DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

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Clarkson and Kaleb — they're back!

INSIDE TIMES2

Nicole Kidman
Hollywood's great survivor

Scroll reveals Plato's final musings: why is that flautist so bad?

Rhys Blakely Science Correspondent

A papyrus scroll that was buried when Mount Vesuvius erupted nearly 2,000 years ago may have revealed how Plato, one of the fathers of western thought, spent his final hours.

The Greek philosopher died in about 348BC having been a student of Socrates, the teacher of Aristotle and the founder of the first university, the Academy at Athens. He is thought to have been 80 or 81 at the time of his death.

The scroll carries a previously unknown account of how he spent his last evening listening to flute music played by a Thracian slave girl. It claims that he was unimpressed and criticised her sense of rhythm.

According to Graziano Ranocchia, a professor at the University of Pisa who led the team that recovered it, the account shows that Plato was lucid until the end of his life, despite suffering from attacks of fever. "Until his very last hour, he was able to express an aesthetic judgment," he said.

The scroll contains part of a history of the Academy by Philodemus, who lived in the first century BC. Until now, however, it had mostly been unreadable. The papyrus on which it is written was transformed into brittle black carbon when Vesuvius erupted in AD79, burying both Pompeii and the nearby Roman town of Herculaneum.

The scroll was recovered from a villa in Herculaneum, thought to have once been owned by the father-in-law of Julius Caesar. Its black ink had been impossible to make out from the charred papyrus to which it had been applied.

Ranocchia and his colleagues deciphered it using techniques including shortwave infrared hyperspectral imaging, which detected tiny differences in how light bounced off the ink.

A fascination for scholars, page 3
Science has unlocked Plato's final hours, leading article, page 25

SNP lurches into another crisis as its leader quits

Labour poised to profit amid race to succeed Yousaf

Kieran Andrews Scottish Political Editor

The SNP is facing a bitter leadership contest after Humza Yousaf resigned as Scotland's first minister, in a move that could bolster Sir Keir Starmer's hopes of entering No 10.

Yousaf quit four days after tearing up a power-sharing agreement with the Greens, admitting that he had underestimated the fury it would provoke.

John Swinney, who was deputy first minister under Nicola Sturgeon, said he was giving "careful consideration" to standing as Yousaf's successor. Allies of Kate Forbes, the former finance secretary who narrowly lost to Yousaf in last year's leadership battle, said she was "actively considering" running again.

Labour, which has just two MPs north of the border, believes that it will enjoy a significant boost from the chaos engulfing the SNP and could once again become the majority party in Scotland after the general election.

The SNP faced a crisis this month following the decision by police to charge Peter Murrell, its former chief executive and Sturgeon's husband, in connection with the embezzlement of party funds. He was first arrested a year ago as part of an investigation into the whereabouts of up to £660,000 in donations. Sturgeon was also arrested during the investigation — she has denied any wrongdoing.

Polling by YouGov has found that Labour is a point ahead of the SNP in Scotland, on 34 per cent. An analysis by Sir John Curtice, the polling expert and a professor of politics at Strathclyde University, said this would equate to Labour winning 28 seats in Scotland. The SNP would return 18 MPs.

It would bring an end to nearly 20 years of SNP dominance in Scotland and provide a significant boost to Starmer as he seeks to win a landslide majority at Westminster. A senior Labour source said: "We think there is a good chance we will be the largest party in Scotland. We've been picking up voters saying that the government can't be trusted. Imposing their third leader in 12 months will reinforce that."

The polling, carried out over the weekend, made for grim reading for Yousaf, with 55 per cent of people saying he should be removed as first minister, including 40 per cent of those who voted SNP at the 2019 general election.

In an emotional resignation speech at Bute House, his official residence in Edinburgh, Yousaf said he had "clearly underestimated the level of hurt and upset" that ending the power-sharing deal would cause. It left the SNP without a majority at Holyrood.

After the Greens made clear that they would not support Yousaf staying in post, there had been speculation that he could turn to Ash Regan, the former SNP MSP who defected to the Alba Party, to win a confidence vote.

But an arrangement with Alba, led by

Continued on page 2

MILLIE PILKINGTON

Together we stand The Prince and Princess of Wales released a private photo from their wedding day to mark their 13th anniversary yesterday. The princess is away from public duties following a cancer diagnosis. Sophie in Ukraine, page 9

Contact lost with most migrants set for Rwanda

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor
Max Kendix

The Home Office has admitted that it is unable to locate thousands of the migrants it intends to deport to Rwanda as it prepares to detain the first individuals this week.

A document slipped out by the department states that more than 5,700 migrants have been identified for removal but only 2,145 of them "continue to report to the Home Office and can be located for detention".

The Home Office has said that the remaining 3,557 have not necessarily absconded but are not subject to reporting restrictions, which means that they cannot be located for detention. The information was included in an update to the department's equality impact assessment.

Sources in the department accepted that there was a significant risk that they would abscond following the implementation of the Rwanda scheme. The Home Office has until now relied on the incentive of free accommodation and a £49 weekly allowance to prevent people from disappearing but officials fear that the threat of deportation could outweigh that.

The migrants identified for deportation to Rwanda all arrived in the UK illegally, most in small boats, between January 2022 and June last year. It means that no one who arrived in the past ten months will be on the initial flights, which are due by July.

The migrants will be detained at one of the UK's six permanent immigration removal centres, which have a capacity of 2,175 people. Home Office sources said there would be up to 700 spaces reserved for those heading to Rwanda.

The document also revealed concerns that MPs could succeed in delaying or cancelling deportations by submitting last-minute representations. There is a parliamentary convention that removal is suspended until a case has been considered and a response issued to the MP. The department said

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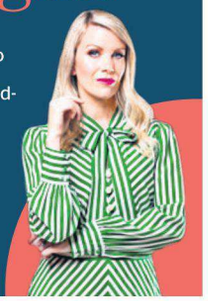
Today's highlights

7am **Victoria Atkins**, health secretary
11am **Matt Chorley** on what happened to the Tory plot to oust Rishi Sunak
2.10pm **Ed Vaizey** chats to the Olivier award-winning actress **Denise Gough**
3.45pm **Rachel Parris**, right, and **Marcus Brigstocke** discuss their podcast How Was It For You?
7pm **Tim Montgomerie** and **Rachel Cunliffe** on the stories of the day



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TODAY'S EDITION

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A wild swimmer tries to start a wave of legal actions
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Russia shows off captured British and US military vehicles
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398 days since Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich was detained in Russia
#FreeEvan

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Why Israeli battalion could face US sanctions

As the war in Gaza grinds on, the United States is considering imposing sanctions on one specific Israeli army unit. What is the Netzah Yehuda Battalion, and why is it in America's sights?

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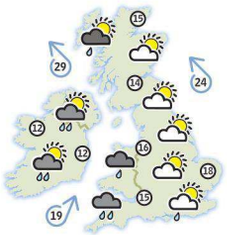

Rain or showers across western areas, but drier with sunny spells further east. **Full forecast, page 50**

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PM seeks to shut graduate visa 'back door' for asylum claims

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor
Ali Mitib

Rishi Sunak is expected to announce curbs on foreign student visas amid fears that the route is being used as a back door into claiming asylum.

The prime minister wants to restrict access to the graduate visa route, which allows students to remain in the UK for up to two years after finishing their studies without having to get a job.

The announcement is expected to come after the Migration Advisory Committee is due to complete a review of the graduate visa route on May 14. Options understood to be under consideration include reducing the time a foreign graduate can stay without a skilled job to six or twelve months.

Suella Braverman, the former home secretary, and Robert Jenrick, the former immigration minister, had pushed to scrap the graduate visa route, something that is being considered by James Cleverly, the home secretary.

Home Office sources said they had seen growing evidence of migrants who previously would have paid thousands to cross the Channel in small boats switch to applying for visitor, student or seasonal worker visas for the UK and then applying for asylum on arrival.

They believe that richer migrants are now switching routes and paying for a study, seasonal worker or visitor visa and applying for a visa before or when their visa expires, following a series of hardline immigration laws introduced by the government. Last year the Illegal Migration Act introduced a permanent ban on anyone who entered illegally from ever being granted asylum or other indefinite leave to remain.

A source said: "This is displacement activity following the Illegal Migration Act and Rwanda policy. We are expecting to see more people coming on visas and then applying for asylum."

Leaked figures to the Daily Mail revealed that 6,136 asylum cases were lodged by foreign students in the 12 months to March last year, a fourfold increase on the previous year.

Foreign students made up the largest group of the 21,525 asylum claims from foreigners who had entered the UK on visas, a 154 per cent annual increase.

An analysis of cases at the upper tribunal, the final immigration appeal court, has revealed hundreds of cases of migrants who originally came to the UK as a student but have avoided being deported for years by lodging a claim for asylum or other human protection.

More than 80 universities offer scholarships and fee waivers to asylum seekers, according to Student Action for Refugees. Those eligible include those granted indefinite leave to stay and those who have applied for asylum.

Jenrick said foreign students were increasingly using human rights laws enshrined by the European Convention of Human Rights, such as article 8, to stay in the UK. He said: "The huge increases in non-small-boat asylum claims deserves far more attention as they're placing a huge burden on the British state. As long as we are party to the ECHR, where migrants can raise 'family life' article 8 claims, we will not be able to return these individuals, the abuse will continue and our borders will remain porous."

The Home Office said: "The government has been clear about its commitment to attracting and retaining the best and brightest students to study ... but immigration is too high, which is why the home secretary has delivered a comprehensive series of measures to reduce these unsustainable numbers."

Foreign hate preachers to be banned from Britain

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor

Foreign hate preachers will be banned from the UK under an extremism list that will be announced by ministers today.

Foreign zealots will be identified by embassies worldwide and names will be passed to the Home Office to ensure that they are among people to be banned from being granted a visa. They will be barred on the grounds that they pose a risk to public safety and Britain's social cohesion.

A task force will be set up by the Home Office and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Organisations in the UK that try to sponsor visas for banned preachers will face having their right to sponsor visas removed. The move is the latest step taken by the government to tackle extremism. It follows Rishi Sunak's speech in March in which he said that extremists who were trying to "deliberately" undermine the country's "multi-faith democracy" must be faced down.

The announcement of the list is in response to recommendations by Robin Simcox, the counter-extremism commissioner. He called on the government to ban Muslim clerics who supported blasphemy activism as he warned of a rise in groups focusing on the topic. He said that the increase had been driven by followers of Mumtaz Qadri, who became a martyr to radical Islamists after he was hanged for killing the governor of Punjab province, Salmaan Taseer, in 2011. Taseer had criticised Pakistan's blasphemy laws.

In a speech last autumn Simcox, who advises the Home Office on counter-extremism, said there had been a string of clerics from south Asia who had visited the UK to speak in support of Qadri. One of those he cited was Enayetullah Abassi, a cleric from Bangladesh, who used a visit to a mosque to voice his support for beheading people who criticised Muhammad.

The scholar also spoke at the Islamic Conference this year in Birmingham, where he said critics of Muhammad should have their heads "chopped off". He praised the terrorists who carried out the September 11 attacks as "brave lions".

Last month Michael Gove, the levellng-up secretary, announced a new definition of extremism to ensure that it more tightly captured the most dangerous radicals.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
Rwanda migrants missing

that it had extra staff to respond to MPs' representations.

The document states that new powers to ignore interim injunctions from the European Court of Human Rights would not be automatic and would be used on a "case-by-case basis". The power was a crucial element of the Safety of Rwanda Act, which became law last week. Civil servants have been told not to obstruct a decision to ignore the European court amid concerns that officials would defy ministers.

The migrants who were identified for removal to Rwanda have all been issued with a "notice of intent" to treat their asylum claims as inadmissible. There are 34,113 people who have been told that their claims are inadmissible. Afghans make up the largest group with the notices, followed by Albanians, Iranians, Eritreans and Syrians.

The Home Office said: "As the prime minister has made clear, we will get flights off the ground to Rwanda in the next ten to twelve weeks. In preparation for flights taking off we have identified the initial cohort to be removed ... and have hundreds of dedicated caseworkers ready to process any appeals. It would be inappropriate to comment further on operational activity."

No migrant deal with Ireland, page 8
US and UK voters are lacking choices, William Hague, page 21

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
SNP leader quits

the former first minister Alex Salmond, was unpalatable to many within the SNP — including Sturgeon, Yousaf's immediate predecessor.

YouGov found that his decision to end the coalition was generally backed by the Scottish public, with 37 per cent in favour and 27 per cent against, but Yousaf's approval rating had sunk to minus 47, by far the lowest score for his 13 months in office.

Ninety minutes after Yousaf quit, Swinney said he was "giving that issue [of leadership] very active consideration". He said that he needed to ensure running was the correct decision for his family but added: "I have to do the right thing by my party and my country. So there is lots to be thought about."

Swinney was quickly backed by senior figures including Jenny Gilruth, the education secretary, who had been considering her own leadership campaign; Stephen Flynn, the SNP leader at Westminster; and Ian Blackford, who was Flynn's predecessor in that post.

However, there were suspicions among Forbes's supporters that a "stitch up" was taking place to push her out of the contest. "A coronation cannot be healthy," one backer said.

Yousaf said he would stay in post until a successor was found. Whoever takes on the role is likely to have to find a way to work with the Greens at Holyrood. Yousaf appealed to opposition leaders to "collaborate" with the SNP as they sought to run a minority administration under a new leader, adding: "I bear no ill will, and certainly bear no grudge against anyone. Politics can be a brutal business. It takes its toll on your physical and mental health, your family suffer alongside you."

The announcement of his resignation comes 13 months after he was sworn in as Scotland's sixth first minister, becoming the youngest person and the first from an ethnic minority to hold the post. He said that when he was growing up he "could never have dreamt that one day I would have the privilege of leading my country. People who looked like me were not in positions of political influence, let alone leading governments."

Yousaf quits in tears, pages 6-7
Future of the SNP, letters, page 24
The SNP has drifted into political absurdity, leading article, page 25

Technology rolls back the centuries to offer glimpse of Plato the dutiful

Rhys Blakely Science Correspondent

Alfred North Whitehead, the mathematician and philosopher, once said that one way to describe the West's tradition of philosophical thought was to say "that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato".

Now, thanks to scientific analysis of a scroll of papyrus that was buried under metres of volcanic ash nearly 2,000 years ago, we have a new set of biographical notes on Plato himself.

The scroll includes a previously unknown account of how the Greek philosopher, who is thought to have died in about 348BC at the age of 80 or 81, spent his final evening listening to a performance of flute music.

It also describes Plato as hosting a visitor, named only as "the Chaldean guest", even though he was suffering from attacks of fever and was just hours from death.

"He exercised his duties; hospitality was sacred for the Greeks," said Professor Graziano Ranocchia, of the University of Pisa, who led the team who recovered the new account.

The details come from a source that has frustrated and fascinated scholars for centuries. In AD79, Mount Vesuvius erupted and unleashed a torrent of volcanic ash and ultra-hot gas that swept down on to the city of Pompeii and the Roman town of Herculaneum.

The most splendid of all the properties to be buried was a sprawling villa in Herculaneum, possibly built by Lucius Calpurnius Piso Caesoninus, father-in-law of Julius Caesar.

After its discovery in 1750 it was found to contain the only intact library to survive from the Greco-Roman world. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of scrolls have been preserved, but in a form that had been unreadable.

Exposed to temperatures of several hundred degrees in the absence of oxygen, they were converted into fragile, withered ingots of pitch-black carbon. Attempts to unravel them frequently ended up in them falling to pieces. When they could be unrolled, it was often impossible to distinguish the black ink that was used to write them from the blackened papyrus.

In the past few months however, dramatic advances have been made. Ranocchia and his colleagues have made progress using techniques such as shortwave infrared hyperspectral imaging. This relies on the subtle differences in light that bounces off the ink and the papyrus on which it is written. It works for scrolls that were successfully unrolled and flattened out in the 18th century.

Other experts have made progress in reading scrolls even without unrolling them. In 2019 two Herculaneum scrolls held by the Institut de France in Paris were taken to Diamond Light Source, a stadium-sized particle accelerator at the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus in Oxfordshire that produces a very fine, powerful x-ray beam. This allowed minutely detailed 3D scans depicting their internal structure to be made.

Attempts were then made to use machine learning, a form of artificial intelligence, to distinguish the ink from the material on which it was written, even though the scrolls remained rolled up.

In February it was announced that three computer science students, Youssef Nader, an Egyptian based in Berlin, Luke Farritor, an American, and Julian Schilliger, from Switzerland, had won the $700,000 Vesuvius Challenge prize, which had been created a year earlier by Nat Friedman, a Silicon Valley investor. To win they had to decipher at least four separate passages of "continuous and plausible text" from one of the Paris scrolls, each at least 140 characters long. The competition has now set a new target: to go from reading a few passages to entire scrolls. More than $500,000 in new prizes is on offer.

The true payoff could, though, be incalculably more valuable. Classicists, who by one estimate have inherited just 1 per cent of the literature of ancient Greece, have dreamt of what the library at Herculaneum may contain. The villa belonged to a powerful magnate.

"Historians believe he would have invited peers, thinkers and artists to discuss cultural matters. To date, what appears to be a small Greek philosophy library has been excavated. Many hope for a larger Roman library as well.

Professor Robert Fowler, a classicist at the University of Bristol, said earlier this year: "My personal wish list would be the poetry of Sappho [only one of whose poems has survived complete] and some of the lost plays of Sophocles: we have seven, but we know he wrote over 120. And on the Latin side, the lost books of Livy, the Annals of Aeneas."

He added: "It could transform what we know about antiquity. If we retrieve the texts that have been excavated, I believe it could be a step forward comparable to the discovery of [lost classical] manuscripts in the Renaissance."

Science unlocks ancient secrets, leading article, page 25

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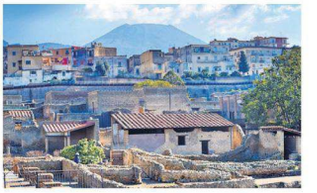

Scientists are discovering new ways to decipher scrolls buried for centuries in ash after Vesuvius erupted over Herculaneum. One documented Plato's last hours

All Things must end, implores peer

Georgia Lambert

For generations, the familiar strains of *All Things Bright and Beautiful* have served as a cherished song of praise, gracing countless Sunday services, weddings and school assemblies.

For Lord Lisvane, the former clerk of the House of Commons and chairman of the Royal College of Organists, however, the hymn's lilting melody is "deeply depressing" and should have been left behind in the 19th century.

In a letter to The Times, he writes: "We are fortunate in this country to have such a splendid repertoire of hymns: English, Welsh, Anglican, Non-Conformist, mighty, joyous, reflective, peaceful. Why do we have to suffer *All Things Bright and Beautiful*?"

The Anglican hymn was written by Dublin-born Cecil Frances Alexander and was intended to teach children about the Christian reflection of nature and God as its creator. Among her other works, Alexander wrote the beloved Christmas carol *Once in Royal David's City*.

All Things Bright and Beautiful is based on the words "maker of heaven and earth", from the Apostles' Creed in the Anglican liturgy. It is believed to have been written in 1848 while Alexander stayed at Llanwenarth House near Abergavenny and is a tribute to the Monmouthshire landscape and wildlife. Singers praising the "purple-headed mountain" and the "river running by" probably celebrated the undulating Sugar Loaf and Blorenge peaks as the mountain and the River Usk as the river winding along the valley floor near the Elizabethan estate.

Lisvane, a crossbench peer, said: "It is chosen by about half the participants in the weddings I play for — although I am often successful in helping them choose something better. The hymn was first published in 1848 in Mrs Alexander's *Hymns for Little Children*, and I think it should have stayed there."

The melody most commonly associated with her words is believed to have been written by the English organist and Anglican church musician William Henry Monk (1823-1889). For centuries, the hymn has achieved popularity as a poetic icon, appearing in numerous hymnals across the English-speaking world and receiving original musical arrangements by contemporary composers such as John Rutter.

To Lisvane the tune is far from beautiful, resonating more closely with Monty Python's parody, *All Things Dull and Ugly*. He said: "I find the saccharine doggerel, combined with the jingly tune — not that easy for congregations to sing, actually — deeply depressing, especially when there are so many wonderful alternatives. Am I alone?"

All things trite, letter, page 24

Reader's Digest UK faces up to an unhappy ending

Alex Farber Media Correspondent

Having graced waiting rooms across the country for much of the past 86 years, Reader's Digest UK has now closed its final chapter.

The May edition of the pocket-sized magazine, launched in 1938 to gather together samples of articles from an array of titles, is to be the last. Its cover story, 6 Easy Ways To Get a Green(er) Thumb, was supported by an interview with the actor Sean Penn and the results of its 100-word story competition.

Eva Mackevic, its editor-in-chief, said that it could no longer withstand the "financial pressures of today's unforgiving publishing landscape". She reassured freelance writers awaiting payment that insolvency practitioners would be contacting them soon.

It marks a sorry end for the UK arm of a global juggernaut that, according to reports, boasted a total circulation of 80 million in 2006 when it was bought for £850 million by the private-equity backed group Ripplewood Holdings.

At the time, the magazine claimed a UK readership of more than two million copies but this had fallen to about 100,000 a decade later according to its final set of ABC audited figures, by which time it was published by its current owner, Vivat Direct.

Anna Walker, a former senior editor who worked on the title for eight years from 2014, said that its demise was the "end of an era" and "a real loss for print journalism". She added: "Reader's Digest was a pocket-sized magazine that punched well above its weight. I loved the years I spent working there."

News

JAMES LINSELL CLARK/SWNS

At home on his range Steve Smart, 65, from the Isle of Sheppey in Kent, is such a fan of westerns that he has turned the garden of his semi-detached house into a Wild West town complete with general store, saloon, jail and even an undertaker's. The project has taken 25 years and has cost the grandfather thousands of pounds

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1 Ceremonial splendour (4)

— — — —

2 Childbirth (6)

— — — — — —

3 Thick clam or fish soup (7)

— — — — — — —

4 Pit worker (7)

— — — — — — —

5 Boxer (8)

— — — — — — — —

A	B	C	C	D	E	E	G
H	I	I	I	L	L	L	L
M	O	O	O	O	P	P	P
R	R	R	S	T	U	U	W

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Cryptic clues T2 MindGames p14

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Teenagers who vape 'at higher risk from lead and uranium poisoning'

Poppy Koronka Health Correspondent

Teenagers who vape a lot may be increasing their risk of exposure to lead and uranium, harming brain and organ development, research suggests.

Findings published in the BMJ Group's Tobacco Control emphasise the need for tougher rules and prevention efforts aimed at the young.

The latest figures show that 9 per cent of children aged 11 to 15 use vapes, even though it is illegal to sell the products to anyone under 18. The number of children vaping has tripled in the past three years.

Certain metals have already been identified in e-cigarette aerosols and liquids, and it can be particularly harmful to absorb them while children are still growing and developing. The researchers used responses to the Popular Assessment of Tobacco and Health (Path) Youth Study of Americans aged between 13 and 17, from December 2018 to November 2019.

Two hundred teenagers who vaped were included in their analysis, submitting urine samples to be tested for heavy metals, including cadmium, lead and uranium.

The teenagers were categorised as occasional vapers, meaning fewer than six days out of 30, intermittent (6-19 days a month), or frequent (more than 20 days a month).

Levels of lead in the children's urine were 40 per cent higher among intermittent vapers, and 30 per cent higher among frequent vapers compared with the occasional vaping group.

Levels of uranium found in their urine were twice as high among frequent vapers when compared with the occasional ones.

The research team, from the University of Nebraska Medical Center, also studied the levels of uranium, lead and cadmium according to the flavour of the vapes and found that those who preferred sweet flavours had uranium levels 90 per cent higher than those who chose mint or menthol flavours.

The scientists said that their research had limitations: the vapers were not compared with non-vapers, and the urine was measured only once. However, the findings showed that vaping may increase exposure to metals.

"Candy flavoured e-cigarette products make up a substantial proportion of adolescent vapers, and sweet taste in e-cigarettes can suppress the harsh effects of nicotine and enhance its reinforcing effects, resulting in heightened brain cue reactivity," the researchers said. "E-cigarette use during adolescence may increase the likelihood of metal exposure, which could adversely affect brain and organ development.

"These findings call for further research, vaping regulation, and targeted public health interventions to mitigate the potential harms of e-cigarette use, particularly among adolescents."

Professor Lion Shahab, of the UCL Tobacco and Alcohol Research Group, said: "This is a well-conducted study underscoring the need to carefully monitor exposure in e-cigarette users and highlights the fact that e-cigarettes are not risk-free, and therefore should not be used by people who have never smoked, particularly adolescents."

Patients won't be vilified for wanting single-sex ward

Poppy Koronka

Patients should not be "equated to racists" if they ask to be on same-sex wards, the health secretary said, as reforms to the NHS constitution could mean that transgender patients are treated in rooms on their own if other patients ask to be on single-sex wards.

This is permitted under equality law, according to the health department, in situations "such as respecting a patient's wish to be in a single-sex ward".

Under the new proposals the constitution will state: "We are defining sex as biological sex."

Victoria Atkins, the health secretary, said: "Listening to patients and respecting their rights are at the centre of my plans to make our NHS faster, simpler and fairer for everyone. Men and women experience illnesses and conditions differently and this must be reflected when delivering their care. But we know that this does not always happen, with guidance left too vague or interpreted in a way that puts ideology before biology.

"We have heard farcical stories that claimed patients who demanded to be on single-sex wards were equated to racists: this cannot be right. We are launching a consultation on changes to make sure the fundamental principles that underpin all parts of the NHS are based on biological sex."

The NHS constitution outlines the rights of patients and staff in England and is updated every decade. The changes are subject to an eight-week consultation, which will hear the views of patients, staff and the public.

Wes Streeting, the shadow health secretary, said "rights on paper are worthless unless they are delivered in practice". He said: "The NHS constitution already pledges that no patient will have to share an overnight ward with patients of the opposite sex, but that is not the case for too many patients. The use of mixed-sex wards has exploded under the Tories. Women were forced to spend the night on wards alongside male patients 44,000 times last year, 20 times as many as a decade ago."

Maya Forstater, head of Sex Matters, a charity that campaigns for clarity on sex in law, policy and language, said: "We can expect an outraged response from trans rights activists, but this is simply a return to common sense."

Also included in the changes to the constitution is Martha's rule, which follows the death of Martha Mills, 13, in 2021. She developed sepsis after a pancreatic injury. The rule provides a second opinion when a patient's condition is deteriorating.

MPs debate legalisation of assisted dying

Chris Smyth Whitehall Editor

Britain is not "teeming with granny-killers", a former Conservative cabinet minister has said as he argued for the legalisation of assisted dying.

Kit Malthouse was among several senior MPs who called for a change in the law to allow terminally ill people to end their lives, but others warned that this would be a slippery slope that would end in the culling of the old.

At a packed Westminster Hall, MPs took part in a three-hour debate on legalising assisted dying in what is likely to form the prelude to a vote in the next parliament on changing the law.

The debate was prompted by a petition organised by Dame Esther Rantzen that attracted more than 200,000 signatures. Ministers have said that any change in such a "sensitive area" would be a matter for a free vote in parliament. Sir Keir Starmer, the Labour leader, has previously told Rantzen that he would also allow MPs a free vote.

The veteran Conservative MP David Davis recalled his mother's "miserable" death from cancer, saying that he supported assisted dying "as long as extremely strict controls are put in place".

Rachael Maskell, the Labour MP for York Central, feared, however, that vulnerable people would feel "I'm just getting in the way", as changing the law could create pressure for them to end their lives.

Malthouse, the MP for Hampshire North West, said the present situation was appalling as he rejected "this view of the country, that it's teeming with granny-killers, all of us waiting just to bump off a wealthy relative so we can pocket the cash".

The rugby star Billy Vunipola, was unaffected by the first Taser deployed on him but he was detained after a second attempt. The back-row forward, who has 75 England caps, refused to put his shirt back on at the Epic bar in Mallorca on Sunday morning

ASA/GC/SOLARPIX

Rugby player tasered and arrested at Spanish bar

Seren Hughes, Will Kelleher
Gerard Couzens

The Saracens and England rugby player Billy Vunipola was stunned by a Taser as he was arrested in Mallorca after allegedly slapping a police officer.

The Spanish National Police said in a statement yesterday that a man had been arrested on suspicion of disobedience and assaulting a police officer. Vunipola admitted resisting the police and wounding. A court officer confirmed that he was given a four-month suspended prison sentence, ordered to pay a fine of €240 (about £205) and €500 in damages to the injured officer.

Vunipola, 31, who is 20st 2lb and 6ft 3in, denied in a statement that the incident had been violent but acknowledged that he had paid a fine and that the investigation had been closed. He had travelled to Mallorca on Saturday with the Saracens squad after their win over Bath on Friday. It is understood that he had been teetotal for nearly two years before the weekend, having cut out alcohol to improve his performance.

"I can confirm I was involved in an unfortunate misunderstanding when I was leaving a club in Mallorca on Sunday, which got out of hand," Vunipola said. "I will obviously co-operate with the Saracens internal process and unreservedly apologise."

A court official said: "He pleaded guilty to the resisting the law charge and a minor crime of wounding. He acknowledged he was in a late-night bar in Palma, which officers attended following an altercation.

"The man stated he did not obey police orders and at one point when they tried to overpower him he lunged at one of them and caused him an injury." Court documents say the officer suffered wrist and finger injuries. The sentence cannot be appealed against.

Vunipola, who plays at No 8, is said to have arrived at Epic bar just before 3am on Sunday. The owner, Toni Rocha, said the player removed his top and "was annoying other customers by pushing them, not in a violent way, but elbowing them and bothering them".

