow and orange peppers, aubergine, courgettes, baby sweetcorn, mangetout, cabbage and spinach. Or you could par-boil some carrots, parsnips, potatoes, French beans and pumpkin, then add red pepper, peas, sweetcorn and purple sprouting broccoli. A comforting, creamy (and extremely nutritious) curry that is ideal for children, too!

- 1 kg mixed vegetables
- 6 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2.5 cm piece of cassia bark
- 2 green cardamom pods
- 1 clove
- 1 large bay leaf
- 2 large onions, cut in half and thinly sliced
- 3-4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 6 cm piece of fresh ginger, grated
- 2 tsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp chilli powder
- ½ tsp sugar
- 2 tsp salt
- 250g full-fat Greek-style yoghurt
- 400ml thick coconut milk
- 2 tbsp ground almonds



Cut all the vegetables into evenly sized pieces and set aside on a tray. Heat the oil in a deep pan over a medium–high heat. Add the cassia bark, cardamoms, clove and bay leaf, then immediately add the onions and fry until golden brown. Add the garlic and ginger and stir for 1 minute. Then add the ground coriander, chilli powder, sugar and salt and stir for 2 minutes. Add the yoghurt, lower the heat to medium and stir until most of the liquid has evaporated. Add all the vegetables, stir and cook until tender. If the vegetables start to stick, add a splash of water.

When they are cooked, add the coconut milk and ground almonds, and stir until the gravy thickens. Taste and adjust the seasoning before serving. This korma goes very well with any kind of rice or pulao, and is a great accompaniment for meat or fish.

RABRI (Milk Dessert with Pistachio) Serves 4

Rabri is a favourite winter wedding dessert, which is usually accompanied by jalebi or gulab jamun. Both those desserts are warm and syrupy, while rabri is thick, cold and creamy. If you really want to push the boat out, make the rabri when you make Malpua (page 116) and spoon a generous amount of rabri on top of the pancakes. The key to perfect rabri is to source really good milk. Use full-fat (blue top) milk; any milk which is creamier than that would be even better.

1 litre full-fat milk

60g sugar

½ tsp seeds from green cardamom pods, crushed

1 tbsp rose water

3 tbsp unblanched shelled unsalted pistachios, finely chopped

Heat the milk in a heavy-based pan over a high heat until it comes to the boil, then reduce the heat slightly to keep the milk at a steady rolling boil for 5 minutes. Turn the heat to low and leave the milk to simmer very gently, uncovered, for about 30–45 minutes, until the milk has reduced to one third of its original volume. When a skin forms, use a spoon to stick it to the side of the pan; you will need to do this repeatedly. Occasionally you will have to stir the bottom of the pan to ensure that the milk does not catch.



Towards the end of the cooking time, add the sugar and the crushed cardamom seeds. When the milk has reduced, take it off the heat and use a spoon to push all the skins from the side of the pan back into the milk. Leave to cool slightly before adding the rose water.

Spoon into a serving dish and place in the fridge to chill, preferably overnight. Sprinkle the pistachios on top before serving.



The Collaboration

by Anthony McCarten

YV Company at the Young Vic until 2nd April

Entering through graffiti-lined walls, we walk into Studio 54, an atmospheric setting which is very New York. We encounter the culture of disco hits and slide shows of that era, even if it's a little deafening!

The “greatest exhibition in the history of modern art”, that was the expectation in 1984 when Andy Warhol the established doyen of American pop art, and wild kid on the art block, Jean-Michel Basquiat agreed to collaborate on a joint project, culminating in an exhibition the following autumn. At twenty-four, Basquiat was a drug-addict and an activist, but was the rapidly rising star of the art world. Fifty year-old Warhol had been at the top for many years, but his star was beginning to fade. This unlikely collusion was to develop into a “bromance”, but it was not to end well.



The Collaboration starts with a young scornful Jean-Michel Basquiat sneering about Andy Warhol being passé, while the shrewd Swiss agent, Bruno Bischofberger skilfully negotiates a collaboration between these two artists.

Paul Bettany plays Warhol intelligently, even though he occasionally comes over as whiney. American actor, Jeremy Pope is impressive as the vibrant Jean-Michel. He has the right amount of arrogance, complimenting Andy's jaded persona. The two actors have a very tangible chemistry, consistent in their rapport and relationship. They are nicely supported by Sofia Barclay and Alec Newman, as Maya and Bischofberger, respectively.