Rocha asked the doormen to get him to leave. "There was no way we could get him to abandon the premises and the situation was becoming very tense," he said. "I didn't feel frightened, it was more a feeling of impotence that we couldn't get him to abandon the premises. But some clients, especially women clients, were feeling frightened and very uncomfortable."

Vunipola became worse when the police arrived and they had to call for back-up, according to Rocha. He heard him "insult" the police and say "f***ing cops". He alleged that Vunipola hit one in the face and continued to refuse to leave, which was when officers resorted to using a Taser. Rocha claimed that Vunipola laughed the first time officers tried to stun him. He is considering filing a complaint as he said the bar lost more than £2,000 after the police told him to close during the incident.

Vunipola was taken to Son Espases Hospital, where he was sedated and strapped to the bed with several security guards and police officers monitoring him, according to reports. In the afternoon he was taken to court wearing the clothes he was arrested in.

The police said: "In the early hours of yesterday, at 4.30am, we arrested a 31-year-old foreign man on suspicion of a crime of disobedience and assaulting a police officer ... The man would not listen to reason and confronted the rest of the customers, and the security staff were unable to restrain him or remove him from the premises.

"The police were alerted and the officers, on seeing the man, who was shirtless and making gestures with his hands, cleared the premises. It was then that he confronted the police and attempted to assault the officers. The police officers tried at all times to get him to calm down, but the man would not listen to reason. At that moment the man pushed and slapped an officer and a policeman pulled out his electric stun gun and fired first time, although the gun didn't discharge. A second projectile was then fired, which did the job."

Vunipola was born in Australia to Tongan parents and grew up in Wales and England, winning a scholarship to Harrow School. He has 75 England caps.

Error-prone little brother, pages 58-60

Russell Brand baptised in the Thames

Kieran Gair

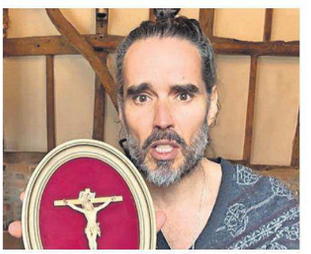
Russell Brand was baptised in the Thames on Sunday as he embraces Christianity after allegations of rape, sexual assault and emotional abuse.

In an Instagram video recorded yesterday, he said he had found his "path" and felt incredibly blessed and nourished following the baptism.

He has denied accusations by four women in a joint investigation by The Times, The Sunday Times and the Channel 4 *Dispatches* programme.

In the video he referred to "challenges" he was facing. The baptism, he added, had made him feel as if "some new resource" had been "switched on".

He said he had previously visited various churches and was considering baptism. "Yesterday I got baptised and it was an incredible and profound experience and many of you would have had your experiences of baptism and will therefore know what I'm talking about," he said.



Russell Brand said he felt overwhelmed

"Something occurred in the process of baptism that was incredible, overwhelming. Literally overwhelming, because I was obviously underwater and it was the River Thames, at some points."

Brand, 48, who was previously Buddhist, said he saw baptism as an opportunity "to die and be reborn". He recently told the former Fox News host Tucker Carlson that the sexual assault allegations were "very, very hurtful".

His gravitation towards Christianity appeared to have begun several months after the sexual assault allegations emerged last year. Since December he has increasingly been publishing photos and videos on social media discussing his relationship with Christianity.

In announcing his intention to be baptised last week, he said: "Like it says in Galatians: that you can live as an enlightened and awakened person."

Last week he said on Twitter/X that he frequently prayed the rosary.

A betrayal of core values? Bulmers fells own orchard

Constance Kampfner

Chris Packham, the BBC naturalist, has condemned Heineken as an "environmental vandal" for chopping down a 300-acre orchard in south Wales.

Bulmers, the UK's largest cider maker, which is owned by the Dutch brewing company, uprooted thousands of trees on the Offa's Dyke path in Monmouthshire after overestimating demand for its drinks. Penrhos orchard, which was planted in 1997, was about the size of 140 football pitches.

Heineken, which plans to sell the land, insisted it had acted in accordance with the Wildlife Act. Packham said that this was "almost irrelevant" in the midst of a British "biodiversity crisis".

"What a tragically sad story and a sort of abject shortsightedness," he said. "They could have offered the land for sale with the trees on it. It could have been turned into a glamping site, a leisure resource, or given to a local community group."

The National Association of Cider Makers said that 2,000 acres of British cider apple orchards had been lost in the past few years. Due to high tannin levels, the fruit has no use other than for making cider.

Heineken said that it was "incredibly important that we act responsibly and sustainably at all times", adding that the move had been prompted by the slowing cider market and improved growing practices.

Yousaf in tears as he yields to

Kieran Andrews
Scottish Political Editor

Humza Yousaf wept yesterday as he announced his resignation as first minister of Scotland, and said that politics was a "brutal business" that had taken a toll on him and his family.

Yousaf stood down four days after tearing up the power-sharing agreement the SNP had with the Scottish Greens. The collapse of that deal had prompted two confidence motions in the Scottish government.

Speaking at Bute House in Edinburgh, his official residence, he said that he had been blessed to have led the SNP. Without an SNP majority at Holyrood, and with the Greens saying they could no longer support Yousaf, there had been speculation he could turn to Ash Regan of the Alba Party to win a confidence vote.

But with an arrangement with Alba, led by the former SNP leader Alex Salmond, unpalatable to many within the SNP, Yousaf said he was not willing to "do deals with whomever simply for retaining power".

Instead he appealed to opposition leaders at Holyrood to "collaborate" with the SNP as they sought to run a minority administration under a new leader. He said that he had hoped to be able to continue working with the Scottish Greens, despite tearing up their power-sharing deal.

He had wanted to have a "less formal arrangement" but he acknowledged: "Unfortunately, in ending the Bute House Agreement in the manner I did, I clearly underestimated the level of hurt and upset I caused Green colleagues."

Announcing his resignation, he said: "I bear no ill will, and certainly bear no grudge against anyone. Politics can be a brutal business. It takes its toll on your physical and mental health, your family suffer along side you."

He became emotional as he paid tribute to his "wonderful wife" Nadia El-Nakla and "beautiful children", telling his family: "You are truly everything to me." The couple have a four-year-old daughter, Amal, and Yousaf is stepfather to Maya, 14.

He added: "And although, as you can tell, I am sad my time as first minister is ending, I am so grateful and so blessed for having the opportunity afforded to so few, to lead my country."

The announcement of his resignation comes exactly 13 months after he was sworn in as Scotland's sixth first minister, at the time becoming the youngest person and the first person from an ethnic-minority background to hold the post.

He said that when he was growing up he "could never have dreamt that one day I would have the privilege of leading my country".

Yousaf said: "People who looked like me were not in positions of political influence, let alone leading governments when I was younger."

But he said that the UK now had a Hindu prime minister, a Muslim mayor of London, a black Welsh first minister and "for a little while longer, a Scots Asian first minister of this country".

Anas Sarwar, the Scottish Labour leader, has called for an election. He said: "Scotland faces the biggest challenges since devolution but it now has a dysfunctional, chaotic and divided SNP government. All this at a time when our country needs strong leadership to get us through the twin challenges of the economic crisis and the crisis in our NHS.

"The SNP are a divided party which is out of ideas and incapable of rising to the challenges Scotland faces. They cannot impose another unelected first minister on Scotland in a backroom deal, the people of Scotland should decide who leads our country. There must be an election. It's time for change and Scottish Labour is ready to deliver it." Sarwar thanked Yousaf for his public service and wished him and his family the best for the future.

Fall of Yousaf exposes green pledges as hot air, Hugo Rifkind, page 23
Future of the SNP, letters, page 24
Holyrood needs a more serious government, leading article, page 25

Selecting a successor

*At least 33 MSPs must vote for it to count
Source: Scottish parliament

Humza Yousaf leaves Bute House in Edinburgh after paying tribute to his wife, Nadia El-Nakla, among others, in his speech

He hoped no one would notice his act of mesmerising stupidity

Tom Peck
Political Sketch

Humza Yousaf may count himself unlucky to have had to step down as Scotland's first minister this tantalisingly close to a general election.

So near, and yet so far ... to the point at which people might actually have known who he was. He had no doubt heard the siren call of such rarefied things as the *ITV Leaders' Debate*. There might even have been a billboard poster on a motorway somewhere, of him in somebody else's pocket or vice versa.

But it wasn't to be. It wasn't to be mainly because he had tried to call his opponents' bluff, even though he'd already seen their hand, they'd seen his, and both of them knew they weren't bluffing.

As he strode out to the Bute House lectern at high noon on Monday, it was clear to see that he had understood the inevitable. That his decision to collapse the coalition agreement on which his government depended had indeed left him in a position where his government was unable to govern.

"Last week I stood here and ended the Bute House agreement, which was the right decision for the country," he said. A barrister friend once told me that Scottish schools dominated national debating tournaments because an articulate Scottish accent was uniquely persuasive. You could hardly want for a more vivid demonstration of such a thing than to watch Scotland's first minister calmly, softly and reasonably articulating how he was having to resign for no real reason beyond having done something quite mesmerisingly stupid but hoped that no one would really notice.

"Unfortunately in ending the Bute House agreement in the manner that I did, I clearly underestimated the level of hurt and upset that that caused Green colleagues."

This is a statement that is very hard to interrogate when it's put as reasonably as this. Had he really "underestimated" how much it would upset the Greens, when he ended their governing partnership and sacked them all from the cabinet? How was he expecting them to respond? We'll never quite know.

Yousaf was still speaking when the tributes to him began to arrive. All of his SNP friends and allies alighted on the same words. He was a "good man", a "decent man". In the sense that he is now the first former SNP first minister never to have been arrested on extremely serious criminal charges, this is factually accurate. His front garden has not yet been transformed into a *Taggart* remake and it is unlikely ever to be so. He will face no questions regarding the ownership structure pertaining to a luxury camper van.

But it's equally accurate in the unconscious. "Good" and "decent" are words whose fellow travellers are "OK", "not bad" and "so-so". All would have worked just as well.

The political lot Yousaf inherited would have been too much for far savvier politicians than he. When someone as cunning as Nicola Sturgeon has accepted the game's up, it's still up for the continuity candidate.

He did his best to seize his moment to rouse his dying cause. Independence, he said, was "frustratingly close". If he doesn't know that's not true then that too explains a lot. One of the many things George Orwell is meant to have said but quite possibly never did is that nationalism is a horse that dies the moment it crosses the finish line. In this case it has died with several extremely large fences still to jump. And here, with the curtain being raised up around him, and the vet having authorised his humane destruction, Yousaf was telling the punters not to rip up their tickets just yet.

He spoke with a wistful air, as he thanked his wife, and his "beautiful children", becoming tearful as he did so. They were the sort of words a young staffer might have written for Ronald Reagan, yet here seemed to be the young staffer giving the speech himself. Here he was, reflecting on a lifetime's public service, and the fickle vagaries of political fortune.

"As a young boy born and raised in Scotland, I could never have dreamt of leading my country," he said. He may indeed still feel like it has all been a dream.

"If only every person in Scotland could be afforded the opportunity to be first minister for just one day," he said, warming to his theme. "They would vote for independence with both their head and their heart."

It's not merely that this is an unfortunate turn of phrase for a first minister resigning after just over a year; he must also remember as far back as, say, the early 2000s, when first ministers lasted many years and were utterly devoted to ensuring independence never happened, on the basis that they considered it to be an extremely bad idea.

Somebody else, self-evidently, is going to get the opportunity to be first minister. They'll be hoping to get more than a single day, but they might be the last one for a while whose head and heart are behind the cause of independence.

the 'brutal business' of politics

DUNCAN MCGLYNN; ANDREW MILLIGAN/AFP

Yousaf could not hide his emotions during his resignation news conference yesterday. John Swinney and Kate Forbes are considering standing to succeed him as first minister

Q&A

The contest to become the embattled Scottish National Party's next leader will soon begin. Humza Yousaf has quit as party leader but will stay on as first minister until a replacement is chosen.

What happens next?
The SNP's ruling national executive committee (NEC) will meet this week to set a timetable and rules for the contest. After Nicola Sturgeon resigned on February 15, 2023, it was six weeks before the result was announced on March 27. Presuming there is a contest and not a coronation, the new leader could be known by the second week of June. If there is no contest, the successor could be known as early as next week.

How will the contest be organised?
The NEC is likely to agree a process similar to the one that elected Yousaf 13 months ago. It announced the timetable and rules for the election the day after Sturgeon's resignation. Nominations opened on February 16 and closed eight days later.

How will a new SNP leader be chosen?
Party rules stipulate that candidates need 100 nominations from SNP members covering at least 20 geographical branches in order to stand.

If there is only one candidate, that person will become SNP leader and will then be nominated as Scotland's first minister.

If there is more than one candidate at the close of nominations there will be a contest and if there are more than two candidates the names will go forward to the party membership, who will rank the candidates in order of preference using the alternative vote system.

Who can vote?
All existing SNP members. At the most recent count on December 31 there were 69,235 members.

When is the result announced?
Last year the leadership ballot opened 17 days after the close of nominations and members had two weeks to vote. Between the close of nominations and the opening of the ballot the party organised eight hustings, staged in each geographical region, for party members to attend or watch online.

The result of the election was announced on the day the ballot closed.

How will Scotland's new first minister be elected?
The next SNP leader would need parliamentary approval to succeed Yousaf as first minister.

The parliament has 28 days to nominate a replacement once Yousaf's resignation has been accepted by the King. If there was one candidate for the parliamentary nomination, they would only need a simple majority to secure the nomination.

If several party leaders put themselves forward for the election, any candidate securing more than half of all votes would win the nomination. If no one reached that threshold, the candidate with the fewest votes would be eliminated. This process would be repeated until there were only two candidates left.

At that point, a candidate would only require a simple majority to win.

Any MSP can nominate a candidate, although it must be seconded by another MSP. Opposition parties usually put forward their own leaders as alternative candidates to be first minister but they have no expectation of winning.

Whoever wins the vote is then appointed by the King. Should the parliament fail to agree a nomination for first minister within 28 days the presiding officer would be required to propose a date for an "extraordinary general election".

Could the Scottish government be forced to resign?
Yousaf had been facing two motions of no confidence, one from the Scottish Conservatives on his leadership as first minister and another from Scottish Labour on the government as a whole.

The timing of the votes, if they are to go ahead, will be determined by the parliamentary bureau, which meets today. The SNP has 63 of the 129 MSPs, so it could be defeated if all the MSPs from other parties voted against it.

A slapstick end for accidental leader who was doomed to fail

Plenty of problems bequeathed to him by Nicola Sturgeon remain unresolved, **Alex Massie** writes

Every tragicomedy needs a fall guy and it was Humza Yousaf's misfortune to be that fellow. Worse still, he did not know it. Yousaf was elected leader of the SNP without enthusiasm and his departure is not accompanied by any great regret. No one is wasting time lamenting what might have been.

It is undoubtedly true that Yousaf has played his cards ineptly, but they were not good cards to begin with. Though it accelerated on his watch, the SNP's slide in the opinion polls began in the later months of Nicola Sturgeon's time in office. Many of the problems that over-matched Yousaf were bequeathed to him by his predecessor. He has failed, but it is not obvious any of his erstwhile rivals would have succeeded either.

Still, as Sturgeon's chosen successor, Yousaf had little option but to run as, in his own words, the "continuity candidate". It was his misfortune to take the helm of a vessel already taking on water. Sturgeon's resignation was prompted by two realisations: first, she had run out of room to manoeuvre on the constitutional question that defined her political life. Secondly, the police investigation into the SNP's financial affairs was drawing closer to home. In a literal sense, she quit before the cops came knocking on her door.

Operation Branchform has cast a shadow from which no escape has been possible. The House of Sturgeon was suffering from subsidence and the SNP's £100,000 camper van, stashed at Peter Murrell's mother's house, became a symbol of decline that was simultaneously preposterous and laughable. Something, somewhere, was going very wrong.

Even without that distraction Yousaf would have struggled. His rise through the SNP ranks was fuelled by charm more than any obvious political aptitude. Nothing had prepared him for adversity or the full glare of press and public scrutiny.

The UK Covid inquiry showed him out of his depth in his previous role as health secretary. WhatsApp messages revealed a health secretary longer on "banter" than substance. Seriousness is more easily recognised than defined, but voters appreciated that Yousaf lacked the heft or gravitas they had come to associate with their first ministers. Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon — like Donald Dewar before them — might provoke fierce opposition, but few doubted their seriousness of purpose. Yousaf, by contrast, will be recalled as the SNP's Henry McLeish: an accidental first minister.

He was also hobbled by Sturgeon's decision to bring the Greens into government — to entrench a pro-independence majority and to flatter Sturgeon's view of herself as a champion of "progressive" politics. She would lead a government greener and more moral than anything elsewhere in the British Isles. Almost every calamity that has since befallen the SNP may be traced to this. Symbolism trumped delivery. Climate targets were published with no regard for ability to achieve them. Good intentions were substituted for good outcomes.

Although SNP politicians now blame the Greens for their woes, this was a shared enterprise. Sturgeon proved to be just as much in thrall to gender ideology as her Green partners. There should be "no debate" on this just as there could be no good-faith questioning of other government policies such as a botched deposit-return scheme or proposed bans on alcohol advertising and fishing in large parts of Scotland's sea waters.

Meanwhile, the NHS and Scotland's education system were in palpable decline. One in every six Scots is on an NHS waiting list; Pisa test scores are the worst ever recorded by Scottish schoolchildren. Yousaf, insisting that all was well in the face of clear evidence to the contrary, never seemed capable of grasping the reality of this. A government that cannot acknowledge shortcomings is a government in no position to remedy them.

The task of reinvigorating the SNP after 16 years in office would have tested any politician but Yousaf failed to even accept the need for this reinvention. His cabinet was filled with retreads and third-raters and it seemed telling that he could find no space within it for Kate Forbes.

Events elsewhere reinforced the necessity for change. Sir Keir Starmer has returned the Labour Party to respectability. If the Conservative Party is clapped out after 14 years in Downing Street, might not the same logic apply to an SNP administration? The answer is plainly yes.

Successful leadership requires grip and an ability to tell voters and supporters hard truths. Yousaf lacked the weight or courage to do either.

Recent polling shows only a quarter of voters approved of the SNP-Green coalition. It is remarkable that ending it led to Yousaf's downfall. Again, the issue was less the decision than the manner in which the deed was done. A rueful first minister said: "I didn't mean, and didn't intend, to make them as angry as they clearly are." Yousaf's time in Bute House ends in slapstick style. He has fallen because falling was his role.

Nicola Sturgeon's decision to bring in the Greens hobbled Yousaf

Sunak: No migrant deal with Ireland

Oliver Wright Policy Editor
Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor

Britain will not negotiate a deal with Ireland to take back asylum seekers who are at risk of being sent to Rwanda, Rishi Sunak has warned, as a diplomatic spat between London and Dublin over migration intensified.

The prime minister said that he was "not interested" in a returns agreement with Ireland and replied "no, no, no, no" when asked whether there was a deal to be struck with the European Union over the issue.

He insisted that he was "focused squarely" on getting the government's Rwandan deportation scheme up and running to provide a "deterrent" to illegal migration into the UK.

His comments came after the Irish justice minister Helen McEntee blamed a rise in asylum seekers in Ireland on the UK's Rwanda scheme and insisted that her country would "not provide a loophole for anybody else's migration challenges".

She said the Irish government would bring forward "emergency legislation" to "make sure that we can effectively return people to the UK" and said she would be raising the issue with the home secretary James Cleverly at a scheduled meeting.

However, Cleverly cancelled the meeting at the last minute yesterday with UK government sources accusing the Irish government of "trying to pull a stunt" and deflect rising domestic Irish concern over asylum seekers by blaming it on the UK's Rwanda policy.

Under the UK's common travel area with Ireland, British and Irish citizens can freely travel between Northern Ireland and the Republic without any formal check on their identity.

NIALL CARSON/PA

Asylum seekers in tents outside the Office of International Protection in Dublin

McEntee has previously claimed that up to 80 per cent of recent asylum seekers in Ireland have entered the country from Northern Ireland. The Irish government has yet to disclose how many asylum seekers have arrived from Northern Ireland and doubts have been raised over whether they are coming from the province or elsewhere.

In the first four months of this year Ireland recorded 6,739 asylum claims, an 87 per cent increase on the same period last year, according to figures published by the Sunday Times Ireland. The vast majority — 91 per cent — came from individuals who lodged their claims when arriving at the International Protection Office (IPO) in Dublin rather than at a point of entry such as a port or airport.

A Department of Justice source told the Irish Times that it was difficult to know precisely how many had crossed the border because it was not routinely monitored.

The IPO office, on Mount Street in the Irish capital, has attracted hundreds of homeless asylum seekers over the last few months following the surge in applications. Many are sleeping outside the centre in tents which have spread along the pavements surrounding the building. Some have painted messages on the tents reading, 'we are not subhuman' and 'homes for all'.

A UK government source said the Irish government's claims were an attempt to deflect blame for the county's own migration crisis. "They are in a bind because people are unhappy about levels of migration there as they are here," one figure said. "But they are too squeamish to do anything about it so they're looking to find someone else to blame."

After a scheduled meeting of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, Chris Heaton-Harris, the Northern Ireland secretary, and Micheál Martin, the Irish foreign minister, tried to downplay the row.

Martin insisted that the legislation was merely intended to reverse a recent Irish high court ruling that said the UK could not be designated a "safe third country" to which asylum seekers could be returned because this would be in breach of EU law. He suggested that this simply represented a return to the "status quo" and that Dublin would work through the issue with London under the common travel area scheme.

Heaton-Harris said: "There is no way that we would want to upset our relationship with Ireland in this space."

But Sunak took a tougher line in an interview with ITV news. "We're not going to accept returns from the EU via Ireland when the EU doesn't accept returns back to France where illegal migrants are coming from," he said. "I'm determined to get our Rwanda scheme up and running because I want a deterrent."

Labour's pick for mayor gave £12k to Reeves

Seren Hughes

Rachel Reeves received £12,000 in donations and a week's holiday from Labour's candidate to be the mayor of the West Midlands.

The shadow chancellor accepted two £5,000 donations from Richard Parker in the year before he was selected. The money was to support the office of the shadow chancellor.

Last summer he gave Reeves the use of a holiday home for a week, which was worth £1,400. Reeves had also accepted a £2,000 donation from Parker in October 2019.

Wes Streeting, the shadow health secretary, received £5,000 towards the cost of staffing his office from Parker on October 5, 2022.

Parker, a longstanding Labour Party member, worked for PwC, the accountant, for 26 years. He advised Labour from 2010 to 2015 and brokered the deal that led to the creation of the West Midlands combined authority in 2016.

Labour members in the region voted for him to be their mayoral candidate for the election, which will take place on Thursday.

Gary Sambrook, Tory MP for Birmingham Northfield, told MailOnline: "The shadow chancellor promised to clean up politics and crack down on cronyism but here she is taking multiple donations and a free holiday off one of Labour's own candidates."

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ABTA Travel with confidence

Royal Mail suspends fines for bogus stamps after surge of complaints

James Hurley

Royal Mail will temporarily waive £5 penalties levied on people who collect post with counterfeit stamps as it introduces measures to tackle the problem.

In response to concerns about a rise in fake stamps after a switch to a barcode-based system, Royal Mail said it would suspend the fine for those who received post bearing bogus stamps.

The postal service said it was developing a new counterfeit stamp scanner in the Royal Mail app to allow customers to check whether the barcodes are recognised as counterfeit. Stickers will also be applied to items to advise recipients that a stamp has been scanned as counterfeit. The Royal Mail said it would increase efforts to charge the sender of items posted with a counterfeit stamp, rather than the recipient.

It indicated that fraudulent stamps from China had resulted in a surge of complaints from customers, some of whom had been fined when collecting post with bogus stamps on. China has been accused of waging "economic warfare" by allegedly flooding Britain with millions of counterfeits.

The issue arose after a switch to stamps with barcodes last July. Small retailers are said to have been unwittingly buying forgeries in bulk.

However, some postmasters have said that stamps they bought directly from Royal Mail had been rejected later as fakes, prompting fears that genuine stamps were being wrongly identified as counterfeit by machines in sorting offices.

Royal Mail said that it would add a new independent expert to its "highly trained team of specialists" to verify whether a stamp is genuine, as part of an escalation process for customer complaints. It also said it would be increasing its partnerships with retailers and online marketplaces to stop the sale of counterfeit stamps.

The Daily Telegraph has reported that four Chinese suppliers were offering to print up to a million counterfeit Royal Mail stamps a week, to be sold for as little as 4p each in Britain. A spokesman from the Chinese embassy in London has called the claims "absurd".

Nick Landon, the Royal Mail's chief commercial officer, said: "The combination of new barcoded stamps with added security features and Royal Mail actively working with retailers, online marketplaces and law enforcement authorities, has led to a 90 per cent reduction in counterfeit stamps."

Duchess on first royal war visit to Ukraine

The Duchess of Edinburgh has made a surprise visit to Ukraine, becoming the first member of the royal family to visit the country since the Russian invasion (Kate Mansey writes).

Sophie met President Zelensky and his wife Olena Zelenska, delivering a letter from the King to the Ukrainian leader. The duchess also spoke to women who had survived rape and torture by Russian troops.

With a focus on how women and families have suffered since the invasion, the visit included a meeting with children who have been returned to their parents after being forcibly removed from their homes and deported to Russia as part of a plan to erase Ukrainian culture.

The visit comes two years after the liberation of Bucha, the city north of Kyiv that has become synonymous with Russian war crimes.

The UN has since documented hundreds of cases of murder, torture and the rape of girls as young as 14 during the atrocities in 2022. After the attacks, Dame Barbara Woodward, the British ambassador to the United Nations, head of the UN security council, described the "unspeakable horror" after hearing accounts of women "being gang-raped in front of their children".

A source said that the duchess wished to show solidarity with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and torture as part of her work as a champion of the UK's preventing sexual violence in conflict initiative and the UN's women, peace and security agenda.

In a video message for a conference in Ukraine on the subject of conflict-related sexual violence last month, the duchess said: "We must not turn our backs on the horrors of this crime, we must never forget survivors. Rather, we must stand shoulder to shoulder with all survivors to secure justice and holistic redress, and ensure that this crime isn't an accepted part of conflict."

Last month the UK pledged £1.5 million for sexual and reproductive health services for the most vulnerable women and girls in Ukraine.

Putin makes PR show of war trophies, page 26

ANATOLII STEPANOV/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Olena Zelenska and the Duchess of Edinburgh on a visit to St Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv

Regal Treetops embraces its rebel past

Jane Flanagan Africa Correspondent

The Kenyan hideaway where Queen Elizabeth "went up a tree a princess and came down a queen" is undergoing a renovation that will deliberately shift its focus from royal connections to more local heroes.

It was at Treetops in Aberdare national park in 1952 that Elizabeth was told her father, George VI, had died in his sleep.

The forest went on to become a stronghold for the Mau Mau rebellion against colonial rule and Treetops was turned into a British snipers' base until it was burnt down by the rebels in 1954.

It was replaced by a 36-room hotel on stilts, which included a Princess Elizabeth suite and walls of royal memorabilia that became a magnet for American, British and Asian tourists until the pandemic hit and the property was mothballed.

Treetops is due to reopen next month after an intense refurbishment that the new owner Keith Rigathi said would place greater emphasis on the lodge's role in a rebellion that contributed to Kenya winning independence.

"Very few people know that beneath the hotel lie underground tunnels constructed by the Mau Mau fighters for accessing the facility," Rigathi, the son of Kenya's deputy president, Rigathi Gachagua, said. Guests would also be shown a vast fig tree that served as a post office for the rebels who used charcoal to scribble messages on leaves hidden in its crevices.

"It is important to note that we are not distancing ourselves from British heritage," Rigathi told the Nation newspaper. A lesson of the pandemic, he said, was the importance of local visitors when travel bans kept foreigners away.

"Treetops is a historical site and that richness must be preserved for all. We simply feel that there are many untold stories surrounding the property that would be of great interest to many Kenyans. It is those stories we intend to tell."

The re-envisaging of Treetops reflects an increased focus by Kenya and other African countries in telling their own histories and less interest in their former colonial rulers.

The crushing of the Mau Mau rebellion during the early years of Elizabeth's reign was one of the bloodiest chapters of British colonial history. During a visit to Kenya in November, his first overseas trip since his coronation, the King stopped short of apologising for the abuse, but described his "deepest regret" at the "unjustifiable acts of violence" against the Mau Mau rebels.

Charles also met some of the former fighters involved in the rebellion against white communities who had settled on their traditional lands in Kenya's forested central highlands. The attacks prompted a state of emergency from 1952 to 1960. After a long court battle, in 2013 Britain agreed to pay compensation to more than 5,000 Kenyans abused by the colonial authorities during the emergency period.

Estimates vary, but officially there were 10,000 Mau Mau and 2,000 civilian dead, and 3,000 casualties fighting on the British side, many of them Africans, by the end of the insurgency. Others put the death toll at 25,000.

After Kenya won self-rule in 1963 and became a republic the following year, the Mau Mau were given no credit for the part that they played. On the late Queen's last formal trip to Kenya in 1983, the movement was not mentioned and the Mau Mau continued to be banned for another two decades.

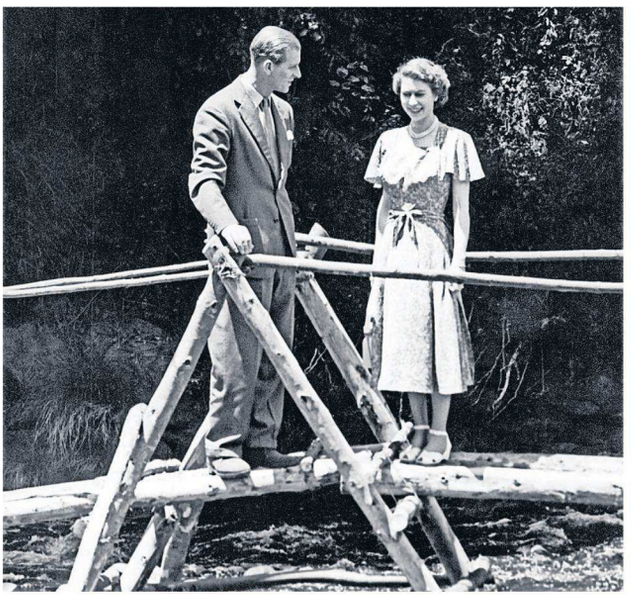
Today the mood has changed and the group has long been rehabilitated, with connections seen as a vote winner.

During his political career the deputy president, who was born in Nyeri County and is from the dominant Kikuyu ethnic group, has emphasised his family's rebel credentials. Gachagua, who has built a fortune from business and been dogged by corruption allegations, has claimed his father made weapons for the Mau Mau fighters and that his mother was a cook and ammunition runner.

Rigathi, a qualified doctor who runs his father's business interests, described the "shame" felt by residents in the county after many historic hotels were forced to close. His company has also acquired the Outspan Hotel, on the outskirts of Nyeri town, which includes Paxtu Cottage where Lord Baden-Powell, founder of the scouting movement, spent his final years.

His cottage is now a museum housing his paintings, writings and scouting memorabilia.

Treetops was designed by Eric Walker, Outspan's owner, who was Baden-Powell's personal secretary and hosted the royal visit in 1952.



Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip explore Treetops on their visit in 1952. The hotel, above, is being refurbished

News Town halls

Council rankings reveal local heroes and villains

Andrew Ellson

Nottingham city council is the worst local authority in England and Torridge district council in Devon is the best, according to government statistics that expose huge variations in public sector efficiency across the country.

The data, published by a new agency, the Office for Local Government (Oflog), shows that some council recycling rates are twice as good as others and that some councils fail to process half of planning applications on time while others are not late on a single one.

Ministers set up Oflog last summer to provide "authoritative and accessible" performance data to support improvement. The figures, published before local elections on Thursday, show the extent of councils' debt: since 2021 six have declared themselves in effect bankrupt. Fifty now owe at least ten times their core budget and 34 are spending more than £1 in every £3 they receive in tax and government grants on interest payments.

Oflog measures councils in 27 categories in five main areas: waste management, corporate and finance, adult social care, planning and roads. Analysis by The Times showed that Nottingham city council, which declared itself bankrupt in November, was the worst, scoring in the bottom 5 per cent of councils for waste processing, financial management and roads and the bottom 25 per cent for planning. It was in the bottom 40 per cent for social care.

The Labour-run council recycled only a quarter of household waste, whereas Barnsley council, which Labour also controls, recycled more than half. The best performing councils recycled nearly two thirds of waste.

Nottingham had three times as many complaints upheld per 100,000 population as Chorley, Exeter and Lancaster and it managed to collect a lower proportion of business rates than almost every other council.

The council, whose chief executive, Mel Barrett, is paid £191,000 a year, blames its financial woes on cuts in government funding, rising demand for social services and high inflation. Others have pointed, however, to mismanagement including the loss of nearly £40 million on a failed energy supplier.

At the other end of the scale, Torridge district council, on the north Devon coast, was rated highly for almost everything. Last year it did not have a single complaint upheld by the local government ombudsman. It ranks in the top 5 per cent for waste processing and financial management and has one of the best planning departments. As a district council, it is not responsible for social care or local roads. Torridge is run by independent councillors and its chief executive is Steve Hearse, who is paid £109,000 a year.

Elsewhere the analysis showed that in the year to September 2022, Hinckley & Bosworth borough council in the east midlands completed less than half of planning applications on time but Tamworth borough council, 30 miles away, was not late on any. Derbyshire county council had the worst-maintained roads in the country but neighbouring Warwickshire was among the best on that measure.

In Birmingham the council recycled only 23 per cent of waste; Bristol achieved 46 per cent.

Tony Travers, professor of local government at the London School of Economics, believes that poorly performing councils were almost certainly failing to do enough to learn from the best. He said: "Some could change the way they deliver services to get better outcomes but at the moment there's very little consistently published information that would allow councils to go beyond just seeing the data without getting a sense of what they need to change."

The TaxPayers' Alliance said the best-run councils were "rays of sunshine amid storm clouds of trouble" and the worst had to do more to improve. Joanna Marchong, from the group, said: "In order to achieve a high level of public sector efficiency, the worst-performing councils should look towards the best to ensure that they adopt sensible and worthwhile changes."

The Local Government Association (LGA) said that there were already mechanisms in place, such as its Inform benchmarking system, to help councils to learn from each other.

Clovelly is served by Torridge district

Abi Brown, of the LGA, said: "Councils continue to face huge financial challenges, with individual authorities facing competing demands on budgets that are often unique to their local area and specific circumstances. While councils continue to transform services, it is unsustainable to expect them to keep doing more for less in the face of unprecedented cost and demand pressures."

A third of councils in England face local elections this week and the data suggests that those not dominated by one of the two main political parties perform better. Of the ten worst performers six are controlled by Labour, one by the Conservatives and three are in coalition. Of the ten best councils, six are in coalition or are run by independents and the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives run two each.

There is a similar pattern when councils are compared by type. Eight of the ten worst county councils or rural unitary authorities are controlled by the Conservatives; seven of the best ten are in coalition or run by independents. The best metropolitan authorities and the best district councils are also more likely to have no single political party in overall control.

Travers added: "If there is a chance of a change of political control it must, other things being equal, be more likely to produce good government. It is also easy to see that having a council where there is little or no opposition, or little chance of a change in administration, could lead to bad outcomes."

Nottingham council said that some of the Oflog data was two or three years old and said smaller councils were "less directly relatable". It highlighted having opened a new central library, running one of the best public transport systems in the country and having parks that kept their Green Flag status, but said that there was "work to do".

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council in Devon. The council, which performs well on waste processing and financial management, is top of the rankings

Independents with can-do attitude ride wave of popularity

Will Humphries
Southwest Correspondent

Three weeks ago the seafront at Westward Ho! was a scene of destruction as Storm Kathleen brought high winds and high tides to batter the promenade and leave the sea wall and fencing damaged by scattered concrete blocks and rocks.

As soon as the winds and rough seas had subsided, the local council sprang into action to repair the Devon holiday destination's broken sea wall and clear the debris.

"The whole seafront got knocked down and destroyed but about four or five days later there were diggers down here repairing it all and it was sorted instantly," Peter Sawyer, who runs the Kitemare Kite and Surf shop on the seafront, said.

Sawyer, 53, who is chairman of the Westward Ho! business association, was not surprised to be told that The Times had identified Torridge district council as the best performing council in England. "They always have people at it and always help," he said. "Our local councillors are bloody fantastic.

"Devon county council can't even fill in a pot hole — they are all under pressure, aren't they? — but [Torridge] sorted it instantly. It will be our local councillors who instigated it. They are both independents and their heart is in the right place and they do it for the right reasons."

As a district council, Torridge is not responsible for certain services, such as maintaining roads or providing social care, both of which are managed locally by Devon county council, but its performance on all the services it does provide is well above average. For example, it completes 92 per cent of its household planning applications on time, meaning that it is in the top quartile of performers nationally. It recycles 54 per cent of all waste, against a nationwide average of 42 per cent.

Surf shop owner Peter Sawyer said Torridge was quick to act

Torridge is financially sound and its debts represent only 12 per cent of its core spending power, compared with a national average of more than 500 per cent.

Sawyer said that any business or residential issues raised with councillors were "sorted quickly" and that the councillors themselves "are human". He singled out the councillor Louis Bach, 77, for tackling a "chav problem" in the village head-on by patrolling with a body-worn camera and liaising with the police to deal with teenagers shoplifting and vandalising local shops.

"It's like *Harry Brown*," Sawyer joked, referring to the 2009 Michael Caine film about a vigilante pensioner. "If the council is performing well I am not surprised with people like that in there."

He thought the lack of councillors representing political parties helped the area. Torridge has often been run by independent councillors or had no party in overall control since its formation as a district council in 1974. "There are a lot of hidden agendas and handshakes [with party politics]," Sawyer said. "We don't seem to get that."

Bach, a retired property and estates manager who has been an independent councillor for the past year, said he had been extremely busy. "It's been really good but it's extremely hard work," he said. "You put yourself at the sharp end and try to help make a difference. I am not a political animal, I just like to get things done."

Hugh Bone, 87, a retired engineer and former district councillor, and his wife, Sheila, 86, believe that Torridge council's independence from party politics has been "a very important factor in helping them succeed". Bone, from Northam, near Bideford, said they were lucky that the council had managed to keep its swimming pools and gyms open when so many other local authorities had closed them because of rising costs and the Covid-19 pandemic. "It's been quite an achievement to keep them all going," he said.

Jenny Cowling, 58, who is co-owner of the Quay 22 café in Bideford, said the council did a good job of making the town attractive to visitors with its flower beds and hanging baskets.

"It's very well kept and the Christmas decorations are exceptional, with the tree and all the lights along the quay," she said. "I think Bideford lights outdo Barnstaple lights by miles. The pavements are all clean, so it's a welcoming environment to come into."

She said the high street was struggling with empty shops, the town recently having lost its Lloyds Pharmacy, but independent shops were thriving along Mill Street and the quay. She was an estate agent in the area for 35 years and said there were six new housing developments around Bideford and Westward Ho! that would put pressure on infrastructure such as roads, GP surgeries and dentists.

Melissa Gilbert, 58, a retail assistant at Hip and Waisted, an independent leather-belt shop in Bideford, said the council needed to install more dog-waste bins, "but it's easy to say what you think is wrong without knowing the full extent of how their finances are".

She said a lot of the historic buildings in the town centre needed work and more public lavatories were required. "There is a lot of new housing but no more pharmacies, dentists or doctors," she said.

As a fairly isolated rural area, Torridge has struggled with low wages and deprivation but £15.6 million of government levelling-up funding is being used to develop a maritime innovation centre in the historic shipbuilding village of Appledore. It is intended to be a world leader in clean shipbuilding.

Chris Fuller, economic development manager at Torridge district council, called the project, in which Exeter and Plymouth universities are involved, hugely exciting. He said there was a strong sense of purpose shared by the council, groups and businesses in the area. "Our isolation used to play against us but now there is a sense of opportunity coming from the sea again, when jobs had been lost," he said.

"We are clear that more improvement is required and we need to move further and faster to become an authority that delivers best value for taxpayers, consistent with good practice elsewhere in local government," it said. "We are committed to making these changes."

Hearse, chief executive of Torridge council, said he was cautious about council league tables because they lacked context but was proud that Torridge had done well.

He attributed his council's success to prudent management, such as not investing in commercial property and keeping waste-management services in-house.

"We operate our own fleet [of dustcarts] and have our own staff recycling. We also work quite hard on educating the public and that's helping improve recycling rates," he said.

Hinckley council said it had improved its planning performance and over the past year had processed 87 per cent of applications on time. It said previous challenges had been due to a "combination of recruitment difficulties and a huge increase in planning applications".

Derbyshire council said it surveyed its roads differently from other councils, making comparisons potentially misleading. It also pointed out that it maintained roads in the High Peak, where it could be much colder and wetter than most places, taking a toll on the lifespan of the road surface.

Birmingham council acknowledged that it needed to improve recycling rates and said it had developed a plan to do so. Comparisons between councils did not take into account key factors such as "the built environment, the types of housing and demographics", it said.

The idea behind Oflog's data is to make it easy for councils, the public, academics and journalists to see how councils are performing and to support improved performance.

Best and worst in England

	Council (party control)	Finance	Waste	Roads	Social care	Planning
	Best					
1	**Torridge** (Ind)	11th	6th	78th*	73rd*	126th
2	**East Cambridgeshire** (C)	17th	22nd	78th*	73rd*	30th
3	**Rochford** (no overall control)	8th	29th	78th*	73rd*	151st
4	**Maldon** (C+Ind+LD)	9th	10th	78th*	73rd*	209th
5	**Staffordshire Moorlands** (NOC)	13th	56th	78th*	73rd*	43rd
	Worst					
314	**Harrow** (C)	312th	206th	78th*	306th	252nd
315	**Birmingham** (Lab)	306th	308th	285th	316th	56th
316	**Derby** (NOC)	294th	256th	309th	317th	212th
317	**Liverpool** (Lab)	303rd	317th	314th	264th	196th
318	**Nottingham** (Lab)	307th	314th	305th	257th	258th

*Not all the councils are responsible for every metric in the table. In this scenario, the average score was given. For example in the social care column many councils have been assigned a rank of 73 (average score of 364). Roads have been assigned a rank of 78 (average score of 104). Source: UK government

How they were rated

Behind the story

The Office for Local Government publishes data from England's local authorities in 27 categories in five main areas: waste management, corporate and finance, adult social care, planning and roads. The idea is to make it easy to see how councils are performing.

The Times chose to examine only categories where each council's performance could be considered a factor in the outcome, such as the number of planning applications completed on time. This means we used the watchdog's data across 21 of the 27 categories.

In each category we ranked each council from best to worst and gave them a score, so the worst performer would be given one point and the best a top score based on the number of councils performing that function.

Where a council did not perform a function, we awarded the authority the average score for that category. We then added up the scores to give a ranking in each of the five main areas and an overall ranking. The data was downloaded between January and March this year.

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Autistic teenager said she would rather kill herself than go to detention

Laurence Sleator

A 16-year-old autistic girl who took her own life at boarding school told a friend she would "rather kill myself than go to detention", an inquest has been told.

Caitlyn Scott-Lee, a high-flying pupil with a love of music, was found dead in the upstairs changing room of Wycombe Abbey, a private girls' school in Buckinghamshire, on April 21 last year.

Her body was found the day before she was due to have her first detention after alcohol and a tattoo kit had been found in her locker. At the start of a three-day inquest into her death, Beaconsfield coroner's court was read a statement by a friend who had shared a dormitory with Caitlyn.

They said that Caitlyn, from Windsor, Berkshire, seemed anxious about the detention and said that she had not been able to revise for her GCSE exams because of it. They said that she had seemed annoyed at her last singing practice and rested her head on another friend's shoulder, which was not normal. The court was also told that she had mentioned that she would rather have been suspended than have a detention. There was also a reference in messages to killing herself because of the punishment.

Caitlyn Scott-Lee was a scuba diver and musician

At the inquest Jonathan Scott-Lee, her father, who also has autism, read out a pen portrait about his "daddy's girl", speaking about her love of scuba diving and music, playing the clarinet and trumpet as well as creating her own concerto.

The coroner adjourned the hearing after many people became emotional. "Caitlyn was so much more than autism, Wycombe Abbey and detention," her father said. "It's a myth that people with autism don't have much emotion. We do, it's a lot, but it's amplified and it is internal. We are so often misunderstood. In fact, Caitlyn loved so, so intensely but also so, so, internally."

Scott-Lee, a banker who lives in Malaysia, does not blame the school for her death. "Caitlyn would not have wanted to unleash such emotional devastation," he said. The inquest continues.

Caitlyn's dad can teach us all how to handle grief, Giles Coren, page 22

RUSSELL SACH

Made to last The artist Anya Beaumont prepares her Future Fossils exhibition, which opens at Pound Arts in Corsham, Wiltshire, on Thursday and highlights the continuing presence of single-use plastic in 21st-century lives. The pieces are all made from materials collected by her local council on their recycling rounds

High risk of HIV from 'vampire facials' at unregulated clinics

Shayma Bakht

People in the UK are being warned of a "very high" risk of catching HIV through unregulated cosmetic clinics after three women in the United States contracted the virus through "vampire facials".

Experts have warned that Britain is likely to see a similar outbreak of blood-borne diseases through Botox, microneedle facials and lip fillers due to "unique" relaxed laws that "allow unqualified practitioners to carry out" such procedures.

The warning comes as three women who had "vampire facials" — or platelet-rich plasma microneedling — at an unlicensed spa in New Mexico were found to have been infected with HIV.

The procedure, which was popularised by Kim Kardashian and is now widely available in clinics across the UK, involves using tiny needles to inject a patient's own blood plasma back into their face. But it is the handling and re-use of disposable equipment — a risk for any non-surgical injectable procedure — that is believed to be responsible for contamination. Ashton Collins, the director of Save Face, a cosmetic industry body and government-approved register of accredited practitioners, has said the risk of cross-contamination is "especially high" in the UK because of a "unique tiered system" where both qualified medical professionals and "cowboy" practitioners who have been trained by other unregulated practitioners are competing to offer the same non-surgical procedures to the public.

The so-called vampire facial was popularised by Kim Kardashian, who underwent the procedure during an episode of her reality TV show

"Unlike America and most places in Europe, there are no regulations in the UK for who can administer fillers, Botox, microneedling," Collins said. "We have thousands of these practitioners operating in the UK, who often work from their own homes without inspection. Therefore, the risk to the public in terms of spreading blood-borne viruses or infection through sharing needles and unsterile environments is actually really, really high."

Collins recently reported a beauty therapist to Nottingham city council who offered a "wildly unsafe" deal of half-priced lip augmentation, which encouraged clients to bring a friend and share a single syringe of filler, drastically increasing the risk of blood-borne disease transmission between patients.

Public Health England reported that between March and May 2016 several individuals suffered injuries and had to undergo rigorous testing for blood-borne viruses after being exposed to the "same needle microdermabrasion device" by a single beauty therapist .

In 2019 Caroline McIntosh, a nurse from Portsmouth, was found guilty of misconduct for squirting leftover Botox with a used syringe back into a bottle to reduce costs. Two of her clients had to undergo six months of blood tests for HIV and hepatitis.

Woman called pretty by boss wins a payout

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

Julia Roberts's Hollywood prostitute might not have objected, but a judge in Leicester has deemed that using the term "pretty woman" amounts to discrimination.

Rachel Broughton, an employment tribunal judge, has ruled that suggesting a woman's looks might help a business is not "flattering" and instead risks "diminishing" her. The judge added that it was unlikely that the term would be applied to a man at work.

Her ruling came in a case involving an accounts manager at a vehicle recovery firm who sued her employers after being told to attend a meeting because a male client liked "pretty women". Emma Nunn was "humiliated and undermined" after her boss, Adam Crouch, extended the invitation purely for her physical appearance.

Crouch was then said to have "demeaned" Nunn further by telling her to "calm down" when she refused to attend the meeting. He also referred to her as "babes" in a message. Nunn, who quit her £60,000 job, is now in line to receive compensation after the tribunal found that she suffered sex discrimination at G & MJ Crouch & Son.

The hearing in Leicester was told that Crouch took over the business from his father in 2015, but that Nunn had known him as a longstanding family friend since she was 18. She told the tribunal that their friendship led to a "blurring of the nature of their working relationship" and that Crouch "did not speak, consult with, or treat any other female employee like he spoke and treated me". The tribunal found, however, that the lack of "a purely professional working relationship" was "encouraged" by both Crouch and Nunn.

In 2021, Crouch sent Nunn a message regarding a planned meeting that said: "You should come as [a customer] is attending — he likes pretty women." When Nunn replied, "I am not coming if just for pretty face", Crouch responded by telling her to "calm down", signing off with "ok babes xx". Nunn resigned later that month and sued for sex discrimination and harassment.

Most of her claims were dismissed, but her complaint about the "pretty woman" remark was upheld. The judge said it "would not have been said to a man, or an equivalent comment made about [their] physical attractiveness as a reason for being invited to a ... meeting". She added that it "should have been obvious" to Crouch that the comment "would be unwelcome".

The tribunal found that the reference to "pretty" was sexual in nature and that the implication was that the customer found "her sexually attractive and would for that reason get some pleasure at looking at ... and/or interacting with her". A hearing to award compensation will take place at a later date.

News

Swimmer tries to start a wave of legal actions

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CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR

A wild swimmer taking legal action over sewage pollution wants to "open the floodgates" for other citizens to fight water companies (Adam Vaughan writes).

Jo Bateman, a retired physiotherapist in Exmouth, was unable to swim for a ten-day period last year because of raw sewage being spilt by South West Water on the town's beach.

Bateman, 62, had previously brought a small claims court challenge against the company, which she admitted she did not expect to win. But her case has now been boosted by the support of the law firm Leigh Day and the non-profit Good Law Project.

"It's a game-changer. Having the backing of a law firm experienced in this area of law has to hugely increase my chances of winning," Bateman said.

She added: "For me, it isn't about the winning as such, it's really not about the money. If we win, that will really properly open the floodgates for other people to do the same."

A burst pipe just before New Year's Eve led to untreated sewage being discharged into the sea and 240 lorry loads of sewage a day being transported through the Devon town.

In her claim, Bateman argues that not being able to swim during the ten days amounted to a loss of amenity, meaning a reduction in the quality of a person's life. She said: "To have a consecutive period like that has a real impact on my mental health. Going in that cold sea is such a boost to my mental health, it's so meditative. So when I can't do that, I can feel myself not feeling so great mentally."

She said that last year there had been more than 120 days she couldn't swim because online maps reported sewage spills, and she always allowed 48 hours after a discharge ended.

With Leigh Day's help her challenge has been redrafted to focus more on the ten-day period. Bateman could win as little as £60 in compensation but she hoped it would cause bigger ripples. "I want to see all the water companies not paying massive dividends to shareholders ... I want to see more money going into infrastructure and maintenance," she said.

Her case is part of a wider drive by campaigners and lawyers to use the courts to force companies to take more action on water quality.

Leigh Day is also representing Carolyn Roberts, of Gresham College in London, who is trying to win compensation for the customers of several water companies she alleges have under-reported sewage spills. Her claims are going through the competition appeal tribunal.

The firm is also bringing a multi-party action against Tesco's main chicken supplier, Avara Foods, over the impact of chicken farms' pollution on the River Wye. If successful it could lead to a payout for locals.

A recent YouGov poll of 2,000 adults found that only 14 per cent were likely to swim in rivers and seas this summer in light of headlines about sewage pollution — 73 per cent said it was unlikely.

The Times's Clean It Up campaign has been calling for better real-time information about sewage spills and faster, greater investment to improve water company infrastructure.

South West Water was contacted for comment.

WAYNE PERRY FOR THE TIMES

Jo Bateman, a keen wild swimmer, is taking legal action over sewage spills at Exmouth beach

Pupils targeted by 'sextortion' gangs

Ben Ellery Crime Editor

Teachers are being urged to warn children about organised criminals targeting them through "sextortion" scams after reported cases doubled.

Criminal gangs from west Africa and southeast Asia are targeting British children and threatening to release nude or semi-nude photos of them, either real or fake, unless they pay them.

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) said that 91 per cent of UK cases last year concerned male victims and it had led in some instances to victims taking their lives.

Yesterday the National Crime Agency's (NCA) child exploitation and online protection (CEOP) education team issued guidance to teachers about spotting the signs of this type of abuse.

The number of global cases reported to the US National Center for Missing and Exploited Children more than doubled from 10,731 in 2022 to 26,718 in 2023. A large proportion of victims were boys aged 14 to 18.

Last December Murray Dowey, 16, from Dunblane, Perthshire, took his life hours after being targeted in a sextortion blackmail plot with potential links to Nigeria.

James Babbage, the NCA's director-general for threats, said: "Sextortion causes immeasurable stress and anguish, and we know there are adults and young people who have devastatingly taken their own lives as a result. A lot of victims feel responsible but we need them to know this is absolutely not the case ... help and support is available."

The advice also includes guidance for parents and carers on how to talk to children about sextortion and how to support them if they become a victim, with the aim of taking away the stigma. Guidance includes not to pay, to stop communication and block the offender, but to avoid deleting anything that could be used as evidence and to report incidents to the police or CEOP.

Susie Hargreaves, chief executive of the IWF, said: "Sextortion has become a major threat online in the last few years. This alert to schools is an absolutely crucial intervention in stemming this epidemic, which has already ruined so many young lives.

"These criminals are cold-blooded, and do not even care when the shame and fear they inflict drives some children to take their own lives. We want children to know, however, they are not alone, no matter how lonely it feels, that there is a remedy, and a way to take control and fight back.

"The 'Report Remove' tool we run with Childline is revolutionary and allows you to stop sexual imagery being shared or from going viral online. Please, if you are being targeted this way, reach out. It is not a hopeless situation, and we are here to help you." Tom Tugendhat, the security minister, said sextortion "destroys lives", adding: "It is often driven by highly sophisticated organised crime groups who exploit vulnerable people for profit. It's vital that technology companies take responsibility for the safety of their users by implementing stronger safeguards on their platforms. I would urge parents to talk to their children about their use of social media."

Richard Collard, associate head of child safety online policy at the NSPCC, said: "Children must be supported to spot signs of abuse, but the burden should not be on them to protect themselves from harm online."

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Family's fury as killer of scooter pensioner avoids murder charge

David Brown, Mario Ledwith

A violent career criminal who stabbed a grandfather in his mobility scooter just days after being freed from jail won't be prosecuted for murder.

Lee Byer randomly attacked Thomas O'Halloran, 87, despite being due in court weeks later accused of a violent attack on a woman. He was charged with murdering O'Halloran but the prosecution dropped the case at the Old Bailey yesterday.

Byer, 45, who has a criminal record dating back to the age of 14, instead pleaded guilty to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility and possessing an offensive weapon.

The decision was condemned by O'Halloran's family. It came weeks after an outcry when the Crown Prosecution Service dropped murder charges against Valdo Calocane, 32, who killed three people in Nottingham. Calocane admitted the manslaughter by diminished responsibility of Grace O'Malley-Kumar and Barnaby Webber, both 19, and Ian Coates, 65.

Byer attacked O'Halloran in Greenford, west London, on August 16, 2022. The severely injured victim travelled about 75 yards on his mobility scooter, where he flagged down a member of the public. O'Halloran, who was known for busking to raise money for Ukraine, suffered stab wounds to his neck, chest and abdomen.

The court was told two psychiatrists had concluded that Byer had psychosis, was hearing voices, and suffered from paranoid delusions and paranoid schizophrenia, which impaired his ability to make rational judgments and exercise self-control.

Judge Mark Lucraft, the recorder of London, said: "A number of mental health issues needed to be properly explored. The issues in this case have been considered at a very high level in the Crown Prosecution Service and the views of the family of Mr O'Halloran have been taken into consideration." Byer will be sentenced on May 10.

O'Halloran's daughter Jeanne, 64, said her family were not consulted about the decision. "We were given no choice, they just told us what they were going to do," she said. "There was no consultation. I am disgusted by this. He will be freed from prison to kill again. We knew he had a previous conviction for robbery but we didn't know he had just come out of prison when he killed my dad. The family would have preferred for him to have a murder trial so we could see justice being done and let normal people decide if he is guilty or not."

Thomas O'Halloran, 87, was known locally for busking to raise money for Ukraine

O'Halloran's daughter said she felt the same anger as the parents of the teenagers who were stabbed to death by Calocane in Nottingham. "The victims are again being ignored," she said. "We have been betrayed by the system. We have not had a chance to have our say.

"They must have known about his mental illness before they let him out of prison. If he was so mentally unwell, why did they let him out?"

Following the attack, Byer tried to destroy his clothes in the garden of his mother's home, where he was living in Southall, west London. When arrested two days later he told police: "Murder? I was in prison at the time." He gave police a prepared statement in which he denied any knowledge of the attack.

In fact, Byer had been released from Wormwood Scrubs jail in west London five days before he attacked O'Halloran. He was freed despite facing a future court hearing on charges of two alleged assaults on a partner, including punching and biting, and one of controlling behaviour, a preliminary hearing was told. Byer has 15 previous convictions for 30 offences dating back to 1992. They include being jailed for 12 years in 2011 after being unmasked as the ringleader of a gang of armed robbers who targeted 34 jewellery stores.

Byer was described as a "Fagin-type character" who recruited and organised younger robbers. Detective Chief Inspector Pam Mace, who was in charge of the investigation, said at the time that Byer was a "prominent and influential figure within west London crime circles". Byer was also jailed for 26 weeks in 2018 after admitting twice attacking an ex-girlfriend. In 2004 he laughed in the dock of the Old Bailey when he was cleared of keeping an arsenal of weapons at a flat in north London.

Lee Byer had been released from Wormwood Scrubs

O'Halloran, who was originally from Co Clare, was a passionate musician who often busked for charity. His death was condemned in Ireland, where President Higgins said: "It is so difficult to understand why and how such a terrible crime could occur to someone so altruistically minded and, indeed, cherished in his local community in Greenford."

The CPS said that under its "bereaved family scheme" a meeting was held with O'Halloran's family to "fully explain" the decision to accept the guilty plea to manslaughter. Julius Capon, head of its London homicide team, said: "We reached this conclusion having carefully reviewed extensive medical evidence from experts who agreed that Byer's actions were substantially impaired by hallucinations caused by paranoid schizophrenia. With this detailed expert medical evidence in mind and having thoroughly reviewed all of the evidence ... we decided that there was no longer a realistic prospect of conviction for murder."

Medal call for Nottingham stab victim

Georgia Lambert

The parents of the Nottingham knife attack victim Grace O'Malley-Kumar have backed MPs' calls for their daughter to be posthumously awarded the George Cross for outstanding bravery.

O'Malley-Kumar and Barnaby Webber, both 19, were walking home from a night out with friends after end-of-year exams at Nottingham University Medical School when Valdo Calocane attacked them.