A cat-and-mouse game ensues in Warhol's studio, a play-off with the main prize being mutual respect and understanding of the other's generation. However, with the obscene amount of money these paintings brought, the only way it could end was ... fittingly ...

We are still amazed by the provocatively balanced tins of paint at the front of the set not spilling over.

Read Heather Moulson's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/03/18/collaboration

Photography by Marc Brenner





Fatal Attraction

by James Dearden

Smith and Brant Theatricals and ATG at Richmond Theatre until 26th March, then on tour until 7th May

Anyone not familiar with the 1987 film *Fatal Attraction* would nonetheless probably be familiar with the term 'bunny boiler' to describe a violently unstable (female) ex-lover. The film, in which a married man spectacularly fails to put his one-night stand behind him, is now a stage play. It's a cautionary tale, a fable for our time and a great thriller. However, it also reflects the changing sexual mores of our western world. Thirty-five years on, the lines are still blurred but the focus has significantly shifted, and the stage version has a different ending.



The story itself concerns Dan, his wife Beth and Alex. While Beth and their daughter are house-hunting, Dan by chance meets Alex. They bond over a meal and one thing moves to another ... (Recreating sex on stage is probably always weird!) Dan assumes this is a one-night stand, but for Alex there is more, and from that point things spiral inexorably downwards to full-on out-of-control carnage.

Oliver Farnworth as Dan, descends through stress to desperation, but stays poignantly bewildered as to how any of this had happened to him when he was the one in control. Susie Amy, playing the potential monster Alex, gives her a personality enough character to make her sympathetic as the victim of loneliness and-or mental illness, as well as a raging ego. Louise Redknapp as Beth seems unable to rise to being distraught at her husband's betrayal, and sticks with mere irritation. The strength of this production though is the telling of the story: this is exciting, interesting full-on theatre.

Oh, yes, the bunny and its notorious fate: the audience reaction to Dan's arrival on stage with a live rabbit in a carry case is enough to make the scene in which the creature's fate is sealed redundant

Read Eleanor Lewis' review at www.markaspen.com/2022/03/24/fatal-attraction

Photography by Tristram Kenton





Loveplay

by Moira Buffini

Questors Theatre at The Studio, Ealing until 2nd April

Love, as the old song says, is a many-splendoured thing. Moira Buffini explores this multi-faceted subject in her 2001 piece *Loveplay*. Originally written to complement the RSS's tumultuous Shakespeare history cycle, it formed part of a short season of new plays generically entitled *This Other Eden*. Unlike Buffini's best work, such as *Dinner* and *Handbagged*, this piece has a distinctly commissioned feel. Given the passionate subject matter, it too often feels a little formulaic, written to order, and by the head and not the heart.



It's a portmanteau play: a series of short vignettes, ten scenes set in the same location but spanning 2,000 years, sex is exchanged not just for money, but for more intangible bargaining chips. There are 31 characters in total, brought to life by a strong and committed cast of seven.

It's a tangled trail of seductions and sexual encounters, showing how, throughout history, the search for love and physical pleasure, while often volatile, has always had some immutabilities. We're pretty much the same creatures, regardless of era, and share the same issues, wants and desires. In the third scene, *The New Millennium*, one of the three sexually frustrated nuns sums up the core quest of the play's protagonists pretty well: "find something that endures before it's too late".

Right at the start, there's a rape. The girl screams and the ghost of that sound, as Gallagher says in his programme note, "echoes down the centuries". *Loveplay* also, almost certainly intentionally, echoes Schnitzler's *La Ronde*. However, while Buffini's scenes aren't linked by the same characters, they are connected by that haunting scream.

Nevertheless, the whole production probably isn't grubby enough. For a play all about sex, it seems rather too chaste and tasteful, even, or rather particularly, in the few-and-far-between kisses and clinches. Ultimately Buffini's play is mostly talk, with very little action. But maybe that's the point...

Read Daniel Wain's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/03/27/loveplay

Photography by Jamie Gould





The Young Writers Festival 2022

Arts Richmond, the Exchange Theatre, Twickenham, 27th March

Full of expectation, I was eager to be present at the annual celebration of young writer's poetry and prose, having witnessed outstanding talent in previous years.

The set comprised a row of colour coordinated chairs on which eight readers, directed and cast by Marc Batten, came and sat. The atmosphere became ripe with anticipation. With great gusto, and against a backdrop of visual titles, the first piece *How to Send a Hug* by Joshua Stewart was an excellent start to the afternoon's session of young people's writings.