She lost her life while attempting to rescue her friend, who also died. A judge has since recognised her sacrifice and "astonishing bravery."

MPs and senior police officers have called for the England under-18s hockey player to receive the highest civilian honour for courage.

Her mother, Dr Sinead O'Malley, said: "The George Cross would be a remarkable acknowledgement of her bravery, for sure. Grace is never coming back to us, but we never want her to be forgotten, and this would certainly make sure she is remembered for ever.

"Our hope is it would help her be remembered as the wonderful person that she was and not just for the horrendous fate she suffered."

Her father, Dr Sanjoy Kumar, added: "The bravery she showed was incredible for a young girl."

After her death on June 13 last year, her parents set up a foundation in their daughter's memory to raise funds for causes that meant a lot to her.

Grace was in her second year. Her brother, James, told The Sun: "She was a hero, that was her character."

The George Cross is recommended by the prime minister and has been awarded only 160 times since 1940. It is reserved for "acts of the greatest heroism or of the most conspicuous courage in circumstances of extreme danger".

Briton, 93, jailed for suffocating ailing wife

Bernard Lagan Sydney

A 93-year-old Briton who is expected to die within six months was sentenced to nine years in prison for the "mercy killing" of his "darling" wife.

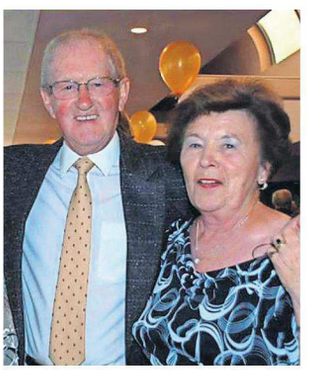
The judge in a court in the Australian capital described yesterday how the childless couple, who emigrated to Australia 50 years ago, had ended their "Canberra dream".

Donald Morley doted on his wife, Jean, who was suffering from dementia, for decades before suffocating her with a pillow when she was 92.

His barrister described it as a "mercy killing", committed by a man who believed, as the couple's health rapidly declined, they had "lived too long".

Justice David Mossop sentenced Morley to nine years in jail with a non-parole period of four-and-a-half years. Mossop noted that Morley is expected to die within six months because of his "grievous state of health".

"Murder remains murder, notwithstanding the age or infirmity of the victim or the perpetrator," the judge said during sentencing.



Donald and Jean Morley were 16 when they met. They emigrated 50 years ago

The Morleys met in the UK at the age of 16, married seven years later and moved to Australia. Morley worked at the Royal Australian Mint while his wife was employed as an administrative assistant. Mossop said they were known as a loving couple who "did everything together".

"The offender always used to call Jean 'my darling'," the judge said.

But in recent years, their health began to decline rapidly. Morley was suffering from multiple health problems, including skin cancer.

He declined hospital treatment because he was worried about leaving his wife alone. Mrs Morley would become distressed if she were left alone owing to her worsening dementia.

Despite some discussions about voluntary euthanasia, the couple had not made a suicide pact. Mossop emphasised that Mrs Morley had not asked to be killed.

The judge detailed how, in July last year, the couple went for lunch with friends and did not enjoy themselves. Morley would later tell police that he thought this was a sign they had "reached the end".

That night Morley waited until his wife went to bed at their home in the Canberra suburb of Fisher. At about 9pm, he smothered her with a pillow and then lay awake beside her body, trying but failing in his attempts to kill himself.

His crime was discovered the next day, when a nurse visited their house. He cried as he confessed, telling the nurse he had done "a terrible thing". Police later seized a suicide note, in which Morley apologised and wrote that the couple had been "afraid of the future".

Mossop said it was unfortunate the couple had not had any younger people, such as children, to help them navigate the challenges of being "very old people".

While the judge acknowledged the murder was not motivated by malice, he said the offence involved "a gross breach of trust" in which Mrs Morley was killed by her husband in her home.

Morley, who has been remanded in custody since his arrest the day after the murder, watched via video link from a Canberra hospice, where he is receiving palliative care.

Two men in court after torso found

Ali Mitib

Two men have appeared in court charged with murder after a torso was found this month in Salford.

Michal Jaroslaw Polchowski, 68, and Marcin Majerkiewicz, 42, followed proceedings at Tameside magistrates' court in Ashton-under-Lyne with the help of a Polish translator. During the hearing they were charged with the murder of a "person unknown" between March 25 and April 2.

A torso, consisting of the bottom of the back, buttocks and a thigh, was found in clear plastic by a member of the public at Kersal Dale Wetlands on April 4. Remains were found in two more places at the weekend and yesterday police said there had been a further discovery in an alleyway near railway lines in Eccles.

Formal identification has not yet been completed but Greater Manchester police believe that the remains are of a local man in his sixties. The remains found at the other three places are still to be tested but police are confident they belong to the same victim.

Yesterday afternoon Polchowski and Majerkiewicz were remanded in custody and are due at Manchester crown court today.

Geoff Caesar at Allensmore Nurseries in Hereford is concerned that inspection staff will damage stock. Patricia Michelson, founder of La Fromagerie, said the slightest error in the forms could lead to long delays

ADRIAN SHERRATT FOR THE TIMES

Bosses fear blight of new post-Brexit border rules

Katie Gibbons, Emma Taggart Alex Ralph

From his wholesale plant nursery in Surrey, Craig Marshall weighs up the risk of continuing to import costly orchids from Europe. Like many companies that trade in live and fresh goods, he is unsure what impact new post-Brexit border checks will have.

Physical inspections are being introduced today at UK ports on animal products, plants and plant products coming from Europe. All high-risk imports, such as live animals, plants, eggs and seeds, will be checked and up to a third of those deemed medium risk — dairy, wild-caught fish and some cut flowers — will receive spot inspections.

As part of the new system all imports through the port of Dover and Eurotunnel will be subject to a "common user charge" of up to £145 for each mixed consignment and there will be additional costs for every inspection.

Evergreen Exterior Services started as a unit in New Covent Garden Market in the 1980s and now supplies garden centres, stately homes, landscapers and public facilities with more than 12,000 plant types. Of the new checks, Marshall said: "It's going to cause huge disruption and we don't know to what extent yet because unfortunately we can't get any answers on what the physical checks are going to cost."

The company brings in about a thousand lorries packed with mixed consignments of all sorts of plants each year, so can expect to spend an additional £145,000 annually on the common charge alone. "It all comes off your bottom line. And that's before we even start with the impact of delays and the time we will lose: you can't put a cost on that. That's probably the worst part of it. It's impossible to prepare."

Evergreen also imports tens of thousands of pounds of houseplants and orchids. On a recent visit to Harwich port in Essex, Marshall discovered that guidelines from The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) for the new inspections did not include anything on temperature controls. "If these houseplants are taken off the lorry for inspection during colder months, a few days later they will be dead," he said.

When he asked about compensation for damaged products, Marshall was told by border staff that it was the responsibility of the importer. "The cost falls to us," he said. "Biosecurity is very, very important, but this has not been thought through. Whoever put this together obviously hasn't been in the field and seen how it works."

The long-delayed border checks were designed to ensure that imports are safe but business owners and industry leaders have serious concerns about the potential disruption. Phil Pluck, chief executive of the Cold Chain Federation, said: "Border Force control officers are raising concerns that they have not been adequately trained and informed as to how to operate the new rules. It is unravelling days before it's due to go live."

For more than fifty years Allensmore nurseries in Hereford has sourced olive trees, citrus, flowering perennials and other Mediterranean plants. Each year they bring in about 150 consignments from Italy and Spain. Geoff Caesar, business development director, said: "The loads that come in from Italy and Spain are loose packed and unloading it all for inspection and then repacking is going to be really tough for border staff. The way the Italians load it is like an art.

> "It's going to cause huge disruption … we can't get answers on what checks are going to cost"

"If we tried to unload it and load it back up we'd need two or three lorries to fit it all in," he added. "We struggle to see how the staff at the port are going to be able to inspect these lorries effectively and in a timely fashion without damaging the stock. We've shared these concerns with Defra and they accept it is going to be a challenge. When the borders were open we were actively encouraged to trade products with Europe so now our business relies upon being able to do that. There has to be workable systems and procedures to enable that to continue."

Trade bodies are also worried about the operation times for the border control posts because of a lack of government inspectors at customs inspection sites — with only Sevington in Kent understood to operate 24 hours a day — causing problems for many fresh food companies who receive their produce overnight.

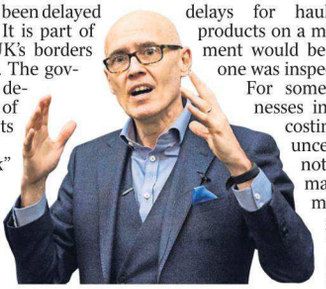
Nigel Jenney, chief executive of the Fresh Produce Consortium, said: "We've now just been informed that the government inspectors will not service these facilities, particularly key control points, which offer the most effective solution for EU trade beyond 7pm when 95 per cent of the goods arrive from Europe."

Mark Simmonds, director of policy at the British Ports Association, said that some shipping companies sailed in after the border agencies closed, meaning that checks would be delayed until the next morning. "There's nothing in such a hurry as a dead fish. You hold those things up for a few hours and it starts to impact the value very quickly," he said.

Defra, which has brought in extra staff, said that if a search took longer than four hours the entire consignment would be released.

Introduction of the new Border Target Operating Model has been delayed five times by ministers. It is part of wider reforms to the UK's borders agreed as part of Brexit. The government charges are designed to cover the costs of border control points around the UK.

Importers of "low risk" goods will pay £10 for each product line and those bringing in medium and high-risk goods will have to pay £29 for each item type. A shipment containing five different types of meat, poultry, egg, milk or plant products would incur the maximum charge.



Marco Forgione, director-general of the Institute of Export and International Trade, warned of price inflation

The French cheese importer La Fromagerie has shops in Highbury, Marylebone and Bloomsbury. Patricia Michelson, its founder, has spent the past week in France meeting transport firms and organising paperwork for the artisan producers they work with. "It is becoming very complex and a lot of fiddly checking and rechecking because if anything is not aligned then it gets thrown out and the shipment is delayed," she said. "It is now getting to the point where I'm almost expecting delays at the port with checks and paperwork with maybe one word missing, or where they just want to recheck paperwork."

> "There's nothing in such a hurry as a dead fish. [Delays] start to impact the value quickly"

Marco Forgione, director-general of the Institute of Export and International Trade, said the system would eventually help the UK to have a "world-leading" border but warned that the checks could cause delays for hauliers as all products on a mixed consignment would be held back if one was inspected.

For some small businesses in the EU the costing regime and uncertainty "is not worth the margin that they make on the goods. So they're just going to stop," he said. He warned that the system could cause price inflation, shrinkflation — where the price stays the same but the amount of goods you get reduces — and product availability problems at a time when the UK is more reliant on food imports owing to poor harvests.

Ben Robinson, chief commercial officer at the Fine Cheese Company in Bath, accused ministers of putting "roadblocks" in the way of small independent businesses. "The big supermarkets are not really going to be impacted by these charges," he said. "They can quite easily spread those costs against the volume."

The fees will cost the business an additional £60,000 to £70,000 a year. "We can't just pass that on to our customers because that will make some of our cheeses almost unsellable," he added.

The new fees have left Paolo Arrigo, who runs Franchi Seeds in Harrow, with no choice but to pass them on to consumers. "I've already chucked 30p on every single packet of tomatoes we do," he said. "Our hauliers who we've used for 20 years are questioning whether it's worth taking our goods in anymore. This country has a passion for horticulture but we can't get seeds in."

Kate Foster, of the Federation of Small Businesses, said: "We're concerned that it would impact small businesses' ability to trade internationally, because the cost impact has the potential to be disproportionate."

A government official said: "We are supporting businesses as they adapt to new border checks while maintaining the smooth flow of imported goods. Our engagement with businesses in advance of these checks has been extensive and we are working closely with the food and horticultural sectors.

"These new controls are being introduced progressively to protect the UK from potentially harmful pests and diseases. We are confident we have sufficient capacity and capability across all points of entry to handle the volume and type of expected checks, while inspectors have undertaken extensive training to ensure goods are treated safely and with care."

TMS

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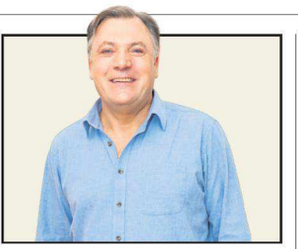
Balls gets blast from the past

Ed Balls has a dressing-room superstition before presenting *Good Morning Britain*. The former shadow chancellor can't go on air until he's had a whiff of L'Oréal's purple Elnett hairspray. This is not to fix his tresses but to conjure up a memory of childhood. "In the 1970s I used to go to the hairdressers with my mum and Elnett reminds me of being with her," said Balls, right. "It's such an evocative smell. That little spray before I go live makes me remember Mum and calms me down." Balls needs his daily spray for the same reason Marcel Proust was always scoffing on madeleines. À la recherche du pong perdu.

Steve Rotheram, mayor of the Liverpool City Region, wants to use AI to help his electorate. He tells the Political Party that he has been looking into a watch that will save doctors time by taking patients' vitals and nagging them about health risks. "It will tell you not to smoke, not to drink, not to eat too much red meat," he says. "And not to watch Everton."

SHORT OF SINGING TALENT

The actor Martin Short is living his



childhood dream on his current tour with Steve Martin by singing on stage. He tells the *SmartLess* podcast that he didn't want to be an actor until he stumbled into the Toronto comedy scene and found his calling. "Up until then, I wanted to be Sinatra," Short says. His co-star suggests that Short made the right choice. "Marty is an incredible singer," Martin says. "He's never flat, he's never sharp and, curiously, he's never on the note."

RUSHDIE'S FILM TRIUMPH

Sir Salman Rushdie cannot be accused of hypocrisy in his defence of free speech. He tells *Off Air* that he has always campaigned against censorship, even of those who attacked him over *The Satanic Verses*. "There was a Pakistani film where I was the villain and the heroes were trying to murder me," he says. "That film was refused a certificate in the UK and I defended it against the ban." Rushdie's arguments were successful and the film was released, which gave him the best revenge. "Fortunately," he says, "it did really badly."

Jerry Seinfeld remembers the joke that made him want to be a comedian. The American stand-up tells The New Yorker that it was when he read about Jimmie Walker starting a gig in Manhattan during a heavy deluge. "He goes on stage, soaking wet and says: 'It's raining so hard out there, I just saw Superman getting into a cab.'" An absurd joke, of course: the very idea that anyone can find a taxi when it's raining...

WINDING UP FRANK SKINNER

Frank Skinner grew irritated during a recent gig in Southend when he saw two women in the front row constantly checking their phones. After a few hard stares failed to stop them, Skinner asked why they were doing it. "It's not my fault," one said, nodding at her husband. "He keeps asking me the time." This, Skinner told Absolute Radio, only rubbed it in, so he removed his watch and left it on the stage in front of her. "There, you can look at that," he snapped. I trust she didn't later tap it to check that it was still working.

PATRICK KIDD

Smart T rex is for the birds, scientists claim

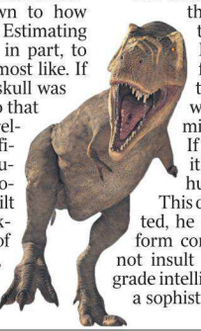
Tom Whipple Science Editor

We know that *Tyrannosaurus rex* was ferocious, with bone-crunching jaws. We know it was scary, with big slavering teeth. But was the king of the dinosaurs also an intellectual?

This is the question that has divided palaeontologists, ever since a paper was published last year that argued the predator might have had intelligence comparable to that of a monkey. Now, researchers have re-evaluated that data, and their findings are disappointing for those who rather liked the idea that behind its sharp teeth lay a sharp mind.

"It's an exciting narrative," said Kai Caspar, from Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf. "If you work on *T. rex*, you might want these opportunities to make it an even more interesting story. But unfortunately it's unsubstantiated."

The dispute comes down to how many neurons a *T. rex* had. Estimating that in turn comes down, in part, to what modern species it is most like. If you assume that a *T. rex*'s skull was filled with a brain similar to that of a bird — its closest living relative — then it was a magnificent brain. That was the argument made last year by neuroscientists from Vanderbilt University in the US. By looking at the skull cavity of dinosaurs including *T. rex*, and mapping that on to those of living relatives, they concluded it had a brain similar to a modern primate's. The lead author, Suzana Herculano-Houzel, said: "Something that big with those teeth that had the cognitive capacity, numberwise, of a baboon ... that is legit scary."



While Caspar does not dispute the scariness of the *T. rex*, his new study, published in the Anatomical Record, is, he believes, a corrective to the idea that scariness came with notable cleverness.

His team identified two areas of disagreement with the US study. The first regards how much of the skull is brain. Birds pack their skulls with neurons, but reptiles such as crocodiles do not. Most of their skull is not brain. Caspar says its brain looked a lot more crocodile-like, than bird-like. This would imply that a third of the skull was filled, reducing the estimate to a billion neurons.

The second disagreement concerns the density of brain in the part that does have neurons. Here there was more room for disagreement as no soft tissue remained. If its brain was as honed as a bird's, it might have a billion neurons. If it was like a modern reptile, it would be a third of that. His hunch is the latter.

This did not mean it was dim-witted, he said, as reptiles could perform complex behaviours. "We do not insult it by saying it's a reptile-grade intelligence. Certainly not. It was a sophisticated animal, for sure."

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High drama as trust shuts island theatre

It was in *The Passionate Pilgrim* that Shakespeare wrote: "Faithful friends can be hard to find" (Ellie McDonald writes).

And so it has proved for an open-air theatre dedicated to his works, as it has been forced to close after 60 years because the National Trust deemed its temporary seating to be an eyesore.

The Brownsea Open Air Theatre (Boat), on the island off the coast of Poole Harbour in Dorset, will be holding its final run of shows this year after the trust said the temporary auditorium was having a bad effect on the landscape and wildlife.

For six decades theatregoers have taken a ferry from Pool Quay to see shows on the island.

The National Trust, which owns the island, said that instead of the temporary seating audience members could bring chairs or sit on rugs on the grass. The trustees who run the open-air theatre said, however, that it would be difficult for people to bring their own chairs on the ferry as it would mean reducing the amount of people it could carry. They said that scaled-back shows would mean reduced takings from tickets, cutting its income.

Roy Sach, chairman of trustees, said: "We are very well regarded within the theatre community. We used to be affiliated with the Royal Shakespeare Company and we were even invited to a Shakespeare celebration event at Buckingham Palace last year in the presence of the King.

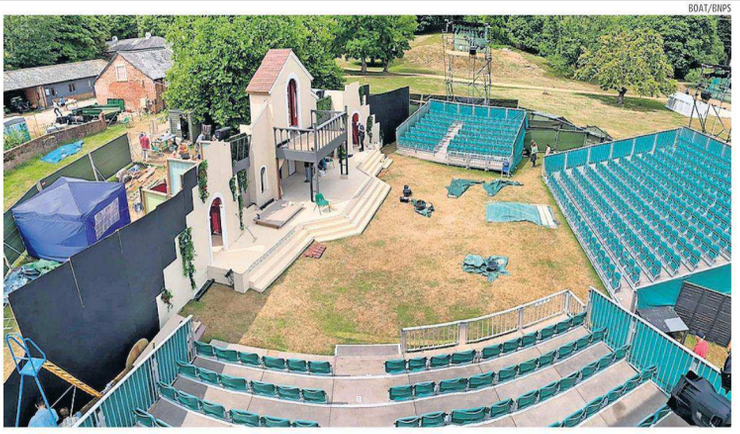
"Every show we have done so far has sold out. We are a charity, we don't make any money from it. Anything we make goes to putting on next year's show. We give anything left to the National Trust, which stands at £300,000."

Linda Kirkman, a theatregoer said: "An unbelievably short-sighted decision on the part of the National Trust. To so many people Brownsea Island means just one thing: Boat, and the amount of publicity the National Trust has received because of Boat is immeasurable.

Boat said that this summer's sell-out performance of *Macbeth* would be its last. Before Covid it was in talks with the trust about developing a natural amphitheatre that could have been hired out but those plans were scuppered by the pandemic.

A National Trust spokesman said: "We will be having a fallow year in 2025 while we consider a number of options for the future of performances on Brownsea Island."

BOAT/BNPS



The National Trust says that temporary seating at the theatre on Brownsea island is an eyesore. It wants a natural alternative

Divorcee's yacht claim 'must fail'

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

Britain's most famous divorce lawyer has told a court that the former wife of a Russian oligarch has no hope of suing her London law firm for negligence.

Baroness Shackleton of Belgravia is a partner at Payne Hicks Beach which is being sued by Tatiana Soroka after it helped her to secure a £453 million court-ordered divorce settlement in 2016.

Soroka claimed that Shackleton, who has also represented Sir Paul McCartney and is known as the Steel Magnolia, and the law firm negligently failed to seize a £200 million yacht that was owned by her ex-husband, Farkhad Akhmedov.

The Daily Mail reported that Soroka has claimed damages of £600 million against Shackleton and her firm for its failure to seize the 377ft yacht Luna in Miami in 2017. The vessel was originally built for Roman Abramovich, the former owner of Chelsea FC, and is thought to be the second biggest of its type in the world. It includes two helipads, a pool and a mini submarine.

However, the newspaper reported that in its defence filed to the High Court in London, Payne Hicks Beach said that Soroka's claim "must fail" because it was "based on a false factual premise". The law firm has told the court that it was not negligent in any way during its handling of her divorce and claimed that she told Shackleton in a phone call that she was "not interested in impounding the ship". Instead, said the firm, Soroka preferred to pursue Akhmedov's money and valuable artworks.

It was reported that Soroka "knew that attempting aggressive enforcement action against the Luna would be regarded by Farkhad as wholly unacceptable (especially when his girlfriend Anna was on board and due to give birth very shortly) and would have greatly inflamed the already difficult relationship between her, Farkhad and their two sons".

The firm also argued in its defence that if Soroka had instructed it to attempt to seize the yacht, she would not have been able to afford the likely costs and had "no realistic means of obtaining significant funding".

However, in 2021, Soroka, who at that time used her married name, Akhmedova, revealed that she had instructed a "specialist asset recovery team" to take the yacht after her former husband had defied the High Court ruling to hand over the vessel as part of the 2016 order.

At the time, an English judge ruled that Akhmedov, said to be close to President Putin, was in contempt of court. The yacht was docked in Dubai, where local court orders had repeatedly frustrated the wife's attempts to take possession.

A statement at the time from her then representatives claimed to have seized assets from the yacht, including a £5 million helicopter and a £1.5 million speedboat. Soroka's team also claimed to have seized a £40 million private jet before targeting the yacht itself by using "former members of the British military" as "part of a formidable effort to enforce the High Court judgment".

Ultimately, her team was unable to seize the yacht and later that year, the couple cut an out-of-court deal with Soroka to receive £100 million in cash and artworks valued at £50 million.

Lawyers for both Soroka and Payne Hicks Beach did not respond to requests for comment.

Tatiana Soroka is suing a law firm

It's a big year for politics. Stay tuned.

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News

A concentration of the master's powers

Visual art Laura Freeman

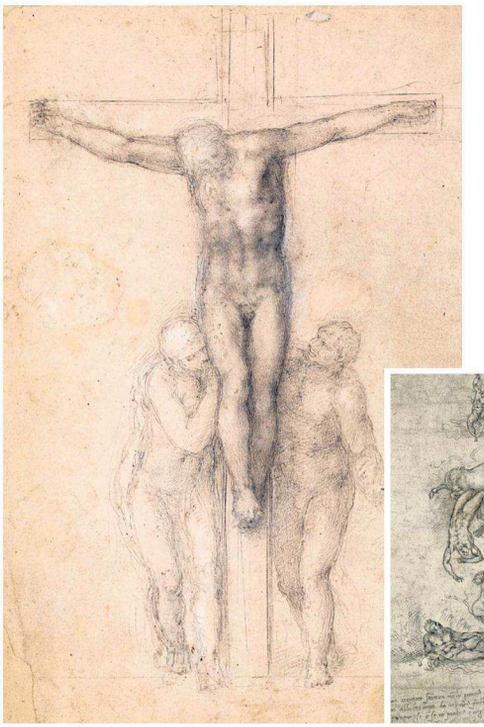
Michelangelo: The Last Decades
British Museum
★★★★☆

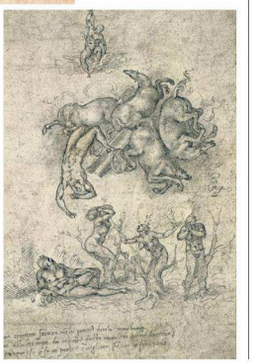
How many masterpieces does it take to make an exhibition? At the National Gallery the answer is one. *The Last Caravaggio* is a single-room show of one stellar painting: *The Martyrdom of Saint Ursula* from the Gallerie d'Italia in Naples. Technically, it's two. The National Gallery's own late Caravaggio *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist* has joined it for the occasion. Two paintings — job, superbly, done.

How about a dozen drawings? Would you feel you had had your money's worth? I ask because the British Museum's *Michelangelo: The Last Decades* could have been a tenth of the size and captivated even more.

This is Michelangelo with time running out. When we meet him he is 59, an old Renaissance man. He is aching, creaky, irascible. The Sistine ceiling is behind him, he has faltered in the monumental tomb of Julius II and he has made his perfect *Pietà*. He would live for another 30 years, creating the *Last Judgement* for the Sistine Chapel, taking over the architectural designs for St Peter's and befriending the intellectual elite of Rome. St Peter's does not travel so we have the drawings. Preparatory sketches for *The Last Judgement* show a mind furiously at work, arguing with itself, refining, scrapping, amplifying. Seven sketches of an angel wrestling a soul grapple for supremacy on a single page.

Diminution of powers? A concentration of them. The final room of the exhibition is a shadowy space devoted to Michelangelo's *Meditations*, densely worked drawings of Christ on the cross or with his mother in infancy, and again after his resurrection. Gone is the clarity and grace of the Renaissance ideal. Gone too is Michelangelo's earlier muscular machismo. The crucified Christs are all torsions and hollows, making you conscious as you have never been before of the wrenching of arms, the heave of ribs, the stretched concavity of the stomach.





The final room of the exhibition is devoted to Michelangelo's drawings of Christ, with chalk lines that lend the solidity of sculpture. Below: a preparatory study for The Fall of Phaeton, which depicts the son of the god Helios after he was struck with a lightning bolt by Jupiter

The black chalk line palpitates as Michelangelo redraws, wonders aloud, worries away until the drawings have the solidity of sculpture. In one drawing the Virgin rests her cheek against the thigh of her crucified son as she might have done when he was a baby, his legs irresistibly chubby. Too tender to bear.

Go for this room alone. As for the rest, it is hard to sustain an interest in Michelangelo and friends when you have come for the headline gig. All is impeccably curated, the captions are models of clarity and you leave with a thorough grounding in papal ambition, the eternal building of St Peter's and post-Reformation thought. But apart from the drawings by the great man himself, most of it feels dogged, not spectacular. Paintings by Marcello Venusti, Michelangelo's younger collaborator, are weak wine indeed.

Call it *Michelangelo: The Last Drawings*, cast off the hangers-on, light the drawings perfectly, leave breathing space between each one and do very much more with far less. *From May 2 to July 28, britishmuseum.org*

Mother beats chef in takeaway tussle

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

A mother has defeated her son in a legal battle over who owns a Thai takeaway that was once named Britain's most-loved.

Ekkachai Somboonsam, a 51-year-old chef, claimed to be the owner of Thai Metro, close to the British Museum in London. A court has ruled, however, that instead he was a mere employee and that his mother, Vanida Walker, was the legal owner.

Somboonsam, who came to the UK aged five, first worked as a kitchen porter and cook before claiming to have founded the takeaway in Fitzrovia in 2000 using inheritance from his father.

The success of that first business allowed the family to open a second restaurant and then go on to amass a multimillion-pound property portfolio.

Walker, 77, began a legal action against her son last year, claiming that she owned the restaurant and that, rather than being the boss, her son worked for her.

Thai Metro ownership was claimed by Ekkachai Somboonsam and Vanida Walker

At the High Court, a half-hour stroll from the takeaway site, a judge ruled that the family companies Thai Metro, Anglo Thai and Finfish Catering were beneficially owned by the mother, who also owns the Charlotte Street property where Thai Metro operates.

Judge Malcolm Davis-White KC rejected Somboonsam's claim that money he had inherited in Thailand was used as the seed capital for the restaurant business, therefore making him the owner. The judge did find, however, that Somboonsam owned two other properties from the family portfolio, which his mother had also claimed.

The court heard that Walker had moved to London from Thailand in 1973, working as a cleaner before moving into catering, providing Thai food at outdoor music festivals, including Glastonbury, and running a restaurant in southeast London. Thai Metro restaurant was opened 23 years ago. It was named by the Hungryhouse delivery website as "Britain's most-loved takeaway" as a result of its five-star ratings and "unprecedented return rate", beating 12,000 other businesses.

The mother and son developed "diametrically opposed" views over the ownership of the businesses, the court was told. Robert Strang, representing Somboonsam, said that although shares in the business were in Walker's name, the reason was that her son was separated from his first wife and wanted to prevent her making a claim.

Timothy Cowen, for Walker, said, however, that she had invested the money and taken the lease in her own name "because this was her business".

Ruling in favour of the mother's claim on the takeaway, the judge said that he "preferred her evidence" on the provenance of the seed capital that started the business and led to the family fortune.

The judge noted that the mother had told the court that there had been "no substantial inheritance" as her son had claimed that his father "was comparatively poor". He added that the son's version of events regarding his inheritance "completely broke down" in cross-examination.

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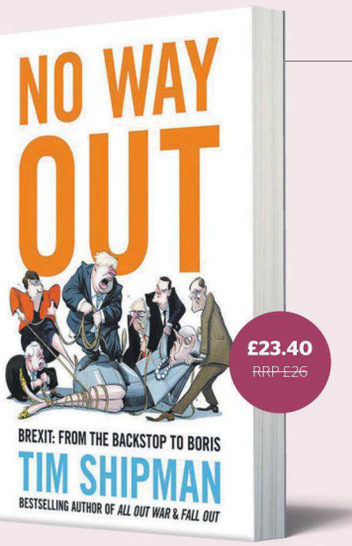

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Fall of Yousaf exposes green pledges as hot air
Hugo Rifkind
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Comment

Turkey and Senegal prove democracy is alive

In this huge election year voters are benefiting when there is a spread of choices, something lacking in the US or UK

William Hague

We are four months into the great election year of 2024, in which several billion people are entitled to cast a vote. And it is already clear that somebody is doing rather well. Who is that, you may be wondering, the right or the left? Is it governments or oppositions, or populists or joke candidates? Is it really possible, from the votes so far cast by 543 million people around the globe in various forms of free elections, to identify who is doing well?

The answer is refreshing. It's electorates who are doing well. On the whole, where they have a genuine choice, voters have been turning out in large numbers and delivering some serious surprises. They have been seeing through disinformation, refusing to be intimidated and when given a chance to give bloody noses to leaders who are complacent, corrupt, incompetent or autocratic, they've seized it. They are showing that democracy isn't done yet.

A good example is Turkey, where President Erdogan — he of the creeping authoritarianism, media domination and ever-extended terms of office — was given the huge and unexpected shock of his main opponents being swept to victory across the largest cities. The scale of the victory of the mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem Imamoglu, suggested voters fully intended to show that political competition in their most pivotal of countries is back.

Most dramatic has been Senegal, where President Sall attempted the old trick of staying in office despite the expiry of his term. He had reckoned without the determination of his people. They turned out in vast numbers to support a court ruling against him and forced an election between new candidates, resulting in a peaceful transfer of power to the opposition. There are Trump supporters in America who could learn a lot from west Africa.

In Taiwan, the electorate faced an orchestrated campaign from China, in the form of military exercises, mass disinformation on social media and blatant demands not to elect a particular president. They defiantly elected him anyway, in an affirmation of their resolve to protect their way of life.

Elsewhere in the Pacific, the voters of the Solomon Islands have just delivered their own verdict on their government allowing excessive influence from Beijing, forcing their prime minister to step down.

> Erdogan had the huge shock of his opponents winning in large cities

The story goes on: in Pakistan, voters stunned the army and political establishment by giving big victories to independent candidates who had been prevented from running for Imran Khan's party due to his politically motivated prosecution. In South Korea, a president seen as out of touch was humiliated by voters giving his opponents a sweeping majority in their parliament. Majorities across the world have voted, where they can, for fairness, standards and upholding their constitutions.

There are, of course, caveats to this, before we get carried away. Sham elections have been held by dictatorships in Russia and Iran, although in the latter the turnout fell so sharply that voters found a way to express their disenchantment.

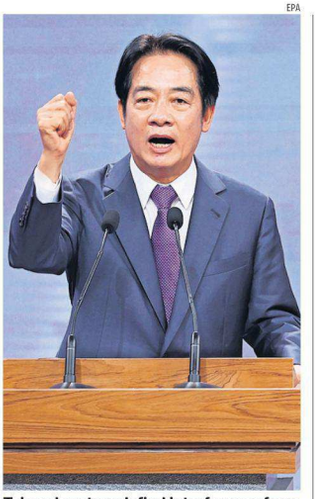
Others, such as in Bangladesh, have not been judged fair and free. In Europe, populism has advanced in elections in Portugal and Slovakia. And it's early days. In the 2024 election special, the night is young.

In the coming weeks, results will roll in from India, where the government is broadly popular, and South Africa, where it manifestly is not. The ANC looks set to lose its hitherto permanent majority post-apartheid, but voters in both countries lack a single nationwide opposition that presents a real choice. Most crucial of all for geopolitics comes the US election in November. Voters are clearly dissatisfied with the Biden/Trump choice before them but trapped in a system dominated by money, name recognition and partisan primary voters.

Voters, then, are doing sufficiently well one third of the way through the year that they merit a round of applause. But they can only keep up their efforts where there are coherent alternatives to choose from and where large numbers of them find it palatable to switch their vote if the occasion demands it — something deeply divided Americans now find very difficult.

This has lessons for us here in Britain. There is no doubt that in our own 2024 general election there are alternative governments and that huge numbers of voters are prepared to switch parties if necessary. In that sense our democracy is in robust health. But that is much less true in many of the local or mayoral elections taking place on Thursday, or in the devolved parliaments in Edinburgh and Cardiff. If we are going to devolve steadily more decisions, then it becomes correspondingly more important for local voters to be empowered, and not feel that one party is inevitably running their country or area for decades on end with nothing that can be done about it.

EPA



Taiwan's voters defied interference from China to elect William Lai as president

To hold mayors, councils and first ministers accountable, voters have to be able to break out of their Westminster election voting habits, allowing local democracy to develop its own choices. You can see voters trying to do this, for instance in the West Midlands, where a highly effective Conservative mayor, Andy Street, is polling sufficiently far ahead of his party to still have a chance of winning. Yet far too many mayoralties will be held for long periods by candidates who have much less merit but are elected because of the Westminster party to which they belong. As for the devolved parliaments, they have produced governments in Scotland and Wales that systematically underperform England but grow arrogant and lacklustre through feeling unthreatened.

In Scotland that may be about to change with the crisis now engulfing the SNP, but the parties will need to allow a wider menu of options across Britain if voters are to do their job. Is it unthinkable, for instance, for the Labour and Conservative parties to co-operate in ensuring an alternative government can be provided in future in Scotland? Can't we allow local parties to endorse a good mayor from another party? Are there new parties that could be established purely at the regional level, overlapping with the national parties but ensuring a real choice for voters? And can we stop treating every local result as a prediction of a general election, which only encourages the idea that local leaders are of no consequence in themselves?

> New parties at local levels could ensure a real choice for voters

I always enjoyed meeting Jean Charest, who was Conservative leader in Canada, and then premier of Quebec — as a Liberal. That was because only the Liberals could beat the separatists in Quebec. He later ran for Conservative leader again. That's a political system with a mature approach to devolution of power, and a country that survived.

It should be of some comfort that in elections around the world, voters are enthusiastically doing their job. But we have to give them the political culture and party system to let them do it.

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ABTA V7545

Comment

MeToo movement hasn't served women well

Reversal of Harvey Weinstein verdict shows that juries need hard evidence, not simply 'my truth'

Joanna Williams

@JOWILLIAMS293

Thanks to the sterling work of Dr Hilary Cass, politicians can no longer obfuscate when faced with the question: "What is a woman?" Last week, the education secretary, Gillian Keegan, declared her understanding had "evolved" and she will no longer say "trans women are women". Labour's Wes Streeting has been through a similar epiphany. He was wrong, he now admits, to have cited the Stonewall-backed claim.

That those in charge of Britain now acknowledge biological facts is cause for celebration. Yet while female anatomy has at long last been mastered, the moral and intellectual status of women remains contentious.

News that Harvey Weinstein has had one of his convictions for rape overturned prompts reflection on the legacy of the MeToo movement. Back in 2017, a small number of high-profile women making allegations against one man soon morphed into a tidal wave of accusations as women around the world took to social media to share their experiences.

In the process, MeToo moved from serious claims of rape and assault to calling out men who behaved badly on dates or in the workplace. Somewhere along the line, the idea that women had agency and could walk away from bad dates or even exploit their sexuality for their own advantage was lost.

Central to MeToo was the demand that we believe women. As a response to a previous era in which women reporting sexual offences were often disbelieved, this made sense. It was only in 1992 that marital rape became illegal in the UK. But as a mantra, "believe women" went further than insisting allegations be taken seriously and sought to treat them as truth.

Routinely discrediting women implied that females had a shakier grasp on reality than males. Unfortunately, the demand to "believe women" did nothing to challenge this differential status. Women were no longer viewed as liars but as paragons of virtue, naive innocents incapable of dissembling. At no point were women considered rational adults, as morally and intellectually capable of both telling the truth and acting out of self-interest as men.

> At his 2020 rape trial lawyers relied on 'prior bad acts' witnesses

Now, with Weinstein facing a fresh trial, the implications of uncritical belief — and the possibilities of achieving anything like a fair hearing in the middle of a political maelstrom — are being called into question.

Weinstein was convicted in a New York court in 2020 of criminal sexual acts and third-degree rape; he was sentenced to 23 years in prison. At his trial, lawyers relied upon a series of "prior bad acts" witnesses. In other words, rather than presenting a watertight case built upon concrete evidence, jurors were presented with the testimony of multiple "believed" women. As Weinstein's attorney argues, witnesses were employed to make the man in the dock "look bad".

It is hardly surprising, then, that an appeal court has found in Weinstein's favour and ruled that the witnesses served only to demonstrate a propensity to commit sexual crimes and not evidence that he did carry out any specific offence. Weinstein was also found guilty of rape and sexual assault in Los Angeles and remains in prison, although this case is also being appealed against.

Weinstein is not the first man to have a conviction brought at the height of the MeToo movement overturned. In 2018, Bill Cosby was found guilty of drugging and sexually assaulting a woman but this was challenged in 2021 when a Pennsylvania appeals court ruled that Cosby's right to due process had been violated. In both cases, the casting of accusers as victims or even "survivors" before legal proceedings got under way, combined with the political imperative to "believe women", made it all but impossible for jurors to assume the accused were innocent until proven guilty.

One lesson from these high-profile cases is that when political fervour enters the courtroom, hard facts are often the first victim. Those salivating over the prospect of convicting Donald Trump need to beware. In the case of MeToo, mixing politics and the law has proved terrible for men who risked wrongful conviction and disastrous for women whose accusations deserved to be judged objectively.

In many respects the instruction to believe women has always been a lie. Girls from towns such as Rochdale and Keighley who reported being groomed, sexually assaulted and raped by gangs of mainly Pakistani-heritage men were routinely disregarded by the police officers and social workers in whom they confided.

Most recently, Jewish women raped by members of Hamas in Israel on October 7 had to wait almost five months before a team of United Nations experts concluded there were "reasonable grounds to believe" these crimes had been committed. Believe women has all too often meant believe articulate middle-class women.

With Weinstein now facing a retrial, his initial accusers are understandably angry. Rose McGowan, one of the first women to speak out against him, defends "What we know of ourselves to be true. And what we know of others to be true." Ashley Judd has likewise said "We still live in our truth. And we know what happened." Perhaps they are right. But in a court of law "my truth" is no match for the truth. And it seems a pyrrhic victory for feminism for women to be cast as less objective or rational than men.

It is great that we can now define women as human females. But it would be sweeter still if we could also own the "adult" part of this dictionary definition. This means challenging the legacy of MeToo that has cast women as childlike innocents. Now that we know what a woman is, let's insist upon moral equality with men.

Melanie Phillips is away

THUNDERER

People with learning disabilities need ministers' support

Ian Birrell

There is a valid debate to be had over disability benefits after a surge in claimants with anxiety and depression. But this discussion will inevitably turn a spotlight on chronic mismanagement of mental health, with 1.9 million people on NHS waiting lists. Community services have been hollowed out, shark-like private firms exploit gaps and there is over-reliance on pharmaceutical and physical restraint. One psychiatrist told me even severely ill patients must be "waving an axe" before they can access help.

Yesterday the work and pensions secretary Mel Stride set a new hare running by saying it is an "open question" whether people with learning disabilities should receive cash benefits, "given they come in all sorts of different forms of scales or severity" — a statement that will fuel fear in many homes.

Life with learning disabilities can be a needless struggle. At best, citizens and their families face endless form-filling and barrages of repeated questions to obtain essential support; at worst, gruelling fights against a cash-strapped and floundering system. Ministers witter on about "big challenges" facing social care, having failed to tackle deficiencies that cause misery after 14 years in power.

Coming now, Stride's suggestion sounds like a prelude to pre-election scapegoating of our most disadvantaged community by a party whose failures on this front have just helped drive out one of its MPs. Dan Poulter, who works also as a psychiatrist, pointed to the ditching of reform to the outdated Mental Health Act — which defines autism and learning disabilities as disorders permitting detention — as a factor in his defection to Labour.

Is it any wonder the government has failed to meet its pledge to halve the number of people with such conditions locked up in costly and inappropriate mental health settings between 2015 and the end of last month? Many others end up stuffed in mini-institutions masquerading as supported living, while community support has corroded in the local government funding crisis.

The pandemic exposed disturbing societal attitudes, with shocking impositions of blanket "do not resuscitate" notices. Given such blinkered attitudes, it is no surprise only one in 20 people with learning disabilities have jobs — although workplaces are among the best places to overcome prejudice and foster integration while reducing reliance on the state.

If only pontificating ministers would see people with learning disabilities as citizens who deserve the best support for the benefit of all society, not simply as drains on their budgets and as political footballs.

Ian Birrell is a freelance writer

Giles Coren Notebook

Caitlyn's dad can teach us all how to handle grief

When I read about Jonathan Scott-Lee, the autistic father of an autistic daughter who killed herself at boarding school over a detention, saying, on the eve of the inquest into her death, "I've no desire for nationwide change... I'm fine with the school and the NHS... I feel they would have done the best they could... I don't want to become one of those people who processes grief in an angry way... Now that Caitlyn has gone, I want to spend the time I have with my other daughters..." I felt huge relief, as well as warmth, sorrow and deep empathy. Because that is how I have always hoped I would react, if such an unthinkable horror ever came to call on me.

I've always been a bit baffled by parents who lose a child (or indeed those who lose a wife or husband or parent) and then devote their lives to campaigning against whatever terrible 10,000 to 1 piece of bad luck killed them. I know how world-endingly terrible the premature death of a loved one is. Most of us do. And I can see how spending the rest of one's life trying to change or end whatever was to blame for their death could feel like a productive outlet for all the rage and sadness of bereavement.

But I've always thought that wouldn't be my way. It seems incompatible with the natural processes of grief, somewhat unaccepting of the eternal order, like Orpheus in the Underworld, or Superman in the one where he reverses the Earth's rotation to bring a dead Lois Lane back to life (note to superhero nerds: that wouldn't work).

Mr Scott-Lee, with the benefit of his specific neurodivergence, feels no compunction to follow the modern route of denial, rage and the politicisation of grief. And he is a reminder of how much we sometimes hysterical souls in the allistic community (ie not on the spectrum), can learn about independence, forbearance and personal resilience from our autistic daughters, sons, brothers and sisters.

Bleeping hell

Well, that was a bit serious. Sorry. Let's have a laugh about the new cars that, from July 6, will almost all carry an alarm feature that bleeps (like one of those infernal seatbelt warnings) whenever you go over the speed limit. If the bleeping doesn't work, the steering wheel will vibrate and then the accelerator will push back at your foot. "Increasingly," the director of the RAC Foundation declared, "the car will decide what you can and can't do."

Hurrah for that, of course, but why stop at speeding? Surely driving too slowly so that people behind you miss the traffic lights should set off an alarm? Also, turning left without indicating and being a bit slow getting your stupid 4x4 through a gap I could drive a train through?

And what about van drivers who ping fags out the window, people who hoot when you're trying to park and young men who lie back low in the driver's seat like gangsters, playing their music much too loud? How about a "WAAA! WAAA! WAAA!" going off to correct their stupid behaviour too?

And why stop at drivers? Why not an alarm for bicycles so that when a cyclist runs a red light a 1,000-volt electric shock is sent through the handlebars that blows him ten feet in the air? How about an implant in the brain of pedestrians that gives them a stroke-like surge down the left side of their body if they don't raise their hand in thanks when I stop for them on a zebra?

Away from the road, how about an automatic sprinkler system that drenches anyone who brings hot smelly food on to a train? Concealed teargas guns on planes could incapacitate anyone repeatedly sniffing in the seat next to me. Or how about an alarm system for "generally being a dick" that screams "don't be a dick!" whenever anyone is being a dick?

The speeding alarm principle is the thin end of a glorious wedge that could soon have us living in a completely perfect world.

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Fall of Yousaf exposes green pledges as hot air

Scottish government promised hugely ambitious policies on net zero but with zero plans for actually carrying them out

Hugo Rifkind

@HUGORIFKIND

"If you build it, he will come." So said a ghostly voice to Kevin Costner, in the 1989 fantasy sports film *Field of Dreams*. With the idea being that, if Costner's Iowa farmer constructs a baseball pitch out in his backwater fields, then players, mysteriously, will arrive.

As plans go, this is obviously somewhat optimistic. Compared with quite a lot of UK climate policy these past few years, though, it is positively down-to-earth. Frequently, the line from our leaders is more like "If we just say we're going to build it, then surely somebody else will." What, though, if nobody ever does? Then, if there's any justice, you end up like Humza Yousaf.

It's deceptive, the Yousaf thing. From the coverage, even from the politics, you'd be forgiven for having concluded that the resignation of Scotland's first minister yesterday was all about his personal failings. Humza Useless, not being up to the job. "Humza the Brief", as Alex Salmond put it.

In one report last week, no fewer than three named people were quoted describing him as, in some form, "a nice guy who is not up to the job". As if this had all happened due to some generalised SNP collapse that he couldn't fix. Because they got in a mess over trans issues, because Salmond had splintered into the Popular Scottish National People's Front (or whatever), because somebody might have embezzled a camper van. And so on.

The thing that has actually killed him, though, is net zero. Or, to be more specific, it is the report published last month by the nationwide UK Climate Change Committee, which looked at Scotland's green plans and, in précis, said "lol, no". Whereupon, inevitably, Yousaf abandoned them.

> The climate committee looked at Scotland's plans and said 'lol, no'

Whereupon, equally inevitably, his coalition with the Scottish Greens became untenable. That's it. That's the story. Or at least, it should be.

Needless to say, the SNP blamed the Westminster government for the CCC's verdict. I wouldn't get too hung up on this, though, because if Godzilla were to march out of the sea at Lossiemouth, I dare say they'd blame the Tories for that too. But it's worth taking a direct look at the committee's report, if only to appreciate just how damning it was.

"The Scottish government is failing to achieve Scotland's ambitious climate goals," it began. Also, "there is still no comprehensive delivery strategy" and "actions continue to fall far short of what is legally required". All this, and we're still in the first paragraph. Honestly, it was a proper mauling.

Until Yousaf responded, hardly anybody had noticed. This was not so surprising. Up in Scotland, after all, it often feels as if Godzilla himself could struggle to make the national news without a Westminster angle. Also, though, it was because the CCC is always saying stuff like this. Formed under the Climate Change Act 2008, it exists to call out greeny bullshit from government, and let's just say it has never struggled for material.

Its last UK report was scarcely more complimentary, pointing out that Rishi Sunak's government was badly off track in its commitments. In response, Sunak did what Yousaf would later do too, which was abandon them. He has also, for almost a year, failed to appoint a new committee chair after its last, Lord Deben, hung up his hemp sandals. With most of his party critics being further to his right, Sunak can shrug this away. In coalition with the Greens, Yousaf could not.

The warming planet is a huge problem. This might seem a banal thing to say, but I do feel I need to say it anyway, if only to pre-empt those who would insist otherwise. Most politicians, also, know this full well, which is why the past few years have seen a startling level of what we might call climate pledge inflation.

Scotland illustrates this perfectly. In 2017, which is really not that long ago, Yousaf's predecessor Nicola Sturgeon was promising an 80 per cent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050. By 2018, it was 90 per cent, which the CCC said was at the "limit of feasibility". A year later, becoming the first UK political leader to speak of a "climate emergency" at the SNP's conference, Sturgeon was promising net zero by the same date. Literally weeks later, that date had advanced to 2045, seemingly for the sole reason that Theresa May was abruptly also promising 2050. No doubt for at least a moment, Sturgeon had considered the possibility of 2049 and a half.

> Johnson really did have a vision that combined net zero and levelling up

On one level, you might see all this as the admirable process of waking up to a crisis. On another, though, a date clearly means absolute bupkis on its own. Boris Johnson, a man with a clear track record of vaguely promising stuff and hoping it turns up (bridges, airports, etc) was singled out for praise last week by the CCC's chief executive, Chris Stark, who pointed out that Johnson really did have a vision that combined net zero and levelling up. Whether or not that Johnsonian vision would have survived the past two years of economic collapse — and I'd say "not" — this should remind us that this stuff need not just be pie in the sky.

In a way, this makes Yousaf's fall extremely on-brand for the SNP, much as the climate aspect may have been neglected. Was there ever truly a vision there? As ever, it's a tale of preachy, competitive, virtue-signalling ambition and not much more.

Should any successor now wish to draw the Scottish Greens back into coalition, one option would obviously be to leap, full (hybrid) throttle into tackling everything that the CCC said it had bodged, such as offshore wind, electric vehicles, tree planting, peat restoration, heat pumps and recycling, having somehow — with difficulty, with bravery, with honesty — found the money.

Another would just be to pretend they will. And call me a man who has forgotten how to dream, but my money is on the latter.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the Editor should be sent to letters@thetimes.co.uk or by post to 1 London Bridge Street, London SE1 9GF

Student visas only for top universities

Sir, It is perplexing that the centrist Conservative think tank Onward recommends cutting visas for international students in a report that claims to be about growth, and doubly perplexing that it is endorsed by the levelling-up secretary ("Slash migration by restricting student visas, ministers told", Apr 29). Universities are some of the biggest employers in our towns and cities. They provide a skilled workforce for NHS trusts, schools and industry and support businesses to innovate and grow.

Universities are already struggling financially: more than 50 are cutting jobs, and more will probably follow. Universities make a loss on every British undergraduate they teach and are successful largely because they can recruit students from around the world. Yet there has been a 40 per cent drop in international student applications so far this year, partly due to new government restrictions.

Further restrictions would mean further job losses, fewer places for UK students, less capital investment and less support for businesses. If some universities were subject to more restrictions than others, then some regions would experience greater economic shocks than others. That is not what growth looks like to me, and it certainly isn't "levelling up".
Vanessa Wilson
CEO, University Alliance

Gaza protests

Sir, Joshua Rowe (letter, Apr 29) interprets US students' protests against the Israel-Gaza war, but not against other wars in Sudan, Syria, Yemen and Iraq, as evidence of antisemitism. It seems to me, though, that this is highly unlikely to be the main motivation. Rightly or wrongly, students are nearly always driven to protest when they oppose actions and policies of their own governments, and the focus of the present demonstrations is on the US administration's continuing support for Israel. I also disagree with Mr Rowe's comments about the Iraq war: there were huge demonstrations in this country opposing our government's decision to support the US invasion.
Lucian Camp
London NW1

Corrections and clarifications

●Britain's highest decoration for civilian or non-operational gallantry is the George Cross, not the George Medal as we said (World, Apr 27).

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First minister's resignation and future of SNP

Sir, Humza Yousaf's resignation is more than just a display of (quite remarkable) political ineptitude. Yousaf was a likeable lightweight, blown like a leaf in the wind. Unlike Nicola Sturgeon, he could not conceal from his party the reality that independence, rejected a decade ago, is still not wanted, despite everything. Nor could he, like her, use it to distract from the Scottish National Party 's dismal domestic record. She left him a legacy of mess-ups — gender recognition, hate crime, unbuilt ferries, climate targets — as well as scandal.

His successor, if the SNP navigates the next few days, will probably be a minority government caretaker, perhaps the veteran John Swinney. He might clear up messes, but cannot answer the big question, which is best addressed in opposition: if one more independence push is off the agenda for now, what is the SNP for?
Professor Jim Gallagher
Chair, Our Scottish Future

Sir, The next leader of the SNP will need to confront party members, whose votes are required to succeed Humza Yousaf, with the reality that another independence referendum is off the agenda for the foreseeable future. The new first minister will need to focus on building a reputation for competence. The problem is that the members do not want to be told that an independence referendum should be "parked", and leadership contenders are likely to try to outbid each other in the nationalist stakes. Leading a minority government will prove very difficult without this change in focus. The only alternative would be to re-enter an agreement with the Scottish Greens and pursue policies that would undermine SNP hopes of retaining seats at the impending general election and probably to defeat in 2026.
James Mitchell
Professor of public policy, University of Edinburgh

Sir, Humza Yousaf will go down as the world's worst gunslinger: a man who tried to dispatch his Green Party chums in cold blood, missed and blew both his feet off. His actions leave his party with a disaster on its hands, heading towards a general election in which it looks like it will suffer very significant losses. With no obvious successor in place and their most impressive communicator, Stephen Flynn MP, sitting in the wrong parliament, the party's former chief executive charged with embezzlement and its longest-serving first minister still involved in a police inquiry, the situation for the party is calamitous — but the situation Scotland faces is much more important and desperate. In every corner of our public services from health to education, housing to drug deaths there is crisis heaped upon crisis. Whoever takes over this bin fire cannot contemplate more of the same — we need a radical change of direction to reverse the shambles we see before us.
Neil Findlay
Former Labour MSP; Fauldhouse, West Lothian

Sir, Humza Yousaf is a living proof that work experience before political representation should be mandatory. Leaving education and immediately pursuing a career in politics is wrong — politicians should be of a mature age and have carved out a career in another field, gaining experience in the university of life. Wisdom is acquired by this experience, not through a university degree.
Stan Hogarth
Strathaven, South Lanarkshire

Grandparents and VAT on school fees

Sir, The case against Labour's VAT proposals for independent schools is now overwhelming ("Grandparents raid savings to beat tax on school fees", Apr 29). One survey after another has concluded that there will be a net cost to the taxpayer when independent education becomes unaffordable overnight for many families. The inevitable reduction in the number of subsidised places (bursaries) will affect social mobility, and the lowest-paid employees in independent schools will pay the price as necessary savings are implemented at their expense to shield parents from the full force of the increase.

Independent schools would welcome an opportunity to engage positively with Labour on ways in which we could do more to boost social mobility and many of us would welcome legislation that makes that a cast-iron obligation. I would like to see the proportion of pupils (at present 10 per cent) who qualify for free school meals in my sixth form increase. Labour's VAT proposals will force those numbers down, to the detriment of all.
Richard Russell
Head, Colfe's School, London SE12

Sir, The value of a private education is very clear when grandparents are prepared to make huge sacrifices so that their grandchildren can benefit from one. Labour maintains that private education is the preserve of the wealthiest families. Nothing could be further from the truth.
Keith Wellings
Halesowen, West Midlands

Wise workers

Sir, Jenni Russell (Apr 27; letter, Apr 29) is right: the squandering of work opportunities for the over-50s is as economically wasteful as it is unnecessary. Conscious bias against employing mature people is rife across the professions and beyond, and it needs a mixture of government initiative and cultural change to rectify. The energy, experience and enthusiasm of the over-50s are vital if this country is to flourish as we approach the mid-21st century. I am particularly concerned to build a bridge between those who have left full-time employment but who want to continue giving and the young who crave wisdom and experience to shape their lives and growing businesses.
Sir Anthony Seldon
Founder, Wise Heads

Women and WFH

Sir, Libby Purves raises an important question but to my mind, fathers are not necessarily going to the office more often than mothers ("We're in trouble if a woman's place is WFH", Apr 29). The pandemic shifted the paradigm of family life. The juggle is more manageable without the commute and is more equitably shared, with fathers proving themselves perfectly willing to look after their own children outside of school and nursery hours. I can only speak as I find, but with the odd exception this has been my experience locally, socially and professionally. As young children my sister and I did not see much of our fabulous father during the week. This new way is better for everyone.
Sarah McKenna
Barnet

DRINK DRIVE FROM MASONIC DINNER

FROM THE TIMES APRIL 30, 1924

At Marlborough Street Police Court yesterday Maurice Tomlinson, 50, described as a secretary, of Dukes Avenue, Muswell Hill, was charged with being drunk in charge of a motor-car at Goodge Street, Tottenham Court Road, and driving in a dangerous manner there. Evidence was given that the defendant's car was in collision early yesterday morning with the post of a refuge in the centre of Goodge Street at its junction with Tottenham Court Road, and that a police-constable found the defendant standing by the car, leaning over its side. After being taken to the police-station, the defendant was certified by the divisional surgeon to be drunk.

When charged, the defendant expressed the opinion that the car skidded owing to a bolt coming out of the back spring. Mr Barrington Matthews, defending, explained that Tomlinson had been to a Masonic dinner, at which he had two glasses of red wine and a small glass of champagne. He drove some friends to their home, where he had two whiskies. The defendant had a clean licence.

On the charge of driving in a dangerous manner, the accused was discharged. Mr Mead sentenced him to 14 days' imprisonment in the second division for being drunk in charge of the car, the Magistrate remarking that there was no doubt he had been guilty of reckless driving, and he must take the consequences.

The defendant: Cannot you modify that? I am in business with a large firm. Mr Mead: That may be, but the public must be protected. It was intimated that there would be an appeal.

● News in brief: The Soviet way with beggars. At Willesden yesterday, when Joseph Levitt, a Russian, was charged with begging, the Aliens Officer said that Russians could not be deported, as the Soviet Government refused to have them back in the country.

The Magistrate: The Soviet Government seem to have a good deal more common sense than we have been giving them credit for. They prefer that we shall keep their criminals rather than they should do so. The prisoner: I also prefer to live in England. (Laughter.) He was sentenced to one month's imprisonment, with hard labour.