In past productions, the actors had been more physical in their presentation of the selected pieces, and although some poems were accompanied by mime, the formal seating and oppressive lighting gave it the air of a school assembly. I must admit to hankering for more vibrancy. However, the high standard of writing compensated for this.

A number of contemporary issues were tackled from these clever young writers, including *The Covid Test* by Layla Farr and *Climate Change* by Joseph Castagne, along with tender and visual pieces such as *The Rainbow* by Grace Aljewicz. It's always invigorating to see such young talent emerging, making this a worthy occasion.

The highest point of this production was naturally the announcement of the overall winners and the collecting of award certificates from the mayor. The winners were Joseph Castagne, Alessandro Paul Faccio, Jess Gunn, Olivia Nugent and Isabella Crawley. These were well deserved but, in truth, every poem there had already won.



Probably it was the judges who had the toughest task of all, choosing between them. Get writing, young poets, I want to be back there next year!

Read Heather Moulson's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/03/28/ywf-2022

Photography by Mart Baptista and Roger Ched



Scents and Sensibility

by Joseph Bazalgette

Olf Actors at the Mogden Open Air Theatre, Isleworth until 1st April

Spring puts a certain freshness in the air, so at the earliest opportunity in the month, I was happy to accept an exclusive press performance. It was a matinee, indeed in its original meaning, for there were no performances in the afternoon. Directions to the open-air theatre were a little vague, just to go past Twickenham stadium and follow our noses. In fact MOAT, as the theatre is affectionately known, is a lakeside open-air setting in parkland amongst countless circular water features, some constantly aerated. A fellow critic, who has been suffering from Long Covid, found it absolutely delightful.



Scents and Sensibility concerns the romantic life of Miss Austen, who was born in Cowley, a grandniece of Sir Patrick Cowley, known below stairs as Cow Pat. She was brought up on the Noland estate, where her father was the local vicar. Here she was wooed by Maurice Oxford, but he lacked the pulling power of his young brother, who was known as Maurice Minor. Although not from the gentry, Maurice Minor had a certain charm, but he always smelt of badly polished wood and rubber. When midwives and district nurses found him so desirable, Jane decided to brake the relationship.

Enough of the plot, for I would not want to reveal a spoiler, but suffice it to say that Jane meets the dashing, polished Hon. Jeremy Healey, fragrant with leather and essential oils. A marriage is inevitable, and Mr and Mrs Austen-Healey start life together, very much in the society fast-lane.

The aromatic actress Effie Luvium, as Jane Austen, savoured what might otherwise be a vapid part, wafting across the stage like a will-o-the-wisp in the dawn light of the sedimentation ponds. As the Hon. Jeremy Healey, Clarkson Piggott got the flavour of the character, his acrid wit and leather-arsed bluster, soon to mellow like a ripe Stilton.



Incidental music was supplied by a hearty wind orchestra and a choir who sang the humming chorus from *Madam Butterfly*; Cio-Cio San meets Coco Chanel, but not quite.

Read Avril Sunisa's review at www.markaspen.com/2022/04/01/scents-sens

Photography by Walter Turbid and Paul Plugg

WIZ Tales - Bulgaria

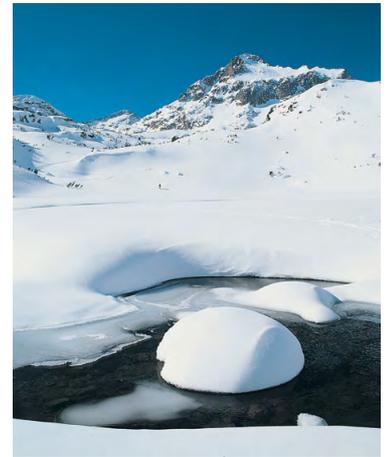
Teresa Read

The Republic of Bulgaria is in South Eastern Europe bordered by Turkey, Greece, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Romania and the Black Sea.

During the First and Second World Wars Bulgaria allied itself with Germany. After the Second World War (1939-45) Bulgaria became a People's Republic coming under the USSR's sphere of influence.

In 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in Soviet Russia. Gorbachev introduced extensive political and economic reforms (Perestroika) and promoted greater openness (Glasnost) between nations.

The end of 1989 saw political changes in Bulgaria and the communist government came to an end in 1990. Bulgaria became a member of NATO in March 2004 and joined the EU in 2007.



More photographs of Bulgaria:

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



Richmond upon Thames College students win at the International Salon Culinaire London

Richmond upon Thames College students and teachers recently competed in the International Salon Culinaire at the ExCeL London.

The competition is a platform for chefs of all levels, and is regarded as one of the world's top competitions for chefs. This year's competition took place as part of the London Hotel and Restaurant Show.

Richmond upon Thames College Catering Level 3 student, Valdino De Souza, won the silver medal for the 'Pub Chef of the Year' competition with his winning dish of roasted pork fillet wrapped in Parma ham, scotch egg, triple cooked chips, and red wine sauce.

Chef Lecturer in Culinary Arts, James Unwin alongside students Frankie Brant, Oskar Costa, and Darian Nabaz won the bronze award for 'Chef Team of the Year', which was awarded by celebrity chef Michel Roux Jr.

Catering lecturer, Neal Hook and student Yasmin Gibb won a bronze medal for their entry in the 'Mystery Basket Challenge'.

Student Darian Nabaz was also awarded a second bronze medal and Oskar Costa a merit for their meal preparation for the Chicken for Sauté competition.



Explore RSPB Richmond & Twickenham's April events

RSPB Richmond & Twickenham have a number of fascinating talks taking place throughout April at York House in Twickenham.

On Wednesday 6 April, the award-winning author, conservationist and feature writer Conor Mark Jameson will give a talk about his travels in search of the magnificent, but rarely seen raptor as described in his book 'Looking for the Goshawk'.

The journey took him from an encounter with a stuffed Goshawk in a glass case, along the length of Britain, through central Europe and onto the USA in search of answers to the goshawk mystery - Why is it so rarely seen in Britain? Conor's talk will begin at 7pm.

On Tuesday 12 April, Gordon Small will discuss the Orkney Islands. Orkney has a surprising diversity of habitats across its beautiful islands, and with 13 RSPB reserves and 36 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, is a haven for a range of special wildlife, including hen harriers, twites, and of course seabirds.

Gordon took up wildlife photography in 1987 and has since travelled to many countries in pursuit of this interest. Gordon will discuss the month he spent travelling around some of the Orkney Islands, showcasing his photographs of the wildlife and spectacular scenery.



South East plays part in record-breaking tree send out as Woodland Trust's free tree-pack scheme re-opens

The Woodland Trust is re-opening its ever-popular free tree packs scheme on the back of a record-breaking spring giveaway which saw more than 75,000 saplings delivered across the south east of England.

A total of 495 schools and community groups in Greater London, Kent, London, Surrey and Sussex took delivery of their trees from the end of February to 11 March, with the next round of applications back open for business on 4 April.

In the south east, 75,735 trees were sent out to 495 organisations. This includes:

- 7,065 trees to 55 organisations in Greater London
- 26,040 trees to 147 organisations in Kent
- 8,880 trees to 83 organisations in London
- 13,605 trees to 75 organisations in Surrey
- 20,145 trees to 135 organisations in Sussex

The figures for the south east of England were part of a record-breaking spring UK-wide giveaway. Woodland Trust senior project lead Vicki Baddeley said surpassing the previous spring delivery record by just over 106,000 for a total of 623,910 trees was “wonderful”.

“We strongly believe everyone should have the opportunity to plant a tree, and our spring planters are really showing us how it’s done,” she added.

“We’re seeing such a wide range of motivations for communities to take the simple, positive action to plant trees. They’re getting their hands dirty to combat climate change, support local wildlife, green up their local spaces, boost their wellbeing, and celebrate the Queen’s Jubilee to name but a few!”



The trees were sent out as part of the Woodland Trust’s Big Climate Fightback where the UK’s largest woodland conservation charity encourages people to plant trees at events, at home and with their school or community to help fight climate change and create new havens for wildlife.

A total of 3,865 schools and community groups received packs and will be joining the fight by sharing their tree planting stories and photos with us on social media using #BigClimateFightback.

Our tree packs have been generously funded by lead partners: Sainsbury’s, Lloyds Bank, OVO Energy, DFS, Joules, Bank of Scotland and Sofology.

Baddeley added: “We couldn’t do this without the generosity of our funders so our thanks go out to each of them for their vital support. We would advise any interested groups to apply sooner rather than later to secure their saplings!”