THETIMES.CO.UK/ARCHIVE

Podcast equality

Sir, Tomiwa Owolade ("Don't tell me to listen to female podcasters", Apr 29) overlooks an important point: the fundamental asymmetry between male and female reading and listening habits. Research shows that women are just as likely to read a book by a man as by a woman, and I suspect the same is true for listening to podcasts. Men, however, do not return the favour. On average, they read four books by a man for every one book by a woman. This means that they are barely even exposing themselves to women's voices. As I argue in *The Authority Gap*, this leads to a narrowing of the mind, a reduction in empathy and a lack of understanding of half the human race.
Mary Ann Sieghart
London W14

Sir, Tomiwa Owalade's article is to be applauded. Telling people to listen to female podcasters or to read more black authors does not make for equality, it is the strident voice of virtue politics. We are assailed by greenwashing, virtue signalling and identity politics, which insist that all arts should express a moral point. Instead, as Owalade says, authors and broadcasters should be admired for their intrinsic merit, rather than be selected because of race or gender.
Janice Ketley
Englefield Green, Surrey

All things trite…

Sir, We are fortunate in this country to have such a splendid repertoire of hymns: English, Welsh, Anglican, Non-Conformist, mighty, joyous, reflective, peaceful. Why, then, do we have to suffer *All Things Bright and Beautiful*? It is chosen by about half the participants in the weddings I play for (though I am often successful in helping them to choose something better). The hymn was published in 1848 in Mrs Alexander's *Hymns for Little Children*: it should have stayed there. I find the saccharine doggerel, combined with the jingly tune (not that easy for congregations to sing, actually), deeply depressing — especially when there are so many wonderful alternatives.
Lord Lisvane
Chairman, Royal College of Organists; Clerk of the Commons 2011-14

Tipping point

Sir, Your report on tipping (Apr 29) reminded me of a visit to a New York restaurant where the service was appalling. I paid but left no tip. Walking out, our way was barred by our waiter, who complained that we had not left a tip. I informed him he was ignorant of the derivation of tip, "to insure promptitude", conspicuous by its absence on this occasion. Turning to the hostess, he asked: "What the hell is this promptitude?" By then we were long gone.
Rodney Croft
Buckhurst Hill, Essex

Stairway to heaven

Sir, Further to your article on the benefit of taking the stairs ("A simple step to live longer — avoid taking the lift", Apr 27), as a fit 67-year-old I always choose the stairs and espouse the benefits to all who are prepared to listen. A sneaking part of me wonders, though, whether a careful analysis might reveal that the extra lifetime hours gained would turn out to have been spent climbing stairs.
Martyn Leadley
Corfe Mullen, Dorset

Daily Universal Register

UK: The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs releases statistics on the concentrations of major air pollutants.

Nature notes

Many gardeners will be familiar with the gorgeous iridescence of the rose chafer, or perhaps the rosemary beetle, the little mint leaf beetle or simply bluebottles as they buzz annoyingly around the house. Some researchers believe iridescence is a way of evading being eaten: a study that trained quail to catch dots on a screen found that if the dots shifted colour — ie performed like iridescence, which changes with the angle of the light — it took the birds more pecks to hit each one. As for birds themselves, the structures that cause iridescence in feathers also increase strength and resistance to microbes: the flashy appearance could be a side-effect that later became useful in communicating fitness and attracting a mate. MELISSA HARRISON

Birthdays today

Lord (Kim) Darroch of Kew, *pictured*, UK ambassador to the US (2016-19), prime minister's national security adviser (2012-15), 70; **John Boyne**, novelist, *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006), 53; **Prof Sir Michael Brady**, information engineer and oncological imager, 79; **Jonathan Brownlee**, triathlete, six-time world champion, Olympic gold medallist (2020, mixed team relay), 34; **Dame Jane Campion DNZM**, film-maker, *The Piano* (1993), *The Power of the Dog* (2021), 70; **James Cartlidge**, Conservative MP for South Suffolk, defence procurement minister, 50; **Andrew Carwood**, director of music, St Paul's Cathedral, 59; **Colonel Tim Collins**, former British Army officer, served in both Gulf wars and leader of Special Forces operations, 64; **Sir Geoffrey Cox KC**, Conservative MP for Torridge and West Devon, attorney-general (2018-20), 64; **Rev Paul Fiddes**, professor of systematic theology, University of Oxford, 77; **Gal Gadot**, actress, *Wonder Woman* (2017), *Death on the Nile* (2022), 39; **António Guterres**, secretary-general of the United Nations, UN high commissioner for refugees (2005-15), prime minister of Portugal (1995-2002), 75; **Stephen Harper**, prime minister of Canada (2006-15), 65; **Tony Harrison**, poet, *The Gaze of the Gorgon* (1992), 87; **Lord (David) Kitchin**, justice of the Supreme Court (2018-23), 69; **Sir Brian Langstaff**, chairman, public inquiry into the infected blood scandal of the 1970s and 1980s, High Court judge (2005-18), 76; **John McAdam**, chairman, ConvaTec Group (medical device company), 76; **Richard Pengelly**, chief executive officer, Education Authority, Northern Ireland, 57; **Carl XVI Gustaf**, King of Sweden, 78; **Sarah Tynan**, opera singer, 48.

On this day

In **1665** the diarist Samuel Pepys wrote about the plague in London: "Great fears of the Sickenesse here in the City, it being said that two or three houses are already shut up. God preserve us all." The Great Plague took the lives of an estimated 100,000 people in the city.

The last word

"If one asks for success and prepares for failure, he will get the situation he has prepared for." Florence Scovel Shinn, American artist and illustrator, *The Game of Life and How to Play It* (1925)

Humza the Brief

The downfall of Scotland's first minister is the result of the Scottish National Party's inexorable drift into political absurdity. Holyrood needs a more serious government

It has been 22 years since Labour's Henry McLeish became Scotland's shortest-serving first minister. Mr McLeish, a mild-mannered academic, held office for 392 days before being forced to resign for failing to declare that he had sub-let part of his constituency office. Humza Yousaf, who called time on his 398 days at the head of the Scottish National Party's failing government yesterday, at least avoided that explicitly ignominious fate. The charges against him, however, are more grave. Mr McLeish was guilty of a temporary lapse of judgment; Mr Yousaf and the party he led have betrayed Scotland with their abject lack of it.

For the best part of two decades the SNP was unassailable as an electoral force. Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon, Mr Yousaf's predecessors, loomed over Scottish politics. Once a marginal band of insurgent nationalists, the SNP became the natural party of government at Holyrood. Those days are gone and no politician embodies the hubris and incompetence that brought that juggernaut to a standstill like Humza the Brief, as detractors now refer to him. For a moment, his government staggers on, bereft of a majority. A confidence motion this week may yet fell it.

As was clear from his dignified resignation statement, the outgoing first minister is a decent man. He was burdened also with a miserable inheritance from Ms Sturgeon. Mr Yousaf's qualities, however, were not equal to high office. Any leader demanding his party return to office for a fifth successive term must display competence, vision, and sound judgment. Mr Yousaf lacked all of these. It is not enough for Mr Yousaf to say that he did not expect the Scottish Green Party to react with such fury to their expulsion from his government last week. The real problem — ignored by many nationalists — is the fantastical world view cultivated within the SNP that allowed the party to entertain the Greens as coalition partners. The Greens who supported Hamas, impoverished rural Scotland with performative environmental policies and regarded eight year-olds switching gender as worthy of consideration.

And what, exactly, does the SNP have to show for 17 years of rule? Shorter and poorer lives in Scotland, a revered education system ruined, soaring A&E waiting times, Europe's worst death rate from drugs and increasingly penal taxes. And in place of practical policies: constitutional grandstanding, a ridiculous obsession with transgender ideology resulting in ministers defending a male rapist's right to a place in a women's prison, an absurd law labelling mildly offensive statements as "hate crime", and hopeless targets for greenhouse emissions. Capping it all, two party leaders in succession arrested and a party chief executive charged with embezzlement of party funds.

It is a record that discredits devolution. The people of Scotland were entitled to expect more of a devolved administration supposedly tailored to their aspirations. Mr Yousaf, who narrowly won the leadership over his pro-business colleague Kate Forbes, did so on a platform amounting to little more than wokeist jargon. He was Ms Sturgeon's preferred heir not because of ability — his disastrous custodianship of Scotland's health, transport and justice services were proof of that — but because of his loyalty to the party apparatus.

Whether the SNP can limp on until the next scheduled Scottish parliamentary election in 2026 is open to doubt. If the party's MSPs were wise they would install Ms Forbes as leader and regain some pragmatism. Happily for unionists the distaste of some MSPs for her religious views makes that outcome less likely than a leader prepared to reforge the disastrous alliance with the Greens. But even if the coalition is raised from the dead and staggers on, zombie-like, into next year, Scotland's voters will have their day, and their say, on the nationalists' excursion into the absurd.

End Game

Dealing with the last Hamas holdout in Gaza confronts Israel with a dilemma

After almost seven months of war in Gaza, Israel is coming under pressure to re-think its campaign against Hamas. The Biden administration in particular has been urging the government of Binyamin Netanyahu to refrain from a full-scale invasion of Rafah, Gaza's southern border town with Egypt. American impatience is increasingly shared by Britain, Europe and moderate Arab states.

Israel is being told that it has reached a fork in the road; that it must choose between the isolation resulting from an endless military occupation or making concessions on Palestinian statehood that might pave the way for a broader regional security arrangement. Many Israelis understandably reject the idea of having strategic choices thrust upon them, even by friendly and sympathetic allies. The Hamas massacre of October 7 was shocking not only for its naked barbarism but also in the way that it exposed Israel's vulnerability to attack. The campaign that followed, it argues, was necessary to build a deterrent wall against further assaults and to ensure that Hamas could never again become the violent champion of the Palestinian cause. And yet, Hamas lives on, diminished and underground but still capable of atrocity. The Israeli priority to free the remaining 100 or more hostages is still largely in the hands of the terror group. Israel's latest offer, relayed by Egyptian intelligence officials, is for Hamas to free 40 hostages in return for six weeks of ceasefire and the release of about 900 Palestinian prisoners. The move could eventually be followed by a full return of displaced Palestinians to their homes in northern Gaza and the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the corridor that divides the enclave.

Although the deal has yet to be accepted by the Hamas leadership, the mere fact it is in diplomatic play is read as a sign that Hamas bosses are convinced that the Israeli threat of a bombardment of Rafah is not a bluff. When western powers urge Israel to abandon an attack on the remaining Hamas structures in Rafah, they may also therefore be weakening Israel's negotiating hand. Rafah is home to the last four intact Hamas battalions. Its leader Yahya Sinwar may be holed up there too.

Yet it is clear — and Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton, the foreign secretary, will have heard this in Riyadh yesterday — that there is no straightforward victory to be had over Hamas. Bombarding Rafah would turn the Gaza war into a permanent insurgency, eat into the fibre of Israel, deny it the neighbourhood security it craves and scupper western goals for a post-conflict environment. One goal would be an Arab peace-keeping force following a lasting ceasefire. It could be backed with US logistical help. The second idea is a US-Saudi-Israeli-Palestinian security arrangement, currently under negotiation with Riyadh. It would include a defence pact between the Saudis and the US as a shield against Iranian aggression.

Normalising relations with Israel would be part of this process. But that, say the Saudis, would require Israel to work towards a two-state solution with a reformed and credible Palestinian authority. Few of Israel's neighbours seem to object to it restraining — even decapitating — Hamas, which has few friends in the region. But everyone fears the radicalisation of the Palestinian diaspora. Israel knows this better than finger-wagging westerners. The complex choice, one of timing and of diplomatic manoeuvre, is Israel's alone to make.

Moment in Time

Science has unlocked a carbonised papyrus telling of Plato's last hours

A Greek man, 80 or so, lies dying of his last fever. A Thracian slave girl serenades him into the darkness with her flute, confident that he has other things on his mind. Unfortunately, the listener is Plato and even in the shadow of death his critical faculties are irritatingly acute. Her rhythm, says the philosopher, is a little off. Well, he could have been nicer about it, couldn't he? But at least he was pleasant to his house guest, visiting that day. Hospitality was a sacred duty in ancient Greece and Aristotle's tutor was not going down in history as a shoddy host. This vignette from the Athens of 2,300 years ago was lost for ever. And then not. Science has confounded time and Vesuvius to bring it back. Plato's end was recorded in a biography of him by the philosopher-poet Philodemus, written in the 1st century BC, a few hundred years after his nitpicking demise in about 348BC. More than a century after Philodemus penned his work a copy was stored with other examples of his writings in the library of a Roman villa in Herculaneum at the foot of a certain volcano. Vesuvius's eruption in AD79 buried the villa, Herculaneum and Pompeii, and carbonised the volumes in the library. That should have been that but their remains were unearthed in 1750. Since then, scientists have struggled to extract meaning from the blackened pages. Plato's farewell evening was returned from oblivion by shortwave infrared hyperspectral imaging, which reveals subtle differences between ink and bare papyrus, raising the words from the dead.

An account that should have been interred for ever as ash rained from the sky is back with us: an old man unable to abandon his customary mental rigour, even as his body failed. The Thracian girl who comforted him, forever nameless yet formed in the imagination: a nervous youngster trying to please. Two people and a moment in time.

World

Cameron urges Hamas to agree 'generous' ceasefire

Israel

Samer Al-Atrush Riyadh
Gabrielle Weiniger

Hamas is standing in the way of a "very generous" ceasefire agreement with Israel in which some of the hostages it is holding could be released in return for a 40-day truce in Gaza, according to the foreign secretary.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Saudi Arabia, Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton said the proposal could also include the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners.

"I hope Hamas accepts the proposal in front of them," he said, adding that Israel's war with the group would not end "until all the hostages are released".

Cameron has joined foreign ministers from the US, Europe and the Middle East in Riyadh to push for a ceasefire in Gaza before any Israeli military operation in Rafah takes place.

The Israeli government has previously threatened to assault the southern city near the border with Egypt, which it sees as Hamas's last stronghold in Gaza. It is crowded with more than a million Palestinians who have fled the fighting.

A Hamas delegation led by the head of the group's negotiating team, Khalil al-Hayya, has been sent to Cairo to join mediators from Qatar and Egypt, where it is expected to respond to Israel's proposal for a ceasefire of up to six weeks and the release of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for some 40 Israeli hostages who remain in Gaza. More than 240 Israelis, including several children, were kidnapped by Hamas militants during the attacks of October 7 and carried back to Gaza to be held as hostages.

According to The New York Times, citing Israeli officials, Israel may be willing to accept the release of 33 hostages, fewer than the 40 proposed, for the next phase of exchanges.

Antony Blinken, the US secretary of state, said that "Hamas has before it a proposal that is extraordinarily generous on the part of Israel. The only thing standing between the people of Gaza and a ceasefire is Hamas. I hope they make the right choice."

A Hamas official was reported to have said that there were "no major issues ... regarding the contents" of Israel's proposal. However, Izzat al-Risheq, a Hamas official, denied this and said that "the proposal is still in the stages of being studied".

Hamas has previously insisted that the only ceasefire they will accept is a permanent end to the war and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, but the threat of an imminent attack on Rafah has increased pressure on them to accept a truce.

Sameh Shoukry, the Egyptian foreign minister, was "hopeful" of progress because the latest proposal "has taken into account the positions of both sides and has tried to extract moderation".

Those assembled in Riyadh also discussed the future of Gaza after the war, which has left a security vacuum and much of its buildings damaged or destroyed. Cameron reiterated Britain's position that the goal must be a deal for the Palestinian people that "gives them the dignity of statehood" but also guarantees Israeli security. But he added that Hamas must leave Gaza for a two-state solution to become a reality. "Hamas are not currently in favour of a two-state solution. They are in favour of a no-Israel solution," he said.

Arab countries that will be asked to fund reconstruction in Gaza and possibly commit troops for a peacekeeping mission have made their agreement conditional on a feasible plan that leads to a Palestinian state, which is something that Israel has so far rejected. Blinken, who will travel to Israel today, urged the Netanyahu government to do more to increase the flow of aid into Gaza. He said that the US had not yet seen "a plan that gives us confidence" for a military operation in Rafah that would protect civilians.

There had been "measurable progress in the past few weeks, including the opening of new crossings and increased volume of aid delivery to Gaza and within Gaza, and the building of the US maritime corridor, but it is not enough," he said. "We still need to get more aid in and around Gaza."

He also called for a strong regional front against Iran after an unprecedented direct exchange of fire between Israel and the Islamic Republic. "This attack highlights the acute and growing threat from Iran but also the imperative that we work together on integrated defence," Blinken said.

Israel continues to launch airstrikes on targets in Gaza City and Rafah most nights, with 27 Palestinians killed overnight on Sunday, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

On Sunday Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, called on the US to intervene to stop an Israeli ground attack on Rafah, which he said would come in the "next few days".

American officials said that Israel had provided assurances that it would not enter the city until a plan to evacuate civilians had been discussed.

Decision on any Rafah attack is Israel's alone to make, leading article, page 25

International court 'considers arrest warrants'

The US has said it opposes the International Criminal Court's investigation into alleged Israeli war crimes in Gaza after reports it was poised to issue arrest warrants against Binyamin Netanyahu and other officials (Hugh Tomlinson writes).

Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, is understood to have asked President Biden to block the inquiry. The court, which is based in the Hague, is believed to be considering warrants for the arrest of Netanyahu, Yoav Gallant, his defence minister and Herzi Halevi, the Israel Defence Forces chief of staff.

Despite public dissent at Netanyahu's handling of the conflict, the Biden administration offered a public show of support for him yesterday. Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House press secretary, said: "We've been really clear about the ICC investigation. We do not support it. We don't believe that they have the jurisdiction."

Neither Israel nor the US are among the court's 124 member states.

"Under my leadership, Israel will never accept any attempt by the ICC to undermine its inherent right of self defence," Netanyahu wrote on X last week. Behind the scenes, however, he is reported to be increasingly concerned that the court could hold him accountable for the death toll in Gaza and for allegations of war crimes by Israeli troops. Almost 35,000 Palestinians have been killed since the war began in October.

A makeshift cinema gives children in a Rafah refugee camp a brief respite

Pink ladies Women add more colour

Putin shows off British and US military vehicles captured in Ukraine

Russia

Marc Bennetts

Russia has put captured British and American military hardware on display at an exhibition of western war trophies in Moscow that features signs reading: "Our victory is inevitable!"

British Mastiff and Saxon armoured personnel carriers, as well as an American Bradley tank that were seized during the conflict in Ukraine are being shown off at an open-air exhibition in the city's Victory Park district.

The exhibition also includes a German Leopard tank, a Swedish CV90 combat vehicle and a French-made AMX-10RC armoured vehicle. "The Russian Army's trophies" reads another sign close to the battered western equipment, which stood under dozens of red banners emblazoned with the word: "Victory!"

The Russian military said that an American Abrams M1A1 battle tank was also being transported from eastern Ukraine to Moscow. "Soon everyone will be able to see it at the exhibition," an army spokesman said.

Ukraine has sidelined the US tanks in recent weeks after the prevalence of Russian drones made it almost impossible for them to operate on the battlefield. Five of the 31 tanks that Washington sent to Ukraine last year have already been lost to Russian attacks, the Associated Press news agency reported last week.

Captured military equipment from Australia, Austria, the Czech Republic and Finland will also be put on display at the month-long exhibition in Moscow, officials said. President Putin is due to oversee a May 9 military parade on Red Square for the country's annual Victory Day celebration to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany. He is also due to be inaugurated for a fifth presidential term at a Kremlin ceremony two days before.

Putin said last year that Russia would study "cutting edge" western military hardware that has been captured by its army in Ukraine. "If there is an opportunity to look inside to see if there is something there that can be applied in our country, well, why not?" he said.

Putin's forces are seeking to press home their advantages on the battlefields of Ukraine before the delivery of American military assistance that was delayed for months by a row in Congress. President Zelensky said in Kyiv that Ukraine's ability to hold back Russia depended on how quickly its forces received delivery of fresh US supplies. "Today I don't see anything positive on this point yet," he said, after talks with Jens Stoltenberg, the Nato chief, who arrived in Kyiv yesterday. "There are supplies, they have slightly begun, this process needs to be sped up. The Russian army is now trying to take advantage of a situation when we are waiting for supplies from our partners."

General Oleksandr Syrskyi, the commander of Ukraine's armed forces, said on Sunday that Kyiv's outnumbered

A British-made Mastiff armoured vehicle that the Russians seized on the battlefield

Spanish PM refuses to quit after five days of drama
Page 29

Trump sons' loyalty test for White House hopefuls
Page 30

GETTY IMAGES

to the peonies in Anhui province, China. They are a symbol of Chinese wealth as historically they were grown for emperors

Prince, judge and chef 'part of far-right plot to install Fourth Reich'

Germany
David Crossland Berlin

Far-right terrorists planned to storm the Reichstag in a coup against the German state that "would involve killing people", a court in Stuttgart heard yesterday.

In the first of three cases against 27 suspects, nine alleged members of a terrorist organisation went on trial accused of high treason and plotting a violent coup. They are alleged to have planned to storm the German parliament building in Berlin and install a Fourth Reich, led by the disenchanted aristocrat Heinrich XIII Prince Reuss.

Prince Reuss, 72, will go on trial in Frankfurt next month. He is alleged to have plotted to become German leader in an armed insurrection by an eclectic group including former members of Germany's equivalent of the SAS, a chef, an astrologer and a judge.

Prosecutors at Stuttgart higher regional court said yesterday that the defendants had been in the process of setting up a nationwide system of 286 military units they called "homeland security companies", adding: "They planned to infiltrate an armed group into the parliament building in Berlin, detain legislators and bring down the system. They understood that seizing power would involve killing people."

Leaked papers showed that any alleged traitors within the group who jeopardised the plot would be executed, investigators said, with the "death penalty" pronounced by Prince Reuss and carried out by a "military court". The plans were thwarted in December 2022 after a series of raids around the country involving 5,000 police officers.

The nine men on trial in Stuttgart are alleged to have been part of the "armed wing" of the Patriotic Union.

The group is a suspected terrorist organisation made up of members of the Reich Citizens movement who want to restore the German Reich and its prewar borders and who do not recognise the Federal Republic as the legitimate German state. They are accused of amassing 380 guns, 350 bladed weapons and 148,000 rounds of ammunition.

One of the suspects in Stuttgart, referred to in trial documents as Markus L, also faces a charge of attempted murder after shooting two policemen while resisting arrest last year. He allegedly squatted behind an armchair and opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle on officers who entered his home. After he surrendered, weapons and large quantities of ammunition were found in his flat, alongside Nazi memorabilia.

Investigators said his violence showed how dangerous the group was. "These aren't just some nice old uncles who had strange ideas," Andreas Singer, the court president, said.

Judges have scheduled hearings in the Stuttgart case until January next year but given the complexity of the case, it could run for several years.

Each defendant must be individually proved guilty, a challenge that would overburden a single court, given the large number of defendants.

Reuss is reported to have written to a senior Kremlin official in the hope of winning Russia's support for the putsch. The Kremlin has denied it offered any encouragement to the plotters.

The accused are alleged to have drawn up their plans to seize power during covert meetings held at Reuss's hunting lodge in rural Thuringia. Their discussions are said to have been influenced by astrological calculations and a belief that the death of Queen Elizabeth II was a signal from higher powers.

● A German army officer has admitted to spying for Russia at the opening of his trial in Düsseldorf, saying he had wanted to avoid the escalation of the war in Ukraine. The officer, named only as Thomas H, is accused of offering his co-operation to Russia's consulate in Bonn and its embassy in Berlin. He is alleged to have provided some sensitive information during these meetings.

and outgunned forces had been pushed back from their positions in eastern Donetsk. "The situation at the front has worsened," he wrote on Telegram.

He said that Russia's army had a "significant advantage" as it tried to break through Ukraine's defences. "It is attacking actively along the entire front line and has [had] tactical successes in some directions," he wrote.

After seizing the strategically and symbolically important town of Avdiivka in February, Russia is now advancing on the town of Chasiv Yar, the capture of which could allow Moscow to push further into the Donetsk region.

Syrskyi also said that Ukraine had observed a build-up of Russian forces close to Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city. There had been speculation that Putin was planning a new offensive to try to encircle Kharkiv, which is 25 miles from the border with Russia. Syrskyi said, however, that there was no indication yet that Russia was about to begin a direct offensive.

The exhibition in Moscow reflects a growing optimism in Russia that the war is turning in its favour. A pro-war Russian Telegram channel said it would be "an excellent idea to leave open free space at the exhibition with a sign reading 'The wreckage of the first downed F16 will soon lie here.'"

Ukraine is to deploy American-made F-16 fighter jets to the battlefield this year. Officials in Kyiv say the jets are essential to oppose massive glide bombs that are being launched at its troops by Russian warplanes.

Western analysts are downbeat about Ukraine's chances of driving out Putin's invading army, despite the recent approval by Washington of the new $61 billion aid package for Kyiv.

"Ukraine has no good options, even with the latest aid package," Eugene Rumer, a former US intelligence officer, wrote in an article for the Carnegie Endowment think tank. "It is now abundantly clear that the size of Russia's population, economy, stocks of military hardware, and defence-industrial base far exceeds those of Ukraine even when it is supported by the United States, Europe, other allies and partners."

Teenage vigilante fights illegal parking

David Crossland

Most teenagers are tempted by breaking the rules, testing boundaries and kicking back against authority. Not Niclas Matthei: his hobby is reporting parking offenders to the police and bragging about it on social media.

Since starting three years ago, when he was 15, his pastime has brought him fame and notoriety in equal measure in his native Germany. Clad in a high-visibility outfit, Matthei has embarked on a quest to report at least one offender in every German city or district.

Matthei, who is studying medicine and comes from the eastern town of Gräfenhainichen, calls himself the *Anzeigenhauptmeister*, which loosely translates as the police complaints master. He has provided a list on his Instagram page detailing the 4,247 complaints he filed last year via an app that allows people to report offences. He filed an average of 11.6 reports a day but on October 2 he contacted the police 95 times. He has already reported 8 per cent of the population in his home town. "The total amount of fines and cautions collected nationwide as a result of my reports amounts to €140,995," he said.

His motive, he told Spiegel TV, is "to implement the highway code because people think they can park how they want".

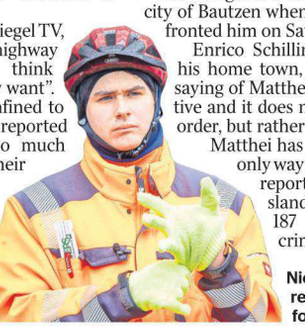
His hobby is not confined to motorists and he has reported people for making too much noise while trimming their hedge or when using a vacuum cleaner.

He has not escaped his own zeal and reported himself to the police when his bicycle fell against a car. It cost him €35 after officers launched a misdemeanour proceeding against him. While he has some supporters, who have donated more than €4,000 to cover his costs, he also has a growing list of enemies.

He was given a bloody nose in the city of Bautzen when 200 people confronted him on Saturday afternoon.

Enrico Schilling, the mayor of his home town, is no fan either, saying of Matthei: "He is provocative and it does nothing for public order, but rather the opposite."

Matthei has responded in the only way he knows how: by reporting the mayor for slander under section 187 of the German criminal code.



Niclas Matthei even reported himself for a minor offence

DEVI RAHMAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Splash of colour A performer in Surakarta, Java, on International Dance Day yesterday. Indonesia has more than 3,000 dance forms, reflecting its cultural diversity

Chiang must fall: Taiwan topples statues of Chinese former leader

Taiwan

Richard Spencer China Correspondent

Hundreds of statues of Chiang Kai-shek are to be torn down across Taiwan as its ruling party tries to distance itself from Beijing.

The island is littered with statues of the former president of the Republic of China, who was driven from the mainland by Mao Zedong's communists in 1949 and then ruled over Taiwan until his death in 1975.

Many had already been removed since the island's politics turned against both the memory of his dictatorial rule and the historic ties to the mainland that he represented. Some have been relocated to a park in northern Taipei.

But the pace of change is too slow for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), whose candidate Lai Ching-Te, the incumbent vice-president, won January's presidential election and will assume office next month. The remaining 760 statues will be removed, using government subsidies provided for the purpose.

Statues honouring Chiang Kai-shek are common sights across Taiwan

Chiang's legacy is divisive in China, as a defeated rival to the Communist Party and Mao, as well as in Taiwan, where his iron rule is bitterly remembered by ageing liberals and democrats.

But as the years pass, the reason for the most serious arguments is his status as a symbol of the disputed relationship between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Chiang was the first leader of the celebrated Whampoa Military Academy, which was set up in 1924 by the Kuomintang or Nationalist Party and attempted to rule and unify China after the collapse of the previous Qing dynasty.

Chiang used it as a power base to propel his rise to power in China, maintained through the war with Japan and the post-war settlement. However, his capricious rule lost the trust of America, which withdrew support, and he was driven out.

He then set up base in Taiwan, which had come under Chinese rule after being ruled by Japan from 1895 to 1945.

The communists were unable to dislodge him but now use his rule in Taiwan to justify their claim that while the island might be ruled separately, the founding father of its present regime acknowledged it was part of China. Many Taiwanese, particularly supporters of the DPP, disagree but China has threatened to invade if the island declares independence, despite assurances of support from the US.

Shih Pu, a senior civil servant, told parliament that part of the delay was opposition to the move from within the military, whose bases hold many of the statues.

The Whampoa Academy, which had trained many future generals of both the Kuomintang and the Communist parties, was refounded in Taiwan in 1950. Its graduates — and Chiang himself — have been credited with saving the island from invasion from the mainland.

The defence ministry said that it needed to take account of "military tradition", according to Shih.