“The appetite to plant trees is clearly growing as demand for our free trees scheme has never been stronger, so we can’t wait to open applications again on 4 April, when we’ll have a further 700,000 trees available for planting in the autumn.”

The trees were sent far and wide:

- UK Total: 623,910 to 3865 organisations
- England: 506,415 trees to 3187 organisations
- Scotland: 76,665 trees to 475 organisations
- Wales: 40,830 trees to 206 organisations



“If we can go there and win, it will be the result of the season for us”

From [Brentford FC](#)

Thomas Frank looks ahead to our trip to Stamford Bridge

Ahead of the short trip to Chelsea tomorrow, Thomas Frank met the media earlier this afternoon to preview our clash against The Blues. As well as building-up to the game against Thomas Tuchel’s men, Thomas gave the latest team news, assessed the run-in, and spoke about the re-introduction of five subs. Read the key lines from Thomas’ press conference below.

Team News ...

Everyone came back fresh and available. We are ready to go and are looking forward to the game.

The run-in ...

We know it will be intense. I have learned to try and relax a bit more in these international breaks, so I’m refreshed and ready to go again. A big part of being a Head Coach, Manager, or leader, is that you have energy and can, hopefully, bring energy to other people.

Chelsea ...

I hope we perform well tomorrow and get a result because we have been close against the top six clubs. It will be unbelievably difficult going to Stamford Bridge against a top Chelsea side. Thomas Tuchel and his staff have done an unbelievable job under very tough circumstances. We haven’t had the margins with us in these bigger games so, hopefully, we can get some points in games where all the bookmakers say we have no chance.

They are a team of World Class players. They are a team, with a coach, who won the Champions League last year and who have a chance to win it again this year. If we can go there and win, it will be the result of the season for us. We will go there and do everything we can. We know they are massive favourites and nine out of ten times they will win.

Five subs ...

I like it. I like the tactical flexibility you have. If you want to press really aggressively it gives you some opportunities. We voted for it.

Finishing off the campaign ...

At the start of the season, we didn’t know how good we would be, how well we would perform, or how many bumps there would be in the road. We know a Premier League season is relentless, playing against the best teams in the world. I had a good feeling going into it and I hoped that we would be an asset to the Premier League. I think we have showed that quite a lot and I think we could have had even more points.

The toughest thing about the Premier League is that you can go into these long periods where you don’t win so the relief of getting three points is big. You grow a little bit more in confidence and are a little bit more resilient. Overall, it is about being calm and consistent in our messages to the players and the media. Then things will turn around.

David Raya’s Spain call-up ...

It was huge for a football club of our size. We have progressed through the leagues and now we have a player getting his debut for the Spanish national team. It is really, really big and shows that you can play for Brentford and get your debut for one of the biggest national teams in the world. Let’s give David 90 per cent of that because it is all his hard work and then I’d like to give everyone who has worked with him at Brentford credit for his development.



Red Roses defeat Scotland in TikTok Women's Six Nations opener

The Red Roses started their 2022 Six Nations campaign with a bonus-point 57-5 win over Scotland in Edinburgh.

Simon Middleton's side secured a 19th straight win running in nine tries at DAM Health Stadium to get their Women's Six Nations title defence off to the perfect start. Some quick-thinking from Leanne Infante from a penalty was the catalyst for the visitors' opening try as the England scrum half stormed to within five metres with Marlie Packer on hand to neatly finish it off.

Poppy Cleall doubled the advantage after a glorious offload from Rosie Galligan put the back-rower in under the sticks. The hosts struck back with a score of their own as a well-timed offload from Hannah Smith out on the wing gave full back Chloe Rollie enough room to cut the deficit to nine.

Middleton's side re-established their two-score lead after huge carries from England's pack put them within touching distance of the Scottish line before Heather Cowell dotted it down. Abby Dow secured the bonus-point with a blistering run from 40 metres out before Packer grabbed her second score of the day moments later from a powerful driving maul to put England in firm control.

The visitors rounded off the first half in style when Emily Scarratt's precision pass put Bern into acres of space whose brilliant offload allowed Infante to run in unopposed making it 38-5 at the interval. Scotland recovered well after the break and were unlucky to see Rachel Malcolm's efforts disallowed after the TMO intervened. That missed opportunity was compounded when a clever kick from Helena Rowland on the 22 was picked up by Holly Aitchison over the line to claim England's seventh try of the afternoon.

The Red Roses forwards continued their dominance in the second-half with Connie Powell scoring from another driving maul no less than 20 seconds after coming off the bench to make it two tries from her first two caps.

England's potent attack continued as substitute Emma Sing sauntered up to the Scotland five metre line from deep in her own half, from which England worked the ball for Packer to claim her hat-trick from short range to put the seal on a player of the match performance and a convincing 57-5 win.

Middleton's side have now won their last 24 meetings with Scotland.

Reaction

Middleton said: *"We are really pleased to open our Six Nations campaign with a win.*

"We weren't quite at the level we wanted to be but that's as much down to Scotland as us. I thought they were terrific and the scoreboard doesn't do them justice.

"Congratulations to Jade Konkel on her 50th cap I thought she was massive for Scotland today.

"There was definitely a bit of rustiness there in our performance and that is understandable given it's the first game, we'll get to the bottom of it and we will be better in our next game.

"I was really pleased with our attack in the first half and particularly our defence in the second, when we came under a lot of pressure. I thought we showed immense desire, urgency and passion to defend our goal line. It's something we've talked a lot about since the autumn internationals so it was great to see the defensive energy and resilience.

"I'd like to give a special mention to Marlie Packer on her 80th cap who deserved her player of the match award. The level of her performances is remarkable. We don't take her for granted, she's a fantastic player. Whether it's for her club Saracens or country, she's up there all the time.

"Emily Scarratt was fantastic on her return. Her pass selection and execution was pure class. I also thought there were some strong games from Rosie Galligan and Helena Roland. If you go through the whole squad you can pick out a fair few who did really well."



Managing reductions in Official Development Assistance spending

The speed and scale by which the government reduced its Official Development Assistance (ODA) spending, from 0.7% to 0.5% of gross national income (GNI), meant that it had to make compromises and take difficult decisions across all of its programmes, according to a report by the National Audit Office (NAO).

Since 1970, the United Nations has endorsed a target for countries to spend 0.7% of their GNI on overseas aid spending, known as ODA. The UK made the 0.7% target a legal requirement in 2015. In the November 2020 Spending Review, the government announced that it would only spend 0.5% of GNI on ODA in 2021, because of the continuing economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its assessment of the impact of this on public finances. This reduced the ODA budget announced in the 2020 Spending Review for the financial year 2021-22 to £10.3 billion, compared with spending of £14.5 billion in the 2020 calendar year. The government has set out an ambition to return to the previous target of 0.7% “when the fiscal situation allows”.

Reducing the ODA budget with a very short time for allocation decisions meant that the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) had to move quickly from planning a multi-year continuation of ODA programmes to planning for a significant reduction in spending in the coming year. The speed at which it had to make decisions limited its ability to complete a thorough review of the impact of the allocations or on long-term value for money.

FCDO had a clear, centralised approach to allocating the reprioritised and reduced ODA budget. FCDO led a three-stage approach, starting with ringfencing significant long-term commitments and multilateral payments, followed by allocating funding to other government departments, and finally allocating the remaining budget across FCDO. The approach focused on the government’s new seven strategic priorities and two geographic priority areas for its aid spending.

Prioritising some existing government spending commitments meant that FCDO’s budget for its bilateral programmes was disproportionately affected by the reduction in ODA spending. Many multilateral spending commitments were also protected due to legal or political commitments. FCDO’s 2020-21 bilateral programmes budget was therefore 53% lower than in 2020.

FCDO reduced the budget for 35 of the 44 country and regional offices with ODA programmes in the previous year; 15 of these saw reductions of more than 50% and a further three were cut entirely. Decisions on allocating the newly reduced budgets were led by local teams, with oversight by ministers.

Local teams were responsible for evaluating their own programmes to determine which were best to deliver priorities. They balanced a range of criteria to make these decisions, including programme performance, where it was in its lifecycle, the impact of closing or amending it on delivery partners, and whether other donors could take on responsibility for the work.

This approach meant teams could factor in their local knowledge and respond to specific circumstances in their countries. This allowed for prioritisation of the highest value and highest priority programmes. However, the scale of the budget reduction meant that some programmes had to be modified or stopped ahead of schedule even if they were performing well.

FCDO has a well-established approach for assessing its programmes. It reviews them on an annual basis and brings this information together to assess how well they are performing against FCDO's global priorities. However, it has not taken steps to understand the overall impact of changes to its programmes on development outcomes. It has also not assessed the impact of its changed portfolio on the overall value for money of its ODA spending.