A separate debate is continuing over the future of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, a temple-like structure visited by thousands of tourists every year in which a giant statue of the "generalissimo", as he was known, takes centre stage.

Blow for Beijing as ally quits Solomon Islands leadership

Solomon Islands

Bernard Lagan

China's push into the Indo-Pacific has suffered a setback after the prime minister of the Solomon Islands resigned.

Manasseh Sogavare, the most pro-Beijing leader in the Pacific, conceded yesterday that his premiership was finished after he suffered a backlash from voters at elections held 12 days ago.

Sogavare, 69, has been the nation's dominant political figure for more than two decades, holding the job of prime minister four times since 2000.

He formed a close relationship with President Xi and during his time in charge, Beijing's presence and investment in the small island nation of 700,000, about 900 miles off northeast Australia, increased greatly.

After visiting Beijing last year, Sogavare declared that China was "the way to go forward" for his nation and insisted that the superpower did not have strategic ambitions in the Pacific. He alarmed the United States, Australia and New Zealand when he severed ties with Taiwan in 2019. He went on to sign a security pact with Beijing in 2022.

A leaked version of the pact had a seismic impact on the geopolitics of the Pacific Island states and Oceania. The agreement allowed the Solomons to request Chinese security assistance, including police, armed forces, and other law enforcement. It triggered fears about the potential for a permanent Chinese military base on the strategically located islands, about two and half hours flying time from Australia.

Japan considered the Solomons so crucial to its advance across the Pacific in the Second World War that it lost 31,000 men in its failed battle to maintain its occupation there against the US and its allies. The islands are still littered with wrecked wartime fighters. The waters off the Solomons' dusty capital, Honiara, are known as Iron Bottom Sound because of the 1,450 military aircraft and 111 warships on its floor.

David Vunagi, the governor-general, has summoned MPs to the parliament on Thursday to choose a new prime minister. Sogavare's governing coalition won 15 seats in the April 17 elections, with 26 required to form a government in the 50-seat parliament.

The Chinese presence in the capital had angered many islanders. Rioters burnt down much of the capital's Chinese business district in late 2021. China responded by dispatching anti-riot police, who remain in the Solomons. Fearing a repeat of Honiara's anti-Chinese riots if Sogovare returned to power, Beijing constructed a heavy steel fortification around its large embassy days before the election.

The King is the Solomons' head of state. The British Solomon Islands Protectorate was proclaimed in 1893 and remained in place until 1978, when the islands became an independent nation.

Allegations of autocracy defame India, claims Modi

India

Amrit Dhillon

Narendra Modi has denied that India is becoming an autocracy under his leadership and accused political rivals who question his democratic credentials of "defaming" the country.

The prime minister was responding to accusations that his government orchestrated criminal investigations to weaken rivals before the general election, which runs until June 1. Counting takes place three days later, with 970 million people eligible to vote.

Modi, 73, remains overwhelmingly popular after a decade in office and is widely expected to win. But the opposition and critics have accused him of undermining the country's institutions and targeting opponents. A criminal tax investigation into Indian National Congress, known as Congress, the largest opposition party, led to its bank accounts being frozen earlier this year.

Modi's chief opponent, Rahul Gandhi, the son, grandson and great-grandson of past prime ministers, was briefly disqualified from parliament last year after being convicted of criminal libel. Gandhi, 53, still faces numerous other active criminal cases, several of which were brought by members of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Modi said the suggestion that India was becoming "an electoral autocracy" under his rule was a fiction spread by his disgruntled rivals. "Because the opposition is not able to get power, they start defaming India on the world stage," he told The Times of India yesterday. "They spread canards about our people, our democracy and our institutions."

Narendra Modi has been accused of targeting his political opponents

He added: "India does not become an electoral autocracy if the *Yuvraj* cannot automatically get power," using the Hindi word for prince to disparage Gandhi's upbringing.

The latest campaign battleground is tax, with Modi ruling out bringing in a "dangerous" inheritance tax if re-elected. The BJP and Congress have accused each other of being in favour of inheritance and wealth taxes. The opposition claims the BJP has increased inequality throughout India and a recent study, *The Rise of the Billionaire Raj*, published by the World Inequality Lab, shows that income inequality is now worse than under British colonial rule.

Voter turnout has so far been lower than for elections in 2019, raising concerns that rising temperatures and weddings in some parts of the country may be keeping voters at home. Modi said he remained confident that the BJP and its allies would secure more than 400 of the 543 seats in parliament.

The southern state of Karnataka announced that it is to investigate allegations of sexual assault against Prajwal Revanna, a member of a party that is a key ally of the BJP. Siddaramaiah, the state's chief minister, said: "Obscene video clips are circulating ... where it appears that women have been sexually assaulted." Police registered a complaint against Revanna, 33, based on the statement of a woman who worked in the family home.

Sánchez refuses to quit after five days of drama

Spain
Isambard Wilkinson Madrid

After five days of high drama and speculation, Pedro Sánchez announced yesterday that he would not resign as Spain's prime minister.

He published a letter on Twitter/X last Wednesday announcing that he was pausing his public duties to review his future, after a judge opened a judicial investigation into allegations that his wife, Begoña Gómez, had used her position to peddle influence.

He said yesterday, however, that he would "continue with more strength at the helm of the government of Spain". The decision brings to an end a five-day period of suspense that brought the country to a political standstill and further weakened the standing of his coalition government.

Not even his closest ministers and aides knew which path he would take after he spent the period of "reflection" holed up in the Moncloa Palace, the government's seat in Madrid. He did, however, visit King Felipe to communicate his decision before announcing it.

Sánchez, 52, is viewed both as a victim of Spain's toxic politics and as responsible for it, but he framed his justification to remain in his post as a turning point. "This is not about the fate of a particular leader," he said. "It is about deciding what kind of society we want to be. Our country needs this reflection. For too long we have allowed mud to contaminate our public life."

He cited rallies at the weekend as influencing his decision to stay on. "My wife and I know that this smear campaign will not stop, we've been suffering from it for ten years. We can take it.

"I call on Spanish society to set an example once again. The ills that afflict us are part of a global movement. Let us show the world how to defend democracy."

A survey commissioned by La Razón newspaper suggested that nearly 60 per cent of Spaniards thought he should step down. The TVE state television broadcaster, under Sánchez's control, added a countdown clock to its broadcasts showing the time ticking down to his announcement yesterday.

The crisis came barely five months after he formed a government with the support of a Catalan separatist party led by a fugitive from Spanish justice.

The investigation into Gómez was prompted by a complaint from the anti-corruption pressure group Clean Hands, whose leader is linked to the Spanish hard right. The online news site El Confidencial said it focused on Gómez's links with Air Europa when it was in talks with the government to secure a €475 million bailout during the pandemic, when she was the director of a business institute in Madrid.

Both Air Europa and the IE Africa Centre , where Gómez worked, have denied any impropriety.

José Manuel Albares, the foreign minister, said that the continuity of Sánchez was "good news for Spain ... good for the progressive policies that he leads and embodies" and "good for Spain's leadership position in Europe and in the world".

Pedro Sánchez cited rallies at the weekend as an influence on his decision to stay on

With Catalan regional elections due on May 12, however, Sánchez was ridiculed by his separatist allies. Pere Aragonès, head of Catalonia's government, called the "five-day drama" a frivolity.

Alberto Núñez Feijóo, leader of the conservative Popular Party, called the prime minister's statement the "most dangerous speech he has made" because "he wants no opposition, no justice and no media". He accused Sánchez of "using the king as a supporting actor in his film," referring to the meeting yesterday morning with Felipe, a step that would have been necessary should he have decided to resign.

"But it is all too crude and obvious and Spanish society will not be fooled," Feijóo added. "After his theatrics, his reality has not changed one iota. There are still two investigations in the high court into the alleged corruption of his party, his government and his entourage."

WAVYPETER/SPLASH NEWS

Bright idea **Anne Hathaway at a TV interview in New York for her film, The Idea of You. She plays a single mother who falls for the singer of a new boy band**

Depardieu to face trial over alleged sex assaults

France
Charles Bremner Paris

Gérard Depardieu will go on trial over allegations by two women that he sexually assaulted them on film sets.

The French film star reported to police yesterday after a summons by detectives investigating the complaints, made in recent months, concerning allegations of groping during filming of *The Green Shutters* in 2021 and *The Magician and the Siamese* in 2014. He was released several hours later, his lawyer said. Prosecutors then issued a statement to say he would be tried in October.

Depardieu, 75, has become the symbol of an alleged predatory culture in the French film industry after public claims of sexual assault from a dozen women and two allegations of rape. One complaint was ruled too old for prosecution but Depardieu has been initially charged with raping an actress, who told police he assaulted her at his apartment in Paris. One of the two new alleged victims claimed in February that Depardieu grabbed her and touched her breasts on the set of *The Green Shutters*, directed by Jean Becker and co-starring Fanny Ardant.

She was "passing through a corridor where Mr Depardieu was sitting," her lawyer, said. "He grabbed her, trapped her between his legs and touched her body up to her breasts. She felt completely powerless. At the time, she didn't press charges because she didn't want to mar the work of her colleagues ... and the kindness of the film crew allowed her to think she was going to be fine. But the trauma persisted."

The other victim told police that the actor had twice groped her and addressed her with obscene language, once in Paris and again on location in the Loire Valley, according to Le Courrier de l'Ouest newspaper.

Depardieu, who grew up in poverty in central France, rose to fame in the 1970s in parts that mixed violence and tenderness. He denies wrongdoing and claims all his relationships have been consensual. In an open letter published last year he said: "Never, ever have I abused a woman."

President Macron has refused to condemn Depardieu, calling him one of France's greatest artists.

MeToo hasn't served women well, Joanna Williams, page 22

Just call me Giorgia, Meloni tells voters

Italy
Tom Kington Rome

Following the lead of the singers Adele and Beyoncé, Giorgia Meloni has asked voters to refer to her simply as "Giorgia" when she stands as a candidate for the European parliament in June.

She told a rally in Pescara on Italy's east coast: "If the Italians think we are doing well, I ask them to vote, to write my name, but my Christian name. The thing I am proudest of today is when people stop me on the street and most call me simply Giorgia, not [prime minister] or Meloni. For me that is extremely important and precious."

Claiming she had been "ridiculed for years" about her "working-class" roots, Meloni said: "They never understood that I was and always will be proud to be a person of the people." She added: "I will always be one of you."

Officials from her Brothers of Italy party said the ballot papers would give her name as "Giorgia Meloni, known as Giorgia", taking advantage of an Italian rule allowing voters to write down the nicknames of candidates on ballots.

However, Gianluigi Pellegrini, an electoral law expert, told The Times that the tactic should not be allowed since Giorgia was clearly not a nickname.

"This rule is used in small Italian towns where many people have the same surname, and nicknames like 'The Baker' are widespread, but the nickname needs to be different to the real name, which is not the case here," he said. "This is instead all about populist electoral propaganda and should not be allowed."

Stefano Ceccanti, a constitutional expert, told the Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera that the move was legitimate as long as the name "Giorgia" appeared on posters at polling stations.

Assuming she is elected, Meloni will give up her European parliament seat, making way for a runner-up from her party — hoping that her name will have pulled in votes. The ploy has been used previously by politicians in Italy where EU elections are viewed as polls about the popularity of parties and governments.

Meloni is standing in European elections

Malaria mosquitoes return to Italy's heel after 50 years

Philip Willan Rome
Tom Whipple

A mosquito species that spreads malaria has returned to southern Italy more than 50 years after the country was declared free of the disease.

The discovery of a population of *Anopheles sacharovi*, considered one of the most efficient carriers of malaria, in six sites in the heel of Italy shows that there is an increased risk of the disease itself being reintroduced, scientists said. It is thought likely that the mosquito has been able to re-establish itself thanks to the rewilding of its habitats, as well as rising temperatures.

Researchers said tourists should not be unduly fearful: the same species in Greece has not led to a return of malaria. The disease had been a significant killer in Italy since before the Roman Empire and was still widespread in coastal areas during the last century, with hundreds of cases a year.

The draining of marshes, pollution, insecticides and urbanisation reduced the insect's habitats. At the same time, better healthcare and development made it harder for malaria to spread. The World Health Organisation declared Italy malaria-free in 1970.

Writing in the journal Parasites & Vectors, researchers said the latest discovery — which may be reintroductions from elsewhere or the spreading of a historic population that had persisted at low levels — demonstrated that the country could not be complacent about its malaria-free status.

World

Thieves raid Los Angeles mansions to bag a Birkin

Keiran Southern Los Angeles

Gangs of thieves are stealing Birkin handbags from some of the wealthiest neighbourhoods of Los Angeles.

The leather Hermès totes, owned by celebrities including Kim Kardashian and Jennifer Lopez, are some of the most sought-after items in fashion. They can cost tens of thousands — sometimes hundreds of thousands — of dollars.

The French luxury brand was recently sued in California by customers alleging that they were barred from buying one in order to boost its exclusive image.

Gangs from South America are targeting mansions across LA, police said. "Where the homes are worth a lot of money, the assumption is there will be high-end handbags," Captain Francis Boateng of the LAPD told the Los Angeles Times. Thieves offload the bags to professional fences who then sell them through resale sites, according to police.

One resident of Pacific Palisades, a celebrity enclave of LA that is home to the likes of Steven Spielberg, was burgled last year and her Birkin stolen. Surveillance footage showed two intruders ignoring electrical goods and instead ransacking a walk-in closet filled with luxury handbags, including a Birkin the woman had used only once. The thieves emptied a drawer filled with receipts that proved the authenticity of many of the bags, suggesting an organised gang. "They were like trained assassins," the woman said.

The burglars allegedly sold the Birkin, which the victim said was worth about $37,000, to a woman who has been charged with receiving stolen property. Karla Suncerí was arrested after police raided her home and discovered more than 50 luxury bags. She has denied receiving stolen goods.

Stolen Birkin bags can be offloaded on resale sites

ABEDIN TAHERKENAREH/EPA

Look before you leap The world's highest bungee jump has opened 280m above the ground at the Milad tower in Tehran, Iran

EIGHT DAYS FROM
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Marrakesh, Rabat, Fez and Meknes – these are the imperial cities of Morocco and all are listed by Unesco as World Heritage sites. Their rich history comes alive in the narrow streets of the medieval medinas and the cool, mosaic lined courtyards of elegant mosques and royal palaces. For fascinating history, diverse and exciting cities, superb architecture, an extraordinary landscape and a rich culinary heritage, look no further than this splendid tour of Morocco.

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Trump sons set loyalty test for White House hopefuls

United States

Alistair Dawber Washington

Donald Trump is said to have given his two eldest sons greater powers in selecting staff for a potential second term and weeding out anyone considered "disloyal".

In an effort to place his family at the centre of influence, the former president has put Donald Jr and Eric in charge of his tentative transition team, which will select about 3,000 officials for a new administration. Neither served in an official capacity during their father's first term. His daughter Ivanka and her husband, Jared Kushner, worked as senior advisers, but have so far eschewed any role in the 2024 campaign.

"What's new here is the role of the family," said Alvin Felzenberg, who worked in the White House for both the first and second President Bush. "I don't know of another case where the family has been so heavily involved."

Trump was stung by senior appointments during his four-year term who turned against him. Anthony Scaramucci lasted a matter of days as the White House communications director and now frequently criticises Trump in the media.

Donald Jr and Eric Trump could pick 3,000 new administration officials

Mike Pence, his vice-president, refused to block the rubber-stamp vote in Congress that confirmed President Biden's 2020 victory. John Bolton, at one point Trump's national security adviser, wrote a book declaring him "unfit" for office.

Sources told Axios that the aim of the new team was "to keep the John Boltons of the world outside a second Trump administration".

Trump's last transition team was initially headed by Chris Christie, the former New Jersey governor. Relations between the pair soured and Christie says that he will not vote for him in this year's election.

Presidents take office two months after winning an election and must fill thousands of jobs to make the administration run smoothly.

"Every incoming administration always felt stymied, especially by the speed of getting their appointees into jobs and taking over control of the government," said Felzenberg. "[President] Kennedy once said that talking to the state department was like nailing jelly to the wall."

Trump seems determined to give his family an integral role. Lara Trump, Eric's wife, is co-chair of the Republican national committee, and some have suggested that Kushner could return as secretary of state.

For now, however, it is about keeping tight control over who gets access to levers of power. Donald Jr has confirmed in interviews that he intends to play an active role in any formal transition team, in order, he says to "stop some of the DC swamp rats and the swamp creatures from getting in there and doing their thing".

Students defy order to abandon tent protests

Josie Ensor New York
Alistair Dawber

Pro-Palestinian protesters at Columbia University defied orders to leave their encampment as pressure grew from Congress to dismantle what some Democrats called a "breeding ground of antisemitism".

The university, at the centre of protests that have spread to campuses across America, gave demonstrators a 2pm deadline yesterday to pack up or face suspension. As the deadline passed, notices littered the ground with the words "Columbia will burn" and "Free Palestine" in red ink.

A dozen or so faculty members wearing fluorescent vests locked arms with students at the edge of the encampment, as police watched on from behind a barricade.

The university said that students who agreed to leave the "Gaza solidarity encampment" would be put on disciplinary probation. Those who refused would be suspended.

The nationwide campus protests began at Columbia nearly a fortnight ago as a response to Israel's offensive in Gaza, which was triggered by the Hamas terrorist attacks of October 7. They have since spread across the country, from Indiana to Washington, California and Missouri.

They have posed a challenge to administrators trying to balance free speech rights with complaints that the rallies have veered into antisemitism and threats of violence.

They have been largely peaceful, with students insisting that the more threatening behaviour has come from outside agitators. One Jewish student has sued the university for failing to keep the campus safe.

The university's trustees came under pressure from a group of Democrats in the House, who called for them to dismantle the encampment or resign. The party is split on Gaza, with moderate members joining Republicans in expressing concern at the demonstrations.

Business

WORLD MARKETS (Change on the day)

FTSE 100
8,147.03 (+7.20) ▲

Dow Jones
38,386.09 (+146.43) ▲

COMMODITIES

Gold
$2,345.64 (+9.91) ▲

Brent crude (6pm)
$87.46 (-1.89) ▼

CURRENCIES

£/$
$1.2551 (+0.0079) ▲

£/€
€1.1712 (+0.0042) ▲

Blackstone hits high notes with bid for Hipgnosis Songs Fund

Alex Ralph

Blackstone has agreed to acquire Hipgnosis Songs Fund for $1.57 billion after topping a rival offer.

In the latest twist in the bidding war for the London-listed music rights investment company, whose catalogues include songs by Nelly, Blondie, Shakira, Jay-Z and the Red Hot Chili Peppers, its board has recommended a $1.30-a-share, or 104p, cash offer from Blackstone, a 4 per cent premium to a $1.25 competing offer from Concord, an industry rival, that was made last week.

The American investment powerhouse's bid is also 48.1 per cent higher than the Hipgnosis closing share price before the takeover interest emerged this month.

Hipgnosis's board said it had withdrawn its support for Concord's offer, which had been backed by Apollo, another American investor.

The bid battle came as a relief to shareholders in Hipgnosis after a troubled period for the company, marked by widespread governance issues and boardroom upheaval. In a shareholder revolt in October, investors voted against the "continuation" of the fund, giving a new board six months to come up with a fresh strategy. Hipgnosis then embarked on a review of the business.

Hipgnosis Songs Fund was founded by Merck Mercuriadis, 60, a music industry veteran, and was listed in 2018 with an ambition to turn music rights into a mainstream asset class by using royalties, such as from radio, streaming and performances, to generate income for investors. It has amassed a portfolio of 138 catalogues with more than 40,000 songs across "genres, artists, vintages and right types".

Robert Naylor, who was parachuted in to be chairman of Hipgnosis in November, said: "Since we started our strategic review, we have been clearly focused on looking at all the options to deliver shareholder value. We are delighted that, following competitive interests in acquiring Hipgnosis, our investors now have a chance to immediately realise their holding at an increased premium."

Shares in Hipgnosis were up ½p, or 0.4 per cent, at 104¼p at the close last night, above Blackstone's offer.

Analysts at Liberum, the broker, said it had been "widely expected that Blackstone would return with an improved offer, following the Concord counter-bid".

Barclays' lenders plot Very auction

Abu Dhabi investors seek to unwind £1.2bn debt

Helen Cahill

The Barclay family are on course to lose control of the last pillar of their corporate empire as their Gulf-based backers plot a sale of Very Group.

The Abu Dhabi investment firm that launched an unsuccessful attempt to buy the Barclays' media assets last year is drawing up plans for an auction of the retailer as it seeks to unwind a £1.2 billion refinancing of the family's debts.

A sale of Very would form part of the "second stage" of a plan to allow Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, vice-president of the United Arab Emirates, to recoup lending secured against the Barclays' assets.

The sheikh teamed up with RedBird Capital, the private equity firm, to refinance the Barclays' debt to Lloyds Bank and had hoped to convert the debt to equity to secure ownership of The Daily Telegraph, The Sunday Telegraph and The Spectator. That deal was in effect blocked last month when ministers drew up legislation to ban foreign powers owning British newspapers.

RedBird IMI, the joint venture part-funded by the sheikh, is now preparing an onward sale of the family's assets and it is understood that the media and retail ventures will be sold separately. A source close to the negotiations said separate sales were planned because media operators were unlikely to show an interest in Very and "different bidders will offer best value for the individual parts". They said bidders "could buy The Telegraph and not the Very Group".

The Barclay family has been retreating from its corporate interests spanning hotels, retail and media in recent years after becoming known in the City for buying up companies in debt-fuelled deals. The family sold the Ritz Hotel to a Qatari investor for about £800 million four years ago and since then have lost control of the Telegraph group, which was seized by Lloyds, and Yodel, the logistics operator that fell into administration in February. ArrowXL, another delivery firm owned by the Barclays, also has fallen into administration. The Barclays are trying to sell the Lady Beatrice, a 197ft yacht named after Beatrice Cecelia Taylor, the late mother of the Barclay twins, Sir Frederick and the late Sir David.

Very has long been a prized possession at the heart of the family's business operations, but its future has been in doubt amid wider speculation about the group's finances. Allianz, the insurer, withdrew the retailer's credit insurance for suppliers last year and since then it has accepted additional debt funding from Carlyle, the private equity firm, and IMI, the sheikh's investment firm. IMI had already secured £600 million against Very with its refinancing of the Barclays' debts to Lloyds.

Carlyle and IMI were given seats on the board as part of the £125 million deal and Dirk van den Berghe stepped down as chairman of Very.

A source close to the Barclays said that any onward sale would require co-operation between multiple stakeholders and that all parties were working towards making a "good return" on the investment from Abu Dhabi.

VERY.CO.UK

The actress Michelle Keegan models a dress from her range with Very. The company's future has been in doubt amid concerns about the finances of the wider group

Frasers buys back parts of Matches

Isabella Fish Retail Editor

Frasers Group has bought parts of MatchesFashion out of administration in a deal that does not include stock worth £80 million or the business's 250 remaining employees.

The retail group controlled by Mike Ashley, the Sports Direct founder, said that it had purchased the brand and intellectual property rights of the collapsed luxury retailer for an undisclosed sum. As part of the agreement, Frasers has granted a licence that allows Teneo, the administrator, to sell off stock as it tries to deliver a return for creditors.

It is not clear whether Frasers plans to keep Matches' IP, brand, trademark and domain name once the administration process has been completed.

Frasers, which owns the Sports Direct, House of Fraser and Flannels retail chains, placed Matches into administration last month, less than three months after buying the business for £52 million in a deal that inflicted heavy losses on Apax Partners, its private equity backer. The sale meant Frasers became the debt-holder and the only secured creditor.

The agreement raises further concerns over whether the remaining creditors will receive any of the money they are owed after the retailer's collapse. The business owed more than £200 million when it was put into administration by Frasers, with unsecured creditors now more than £36 million out of pocket. Matches' suppliers — which include Burberry, Gucci and Saint Laurent — are likely to receive less than a penny in the pound.

The deal also raises questions over what will happen to the 250 Matches employees.

Matches was founded in 1987 by Tom and Ruth Chapman, who were said to have named it after the former's 40-a-day cigarette habit. The business sells hundreds of luxury brands via its shops and website, such as Prada, Gucci, Balenciaga and Stella McCartney.

Need to know

1 Physical inspections begin today at UK ports on animal products, plants and plant products coming from Europe. All imports through the port of Dover and Eurotunnel will be subject to a charge of up to £145. The checks are designed to ensure imports are safe, but business and industry leaders have serious concerns about potential disruption. Page 16

2 The Barclay family are on course to lose control of the last pillar of their corporate empire as their backers plot a sale of Very Group. The Abu Dhabi investment firm that tried and failed to buy their media assets last year is drawing up plans for an auction as it seeks to unwind a £1.2 billion refinancing of the family's debts. Page 31

3 Blackstone has agreed to acquire Hipgnosis Songs Fund for $1.57 billion after topping a rival offer. In the latest twist in the bidding war for the music rights investment company, its board has recommended a $1.30-a-share, or 104p, cash offer from Blackstone, a 4 per cent premium to a $1.25 offer from Concord, a rival. Page 31

4 Frasers Group has bought parts of MatchesFashion out of administration in a deal that does not include £80 million in stock or the 250 staff. Page 31

5 Humza Yousaf's successor as the first minister of Scotland should prioritise the economy, reduce taxes and target inward investment, business groups said. They called for stability, with the vacuum created by his resignation to be filled as quickly as possible.

6 Wall Street reacted positively to an endorsement from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, which said Tesla's Model 3 and Model Y cars, made in Shanghai, had passed China's data security rules. Shares in Telsa, down by 22 per cent since the start of the year, reversed much of that loss.

7 Shop prices inflation slowed to its lowest pace in two and a half years, raising hopes for summer interest rate cuts. It eased to 0.8 per cent in the year to April, down from 1.3 per cent in March, the British Retail Consortium and NielsenIQ said. Page 34

8 Philips has reached a $1.1 billion settlement to resolve lawsuits over night-time breathing devices in the United States. The medical technology company said it would end the uncertainty from personal injury claims. It did not admit any fault or liability. Page 36

9 Oil trading activities in the United States make Shell about $1 billion a year, according to court disclosures. The figure was revealed in documents filed in a court Texas by a former Shell employee as part of an employment dispute. Page 37

10 The pressures on Petrofac have grown after it warned that it would miss its next bond payment and had delayed its annual results. Shares in the oilfield services group fell sharply after it said it would fail to make its next bond payment, which is due on May 15. Page 39

Scotland's business leaders

Greig Cameron

Humza Yousaf's successor as the first minister of Scotland should prioritise the economy, reduce taxes and target greater inward investment, business groups have said.

They also have called for stability, with a requirement for the vacuum created by Yousaf's resignation to be filled as quickly as possible.

In addition, trade bodies want an improvement in collaboration between politicians and industry to ensure that relevant concerns are heard when policies are being designed.

Liz Cameron, the chief executive of Scottish Chambers of Commerce, suggested that growing the economy must be the central aim for any new leader. "We need to be confident that the Scottish government is pulling in the same direction to support business, grow the economy and create jobs," she said.

"The next first minister must work with business to turbocharge our efforts to attract global investment and send out a clear message to the world that Scotland is open for business."

Tracy Black, the Scotland director at the CBI, said: "Whoever comes in as first minister must put addressing Scotland's faltering economy first. Without a competitive and resilient economy that prioritises investment, the ambition to deliver sustainable economic growth will fall short of the mark."

David Lonsdale, director of the Scottish Retail Consortium, said: "There is a pressing need to lift private sector investment, productivity and growth. After all, an expanding economy is good for living standards, job prospects and government revenues.

"If the economy recovers, other policy challenges become more manageable. Conversely, a weak economy will exacerbate the existing pressures on households and public finances. Central to this should be a plan to ease the regulatory burden and lower the tax burden on business."

Yousaf inherited a number of problems when he became first minister in March last year, such as what to do with the state-owned Ferguson Marine shipyard and Prestwick airport.

He had sought initially to improve relations by promising a "new deal" for business. That was supposed to involve better collaboration between corporate Scotland and its elected politicians. A willing business community, which effectively had been frozen out in the latter years of Nicola Sturgeon's administration, was eager to embrace a closer relationship with Holyrood, but the initial rhetoric failed to match the delivery of policy.

Colin Wilkinson, managing director of the Scottish Licensed Trade Association, was among those who had welcomed Yousaf's attempts to "reset" the relationship with business. "That early enthusiasm clearly waned as hospitality businesses and the licensed trade have continued to struggle since his arrival in Bute House and there appears to have been no real understanding, or willingness to understand, the myriad problems and challenges facing what is one of the biggest employers in Scotland," he said.

While some ministers were noticeably keener to engage, with Neil Gray visible in corporate circles until his move from the economy brief to health in February, the steady stream of poorly received policy decisions continued. One of those was Yousaf's introduction of a new income tax band targeting earners between £75,000 and £125,140. Almost all business bodies had united in condemnation of the idea.

Scotland's income tax divergence means that anyone earning above £28,867 pays more in income tax than if they live elsewhere in the UK. The gap widens as salaries increase, with someone in Scotland on £60,000 having an additional £1,796 to pay, while for an employee on £125,140 the sum is £5,232.

There were also questions about how Yousaf could expand the economy by cutting the budgets of development agencies such as Scottish Enterprise and reducing the amount of cash flowing to the Scottish National Investment Bank. The concern over the creeping international perception of the nation as a high-tax regime was growing, too, with the issue being raised with business representatives who attended the Tartan Week celebrations in New York two weeks ago.