Stakeholders and delivery partners were critical of the lack of transparency around the changes to ODA, which contributed to uncertainty in the sector. Whilst the autumn 2021 Budget provides some clarity for ODA spending in the medium term, departments need to plan for potential scenarios for a return to 0.7%. The government says it intends to return to this target when, on a sustainable basis, it is not borrowing for day-to-day spending and when underlying debt is falling. In the 2021 Spending Review, the government expected this to be in 2024-25, but this is dependent on how the UK economy performs.

The NAO recommends that FCDO and HM Treasury work with other ODA spending departments on a scenario for a return to the 0.7% target and consider how to improve the transparency of ODA spending decisions. FCDO and other ODA spending departments should assess the impact of the reduction and reprioritisation of ODA spending on performance in the short-, medium-, and long-term, including a focus on the impact of bilateral spending which has been affected the most by budget reductions.

Gareth Davies, the head of the NAO, said:

“The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office took the lead in setting clear parameters for reducing the ODA budget while looking to local offices to make decisions about individual programmes.

“However, the speed and depth of reductions has had an immediate impact locally and the effect on long-term value for money is not yet known. FCDO must build its understanding of how the spending reductions have affected development outcomes to help it plan its approach to future budget allocations, including a planned return to the 0.7% ODA target.”

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



National Audit Office

One in four ambulances delayed 30 minutes or more, as Urgent and Emergency Care falls deeper into crisis

The latest [Winter Sitrep data](#) for the week ending 27 March show:

- There were 79,588 ambulance arrivals, 2.7% less than the previous week.
- More than one quarter of ambulances experienced delays of 30 minutes or more, equal to 21,051 ambulances
- This is an increase of 7.4% on the previous week
- This is the highest proportion of ambulance delays on record
- More than one in nine ambulances were delayed by more than 60 minutes, a 10.2% increase on the previous week, setting a new record high for this reporting period.
- The average number of delays for this winter has continued to creep up, increasing from 0.3% up to 21.3%. The previous highest weekly average number of delays was 14.3% in 2019-20.

The Royal College of Emergency Medicine and The College of Paramedics have collaborated on this [Ambulance Handover Options Appraisal guidance](#) that details the ways in which Paramedics and Emergency Medicine staff can reduce ambulance handover delays.

Dr Ian Higginson, Vice President of The Royal College of Emergency Medicine, said:

“The data show Emergency Department crowding, long “hidden” within the walls of EDs, has become more visible as handover delays have dramatically increased, leading to ambulances waiting outside EDs with their patients still inside.

“It is vital that ambulances return to active service whenever possible and safe to do so. Delaying ambulance handovers should be a last resort. Holding patients in ambulances leads to unnecessary delays to their care, leaving seriously ill or injured patients in the community requiring an ambulance to wait longer.

“Ambulance handover delays are almost entirely caused by dangerous crowding in Emergency Departments. The root cause of these problems is “exit block” where there are delays for patients to be admitted to inpatient beds from the ED. Patients suffer harm or die unnecessarily when they cannot get an ambulance in time, when they are held in ambulances on arrival in ED, or when they are treated in crowded EDs.

“Emergency Departments must have sufficient capacity to meet demand, and constant flow from the Emergency Department into inpatient beds, otherwise they will not be able to keep patients and staff safe. This means that risk must be properly shared within organisations, and through systems.

“When this does not happen leadership teams tend to look for mitigation. Unfortunately, this

mitigation is usually focused at the front door of the hospital, rather than being directed at the root cause of the problem. The Royal College and The College of Paramedics have produced [this joint guidance to support good decision making](#) when managing ambulance handover delays in an effort to tackle ambulance handover delays and dangerous Emergency Department crowding.”

Tracy Nicholls, Chief Executive of The College of Paramedics, said:

“We hear from our members how consistently challenging this situation is and, whilst we can see that paramedics, ambulance clinicians and hospital ambulance liaison officers are doing everything they can, the system is now at breaking point.

“Those who need an ambulance are continuing to wait an unacceptable length of time and those paramedics and ambulance clinicians who are running to their next job can clearly see how long their next patient has been waiting and know they are going to be met with frustration, anxiety or fear.

“It seems incongruous that additional measures are being taken at the front door when the whole system flow of patients still needs to be addressed, but we suspect that there are now few options left without further risk to both those who are using the ambulance services and those who are working within them.

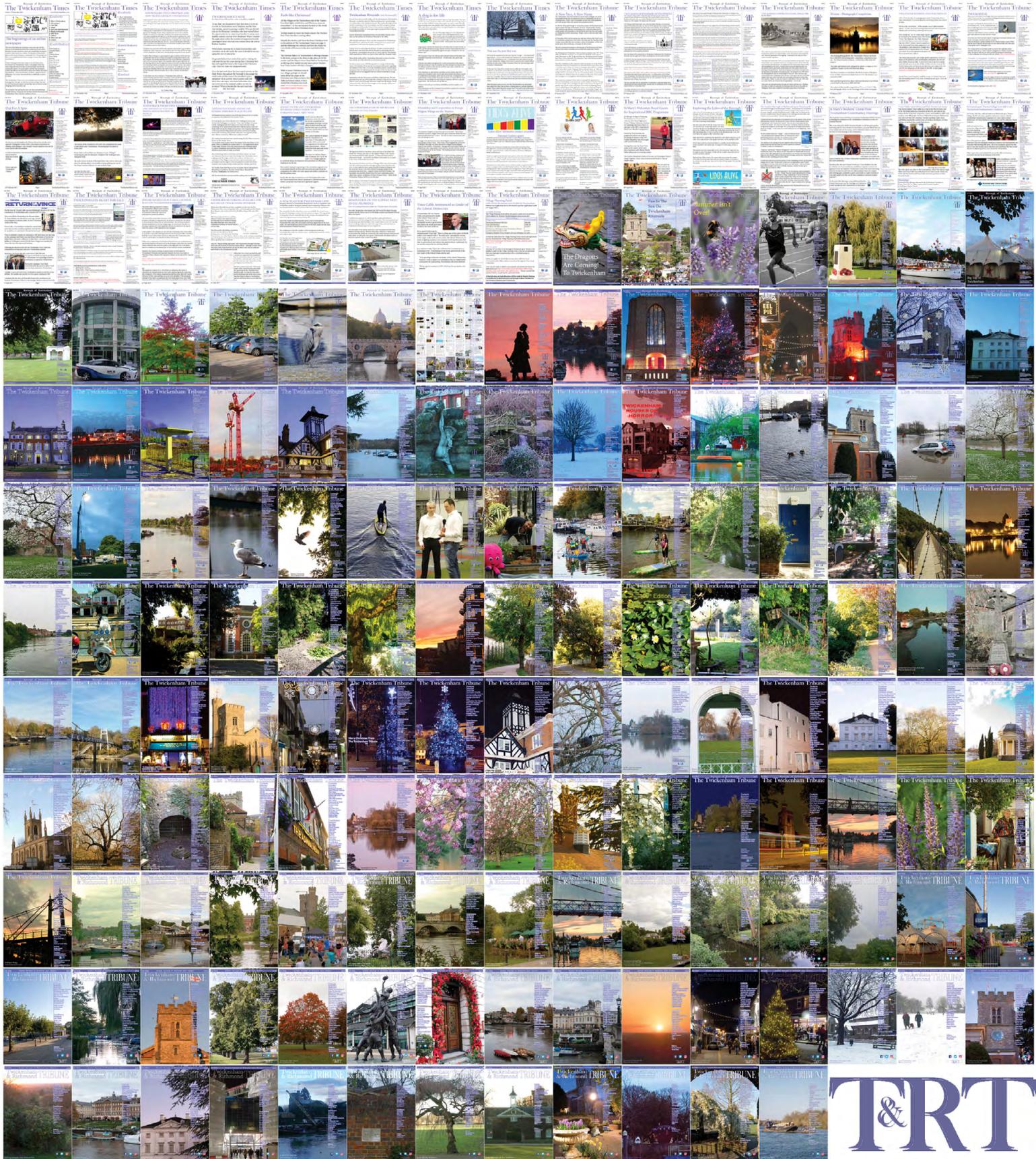
“Ambulance operations centres are still fielding calls at record numbers because callers want to know when an ambulance will arrive and are often calling back time and time again. It is difficult to hear that an ambulance might be delayed but imagine how a caller feels when their 999 call isn’t answered straight away. The moral injury is not just with the paramedics, but also with all of those involved directly with patients and their care.

“The College supports RCEM’s call for both the reduction in ambulance handover delays and in ED overcrowding. It is only by working together as a system that we will see this much-needed change and this guidance document outlines the risks associated with the current challenges.”



Royal College *of*
Emergency Medicine

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