Timothy Douglas, the head of policy and campaigns at Propertymark, said: "The first minister will change, but the issues facing Scotland's housing sector won't until those running the country immediately tackle the cost of renting through increasing supply of homes for people to rent and reviewing the cost of providing rented property and purchasing a home to live in."

Catherine McWilliam, from the Institute of Directors Scotland, said: "Business confidence is low in Scotland and another change in leadership at government level will do nothing to remedy that. The priority for the next first minister must be to restore business confidence and to create a stable operating environment to enable economic growth."

Humza Yousaf and his SNP predecessors have rarely enjoyed smooth relations

Behind the story

The SNP's relationship with corporate Scotland over the past 17 years hasn't exactly been one to cheer about (Jessica Newman writes). Indeed, it has been one of disappointment, anger and no little controversy

Take Prestwick airport, the only place in Britain that Elvis Presley ever visited, which the SNP administration bought for £1 in November of 2013 to save it from collapse. "I believe an opportunity now exists to return Prestwick airport to profitability and ultimately to private ownership," Nicola Sturgeon, at the time the deputy first minister of Scotland, said. Fast-forward to more than a decade later and the airport is still a drain on the taxpayers' purse, with more than £55 million of losses built up and no buyers in sight.

Then there is the island ferries saga. The beleaguered Ferguson Marine shipyard was rescued from administration in the weeks before the independence referendum by

Tesla clears data hurdle to self-driving cars in China

Jessica Newman

If Elon Musk had been hoping that his visit to China would represent a turning point in Tesla's recent fortunes, then he was amply rewarded yesterday by the removal of key regulatory barriers that had been holding back the carmaker's efforts to bring its self-driving software to China and then by a much-needed jump in its share price.

Wall Street reacted positively to an endorsement from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, which said that Tesla's Model 3 and Model Y cars, produced at the company's factory in Shanghai, had passed the requirements of China's data security rules, The Wall Street Journal reported. Shares in Telsa, which had fallen by 22 per cent since the start of the year, reversed some of that loss and closed up $25.76, or 15.3 per cent, at $194.04 in New York last night, valuing the company at $619 billion.

Data security and compliance are among the reasons why Tesla, which introduced the most autonomous version of its Autopilot software four years ago, has yet to make full self-driving available in China. Tesla cars are banned from Chinese military compounds and some government sites because of the cameras installed in the vehicles.

The world's most valuable carmaker is also said to have agreed a deal with Baidu, the Chinese technology group, for its mapping licence for data collection on China's public roads, another big step for its self-driving technology to be introduced in Chinese cars.

Dan Ives, an analyst at Wedbush, said winning regulatory approval in China marked a "watershed moment" for Tesla. "If Musk is able to obtain approval from Beijing to transfer data collected in China abroad, this would be pivotal," he said.

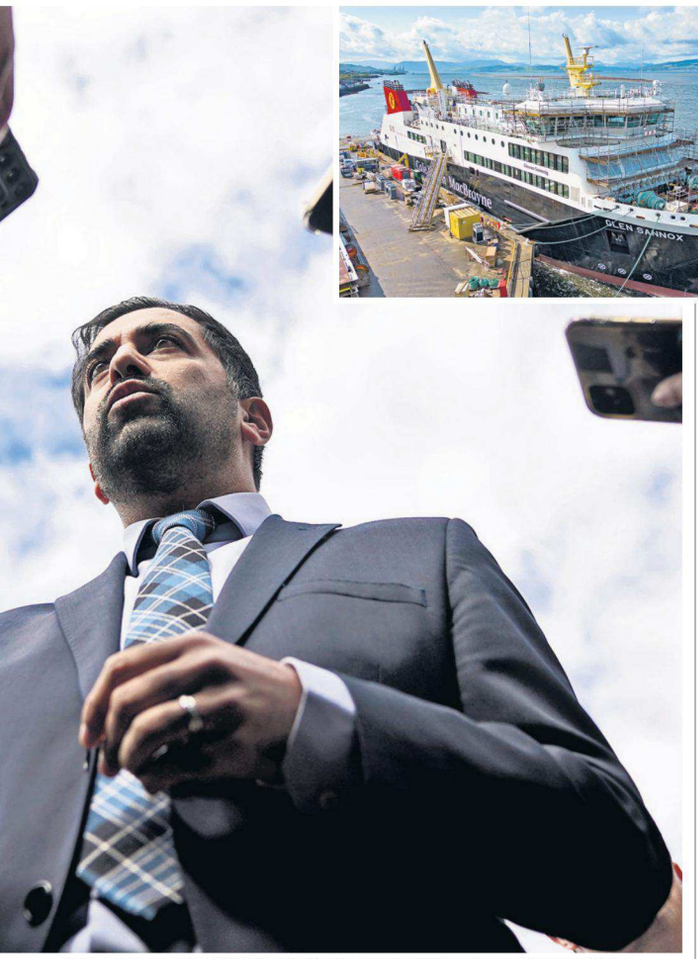
The news came after Musk, 52, Tesla's chief executive since 2008, made an unexpected visit to Beijing on Sunday, meeting Li Qiang, China's premier, and other officials, who said the carmaker's manufacturing in China was an example of strong Chinese-American trade co-operation, according to local media.

China is the world's largest producer of electric vehicles. It is also Tesla's second largest market and the largest provider of premium electric vehicles. However, the American company is being undercut by cheaper local producers, such as BYD.

The approval is a boost for Tesla, which has been battling with slowing demand for its electric vehicles and intensifying competition. Last week it reported revenues of £21.3 billion in the three months between January and March, its first drop in quarterly revenues since 2020.

Elon Musk met China's premier on Sunday in an unexpected visit to Beijing

crying out for help



ANDREW MILLIGAN/PA

with business, with friction over issues including the delayed island ferries

Jim McColl, a former economic advisor to the Scottish government.

A year later it received a £97 million contract to build two ferries, but a long-running dispute between Ferguson and Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited (the Scottish government-owned body that owns the vessels, ports and infrastructure for Scotland's lifeline ferry services) over who would pay for spiralling costs led to the yard falling into another insolvency in the summer of 2019 before it was nationalised at the end of that year.

Now six years behind schedule, the cost of the two ferries at the centre of the controversy is running at nearly four times the initial sum suggested. The Scottish government warned last month that there were "likely" to be further delays to the delivery of one, the Glen Sannox, which is due in May.

McColl has criticised the "fabulous propaganda exercise" by SNP ministers who he claims rushed through contracts for political capital and he has accused Sturgeon's administration of trying to deflect from its own failings by condemning the previous management of the shipyard.

A critical report by Audit Scotland in 2022 found that government ministers had approved the £97 million deal for two ferries even though CMAL, the agency in charge of vessel procurement, was reluctant to proceed owing to a lack of protection should construction go awry.

Another of the SNP's investments in the private sector to have come under fire is its decision to join forces with Sanjeev Gupta, the industrial tycoon. The Scottish government guaranteed loans worth £586 million of public money to help Gupta to buy the Lochaber aluminium smelter near Fort William in 2016, a decision slammed by other parties. Willie Rennie, the former leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, called the SNP "reckless". Scottish Labour branded it a "dodgy deal".

The SNP-Green coalition's attempt to mirror a bottle return scheme that has been hugely successful in dozens of other countries has been another blunder that led to companies being owed millions of pounds. Under the deposit return scheme, shoppers would pay an additional 20p charge every time they bought a drink in a can or a bottle, with the money refunded to them when the empty containers were returned for recycling. The plans collapsed last June after Holyrood would not comply with caveats to exclude glass.

Biffa, the waste management company, is owed £65 million from Circularity Scotland, the company set up by ministers to run the bottle and can recycling initiative, as it had been hired to set up processing depots and order collection vehicles.

The divergence in income tax between Scotland and England hasn't won the SNP many fans across a number of industries. Business owners in the financial services and technology sectors have highlighted their fears about attracting talent and skills to Scotland, while those in hospitality are finding it difficult to attract chefs from England because of higher income taxes.

Star stockpicker quits Royal London

Patrick Hosking Financial Editor

A star stockpicker who has been responsible for managing £60 billion of assets has quit Royal London Asset Management to set up his own firm, taking his team with him.

Peter Rutter, the firm's head of equities and the manager of a number of strongly performing authorised funds, has left with immediate effect. Four of his team have walked out with him, including Will Kenney and James Clarke, the senior fund managers.

Royal London, Britain's biggest mutual life assurer with £162 billion of client assets, disclosed the departures in what it called a "team restructure" and announced a string of new responsibilities to plug the holes.

Piers Hillier, the chief investment officer, will take on the additional role of head of global equities, while other existing managers will cover elsewhere. No new appointments were announced.

Rutter and his team managed investments for Royal London's eight million policyholders, as well as £10.4 billion of authorised funds bought by retail investors on mainstream platforms. He has been a consistently strong stockpicker, according to Trustnet, the funds data service. He produced returns for investors of 61.3 per cent over three years, compared with 23 per cent for his peer group. Over ten years, he delivered 247 per cent, against 149 per cent. His funds include the £4.9 billion RL Global Equity Diversified, which he co-managed with Clarke. They also jointly manage RL Global Equity Select, an £800 million fund.

61.6%

Returns for investors produced by Peter Rutter over three years

Fund manager departures can be disruptive, with clients often withdrawing their money to follow the manager. Jupiter Fund Management is grappling with the planned departure of Ben Whitmore, who is setting up his own firm, Brickwood Asset Management. Jupiter is suffering heavy outflows even before Whitmore leaves in July.

While the rewards can be huge for the well-regarded fund manager who leaves, they also face headwinds, including high start-up costs, regulatory burdens and delays and the need to achieve scale quickly.

London market sees Darktrace clearly

BUSINESS COMMENTARY *Alistair Osborne*

Sometimes you can't keep a good story down. Take Darktrace selling up to Thoma Bravo for £4.3 billion cash. Here, apparently, is the latest proof of London's sinking stock exchange, unable to value anything, least of all tech companies. "A hammer blow for the UK market," was how Peel Hunt's research chief Charles Hall put it.

Really? Whatever its wider problems, hasn't the market worked pretty well in Darktrace's case? It takes two views to make a market. And here's the view on the Bravo deal of the ex-head of a different stockbroker: "A get out of jail free card for London." Indeed, since 2021's float at 250p a share, where the cybersecurity outfit raised £165 million, it's yo-yo'd between such opposing opinions. Yet three years on Darktrace is still being acquired at 620p. If the UK market routinely delivered that sort of result, investors would be queuing up.

Of course, the Darktrace board, chaired by Gordon Hurst, did its bit to play up to the narrative, arguing that its "operating and financial achievements have not been reflected" in the shares, what with them "trading at a significant discount to its global peer group". But what exactly did it expect? However powerful Darktrace's AI algorithms, they're yet to find a way to neutralise Mike Lynch: its founder investor on trial for fraud in America after 2011's $11.7 billion sale of Autonomy to Hewlett-Packard.

Three Darktrace top bods, chief executive Poppy Gustafsson, strategy head Nicole Eagan and chief technology officer Jack Stockdale, cut their teeth at Autonomy — not that they're brave enough to admit it on their website. Another founding investor was Autonomy finance chief Sushovan Hussain, who's had a stint in a US clink. Lynch and his wife once owned more than 10 per cent of Darktrace: a holding they've been selling down to pay his bail. They're still in line for a Bravo payday of over £250 million. Lynch also had a representative on Darktrace's board — until he was voted off last year.

So it's no shock that the short-sellers, now burnt by a 20 per cent takeover premium, piled in, with the likes of hedge fund Quintessential portraying Darktrace as Autonomy Mk2. Last year, it got the shares down to 210p after alleging "channel-stuffing" and "round-tripping" accounting tricks. Despite Darktrace denials, only a review by accountant EY calmed things down.

Yet, despite all the noise, it says something for the maturity of the London market that other investors still focused on the Darktrace growth story: customer numbers up from 5,629 at the 2021 full-year to 9,400 today; recurring revenues rising from $346 million to $637 million over the past three financial years; and ebitda margins now heading for at least 23 per cent.

Yes, a take-out enterprise value (equity plus debt) of 7.3 times sales, on Panmure Gordon maths, can't compete with Palo Alto's 11.5 times or CrowdStrike's 17.5 times. Yet such rivals are miles bigger, without Darktrace's baggage. It was only last month, too, that Gustafsson and Eagan sold shares at sub 470p. Who knows, Darktrace may yet lure a higher bid, though the shares at 603½p aren't signalling one. But whatever happens, it's hardly a London market failure that it's matched a willing buyer and seller at a 148 premium to a float price of only three years ago. Besides, assuming its bid succeeds, Thoma Bravo will still have to find an exit. Has it considered Hewlett-Packard?

Out of its element

If only Elementis could use its "unique chemistry" to pacify its shareholders. The specialty chemicals group has potions used in everything from cosmetics to cars, plus a mine even BHP hasn't bid for: a Californian repository of hectorite, a greasy clay, ideal for the beauty industry. Yet you see why investors keep lobbing mud at the board.

The latest is Gatemore, which has popped up on the eve of the AGM to prove that a mere 0.6 per cent stake is no bar to writing punchy letters. In a missive to John O'Higgins, the Elementis chairman, Gatemore's managing partner Liad Meidar lambasts the "significant" share price "underperformance" and "self-inflicted management failures" — before calling for the head of chief executive Paul Waterman.

It's pretty Elementis, too, that despite his £14 million pay over seven years, Waterman's not exactly delivered. The shares at 142¼p, up 3.6 per cent yesterday, are below the 190p where he came in, with his tenure tarnished by an acquisition goof: 2018's $500 million purchase of industrial talc business Mondo Minerals. Gatemore's right, too, that he lacks credibility setting a 19 per cent operating margin target when they're 14.6 per cent and still adrift of the previous goal of 17 per cent.

A far bigger investor, Franklin Mutual with almost 10 per cent, has already told the board to put the business up for sale, annoyed it has rebuffed three takeover approaches — even if two of them seemed flaky. And Gatemore says it has backing from other investors. In Waterman's defence, he's made some progress lately, the shares have picked up a bit and few expect AGM votes of 10 per cent-plus against any director. Even so, some sort of chemical reaction is bubbling up here.

Flight of Concord

It's not over till the fat lady sings. And, with Concord owning a 4.8 per cent stake in Hipgnosis and still holding irrevocable acceptances for its $1.25-a-share bid from more than a fifth of the register, it could make things less than harmonious for Blackstone. But is Concord likely to top Blackstone's latest offer of $1.30, 104p in real money? Concord's last bid said it intended to sell up to 30 per cent of Hipgnosis's assets after "18 to 24 months" of any deal, hinting that financing was tight. This bid battle may struggle to hit an even higher pitch.

alistair.osborne@thetimes.co.uk

Shop prices boost hopes for rate cuts

Jack Barnett,
Economics Correspondent

The rate of shop prices inflation has slowed to its lowest level in two and a half years, driven down by grocery bills and rekindling hopes for summer interest rate cuts.

Prices growth in shops eased to only 0.8 per cent in the year to April on an annual basis, down from 1.3 per cent in the previous month, according to the British Retail Consortium and NielsenIQ. It was the slowest rise since December 2021.

On a monthly basis, shop prices fell by 0.3 per cent. Annual food prices inflation has dropped to 3.4 per cent this month, the 12th consecutive month of decline and the lowest level since March 2022.

The figures demonstrate that price pressures are continuing to ease after racing to a 40-year high of 11.1 per cent in October 2022. They also suggest that the Office for National Statistics' official consumer prices index inflation estimate for April, due to be published on May 22, will decline from the 3.2 per cent figure announced in March. Analysts said that shop prices inflation had declined thanks to retailers stepping up promotions in April, potentially as part of the Easter sales season.

Helen Dickinson, chief executive of the consortium, said: "Both food and non-food have seen shop inflation rates ease to more manageable levels. In April, non-food prices fell, especially in clothing and footwear, where retailers ramped up promotions to encourage consumer spending. Fresh products such as butter, fish and fruits continued to fall in price due to easing input costs and intense competition between grocers."

There is debate over when and by how much the Bank of England will cut interest rates, with markets drastically scaling back their forecasts for the scale of monetary loosening this year. At the beginning of 2024, the Bank was expected to reduce the UK base interest rate six times by quarter-point magnitudes. However, signs that inflation in the United States is proving stubborn have prompted a recalibration in forecasts for how many times central banks as a whole will lower interest rates this year.

The BRC and NielsenIQ's data suggests that inflation in Britain is on a downward trend, in contrast with America, where it has risen to 3.5 per cent, from 3.2 per cent previously and above analysts' expectations.

The Bank is expected to cut UK interest rates twice this year, while some analysts think that the US Federal Reserve could delay rate cuts entirely until 2025. Last week, Huw Pill, chief economist at the Bank, said that he had yet to see enough evidence to convince him that rate cuts are necessary. Andrew Bailey, governor of the Bank, and Dave Ramsden, a deputy governor, have signalled that they are close to voting for interest rate cuts.

The Bank's next ratesetting meeting takes place on May 9 and will include new forecasts for the economy. The base interest rate stands at a 16-year high of 5.25 per cent.

Referring to the war between Israel and Hamas and disruption to trade flows in the Red Sea, Dickinson said that "geopolitical tensions" could generate a "knock-on impact on commodity prices, like oil [that] pose a threat to future price stability".

Analysts at Goldman Sachs, the investment bank, have calculated that suppliers could step up oil output to replenish global oil inventories, putting downward pressure on prices.

Fewer interest rate cuts this year would dilute the Conservatives' expected election messaging of highlighting the strength of the economic recovery since Rishi Sunak became prime minister.

Fresh food prices inflation slowed to 2.4 per cent in the year to April, down from 2.6 per cent in the previous month.

Average disposable incomes grow every month for a year

Average disposable incomes in Britain have risen every month for a year, according to research that suggests falling inflation and rising wages are easing the pressure caused by the cost of living crisis (Jack Barnett writes).

The monthly *Income Tracker* report from Asda and the Centre for Economic and Business Research shows that the average family budget improved by 10.1 per cent, or £21.50, over the year to March to £233 per week. Over the past month, family spending power has risen by £1.65. The sustained rise over 12 consecutive months has been driven by inflation falling quickly and by nominal wage growth reaching record highs.

The report indicated that the poorest households continue to suffer from "negative spending power", meaning that their nominal income does not cover the cost of essential bills, leaving their weekly disposable incomes at -£67. The richest households' spending power rose by 8.6 per cent to £822. The poorest households' weekly disposable incomes have declined by £67, or 8.4 per cent, over the past year. The richest households enjoyed a £822, or 8.6 per cent, rise in their spending power.

In the first quarter of this year, on an annual basis, London and the northeast of England experienced the steepest increases in disposable income at over 10 per cent, while the East Midlands recorded the slowest, nearly stagnating.

Raconteur

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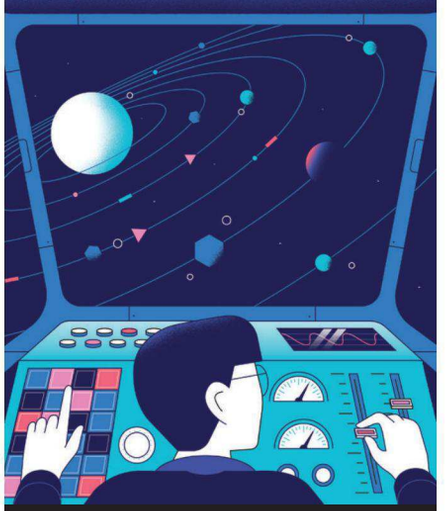

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FT announces 'strategic partnership' with ChatGPT

Katie Prescott
Technology Business Editor

OpenAI has struck a deal with the Financial Times to allow its ChatGPT artificial intelligence program to access the newspaper's archived content.

Details of the tie-up, described as a "strategic partnership and licensing agreement", were not made public. The FT will receive an undisclosed sum for its journalists' work and the businesses will collaborate on developing AI features for the paper's readers. OpenAI is backed by Microsoft.

Users of ChatGPT will be able to see short summaries of the FT's journalism and links to articles, which will be given in response to queries to the chatbot.

Copyright is a source of contention between the technology and creative industries. Generative AI, which creates content such as text or images from prompts, requires vast tracts of information to power it. The higher-quality the input, the better the output. Many content creators claim that technology companies are using their data without permission to train their AI models. Some have taken legal action, such as The New York Times newspaper, which is suing OpenAI and Microsoft, and Getty Images, the photo library, which is suing StabilityAI. Others, such as Axel Springer, Associated Press and Le Monde, have reached agreements with the technology businesses.

John Ridding, 58, the FT's chief executive, said: "We're keen to explore the practical outcomes regarding news sources and AI through this partnership. We value the opportunity to be inside the development loop as people discover content in new ways.

"As with any transformative technology, there is potential for significant advancements and major challenges, but what's never possible is turning back time. It's important for us to represent quality journalism as these products take shape, with the appropriate safeguards in place to protect the FT's content and brand."

Brad Lightcap, chief operating officer of OpenAI, said: "Our partnership and dialogue with the FT is about finding creative and productive ways for AI to empower news organisations and journalists, and to enrich the ChatGPT experience with real-time, world-class journalism for millions of people around the world."

Lightcap said recently that copyright was a "hard problem to solve" but technology companies could "do better" than signing licensing deals with content creators, such as collaborating earlier in the research process on new products.

The FT will be "inside the development loop" for new ways to find news

Mehreen Khan

A once-in-a-generation chance to fix the Bank has gone begging

On a Friday afternoon in an oak-panelled room overlooking the Bank of England's courtyard, Ben Bernanke, the most-fêted central banker of his generation, offered his thoughts on where Britain's monetary policymakers had gone wrong over the past few years of raging inflation.

Bernanke's findings, which had been hyped as a "once-in-a-generation" chance for reform by Andrew Bailey, the Bank's governor, were presented to a group of journalists, without television cameras or a live stream, a departure from the Bank's regular monetary policy and financial stability press conferences. Given that a big part of Bernanke's work was on how to help the central bank's communications, the choice of a closed-room press event was jarring. But it did sum up the institution's ambivalent relationship with transparency, which often echoes St Augustine's prayer "for more openness and accountability … just not yet".

Cameras or not, Bernanke's underwhelming recommendations did not live up to Bailey's billing. The former US Federal Reserve chief spent six months working on a report that made some cutting observations about the Bank's overstretched and sometimes under-qualified staff and the shortcomings of its forecasting models. Yet he refrained from making suggestions for transformative changes to the way in which the central bank communicates its views on the path of interest rates to British households, businesses and financial markets.

Rather than a once-in-a-generation chance, the Bernanke report is likely to go down as a historic missed opportunity for the Bank's monetary policy committee to provide clarity on its interest rate strategy when it desperately needs one.

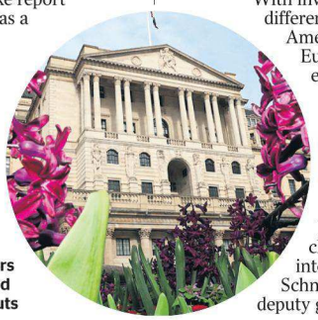
The glaring oversight in Bernanke's dozen recommendations was on how the Bank's nine-strong committee could become more transparent over their voting intentions.

One possible way to achieve that is through the use of a "dot plot", an innovation that Bernanke introduced at the Fed in 2012, where ratesetters publish anonymised individual forecasts on where they think borrowing costs will be over the next year or so. Bernanke did not think the Bank should follow this model and even refrained from a more moderate move for the MPC to publish a rates forecast when the Bank publishes its reports on inflation and the state of the economy every quarter.

The omission, from a figure as respected as Bernanke whose recommendations would have had to be taken on board by the Bank, was odd as the MPC is in dire need of a strategy rethink. Financial markets have been whipsawing all year over repeated false dawns on how imminent interest rate cuts may nor may not be, with the Bank unable to offer a clear message either way.

Market see-sawing has been caused by developments in the United States, where strong inflation data and robust jobs growth have forced the Fed to step back on its hints that rate cuts were coming in 2024. Traders who had been betting on up to seven interest rate cuts at the start of the year now think the Fed may manage only one. The British and eurozone economies have been caught up in the hawkish frenzy. Having been burnt by the Fed, traders now think there will be a maximum of two rate cuts from the Bank his year, despite UK inflation falling steadily and the labour market cooling.

With investors failing to differentiate between the American, British and European economies, ratesetters at the European Central Bank are now loudly insisting that they are not going to slavishly follow the Fed's lead and are much closer to cutting interest rates. Isabel Schnabel, the ECB's deputy governor, has even suggested that the institution adopts its own "dot plot" to offer markets and households a far clearer view on its monetary policy strategy.



The Bank's ratesetters have given out mixed messaged on rate cuts

In the UK, meanwhile, the Bank has only added to the confusion. At this month's meetings of the International Monetary Fund, Bailey was sanguine about the state of the economy, saying that the Middle East crisis was not as inflationary as had been first feared, given subdued oil prices. He also highlighted that Britain was managing to bring down inflation without generating mass unemployment. So far, so doveish.

Sir Dave Ramsden, his deputy, went further a few days later. In a speech, he said that inflation would hit 2 per cent in the coming months and would stay there until 2026, according to new Bank forecasts published this month. His intervention was the most doveish signal so far from a member of the MPC who had voted to keep rates unchanged in March.

Such messages would usually indicate the start of a shift in the MPC's thinking to pave the way for a majority vote in favour of rate cuts, but any such hopes were extinguished days later when Huw Pill, the Bank's chief economist and usually the most reliable indicator of the majority view of the committee, said rate cuts were still "some way off".

The mixed messages from senior Bank officials have created a communications mess. The Bank will have had six weeks between its last interest rate decisions and seems more divided than before on whether inflation is falling and stable, or still too high and threatening.

The dot plot won't fix this and the Fed, with one in place, didn't do a much better job on inflation than the Bank. But having a transparent way for the MPC to publish rate forecasts will not make Britain a bad copy of America. Instead, it will bolster the Bank's independence from other central banks by offering a clearer steer on what UK ratesetters think and why. For an institution so often accused of "group think", the dots would be a communications asset and offer some clarity over the MPC's confusion.

Mehreen Khan is Economics Editor of The Times

Anthony Impey

Gen Z offers a path to an entrepreneurial and more dynamic Britain

After a decade of economic stagnation, post-Covid inflation and the cost of living crisis have stung British people and businesses particularly hard. Despite endless discussions about growth, the British economy seems stubbornly stuck. And, as a general election approaches, finding an effective way to revive the economy could be the difference between victory and defeat.

A solution may come from an unexpected source: Gen Z. The younger generation, sometimes mocked as the "snowflake generation" and labelled fragile, entitled and work-shy, are finding their way in the world of work — and are putting forth a different, impressive side. New research from Lloyds Bank has found that Gen Z are, indeed, more entrepreneurial and are more likely to start their own businesses than previous generations. Could this cohort herald an entrepreneurial resurgence and usher in a new productive era for the "nation of shopkeepers"?

Gen Z's ambitions are not only beneficial on the macro level. There are also early signs that Gen Z make great business leaders. Be the Business's new Productive Business Index has found that leaders aged under 35 consistently outperform older leaders on a range of productivity metrics. A healthy 50 per cent of leaders aged 18 to 34 increased their business revenue in the past three months, in contrast with only 30 per cent of business leaders aged over 55.

These results are no coincidence. The trend is replicated across metrics measuring financial performance, employee numbers and general business conditions. Gen Z business leaders are clearly doing something right.

One explanation for their business success could be linked with a "continuous improvement mindset" — a set of behaviours and attitudes displayed by younger leaders that includes taking proactive steps to enhance leadership skills, assess performance metrics and refine business operations, all of which have been shown to improve business productivity.

The effects of continued subtle changes and improvements are easily overlooked, but they make a disproportionately large and positive impact on the productivity of small and medium-sized businesses, which account for 99 per cent of the UK's business population. Be the Business estimates that a modest 1 per cent annual improvement in smaller business productivity performance could inject £94 billion into the economy over the next five years.

Even though, at present, both political parties ostensibly support business, the support measures and policy solutions they propose primarily benefit the big players. This has obvious immediate benefits, politically and economically, and provides great photo opportunities, but it may prove short-sighted. International corporate businesses are free to go wherever the conditions are most beneficial to them, and usually do. Nurturing a network of small enterprises rooted across diverse communities and localities in the UK could generate sustainable, long-term growth and could provide employment and opportunity in every part of the country.

To create and sustain a healthy small business community, the government's policy interventions and business support should put time-poor entrepreneurs front-of-mind, helping them to make use of existing resources, to access and use available information and to create networks of support that they can rely on. Moreover, fostering a culture of mentorship and collaboration will facilitate knowledge exchange and will help to bridge the gap between generations, creating a spirit of collective advancement.

In the pursuit of economic revival, Gen Z epitomises the hope and promise of the new, dynamic, entrepreneurial Britain. Yet their success is contingent upon our collective commitment to provide them with the support and opportunities they need to thrive. If we allow the potential of young entrepreneurs to waste away, we might be looking at another decade of stagnation and plummeting living standards.

Anthony Impey is chief executive of Be the Business

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Philips breathes easy after $1.1bn American settlement

Alex Ralph

Philips has reached a $1.1 billion settlement to resolve lawsuits over recalled night-time breathing devices in the United States.

The Dutch-based medical technology company said the resolution would bring to an end the uncertainty from personal injury claims that has hung over the company and its share price for three years. It did not admit any fault or liability.

In January Philips reached an agreement with the Department of Justice in America, representing the US Food and Drug Administration, not to sell new devices in the country to treat sleep apnoea, in which a person's breathing stops and starts while they sleep. The final details of that agreement, including the improvements required, were reached this month.

The personal injury claims and medical monitoring settlement is smaller than the hit of $2 billion to $4 billion expected by analysts and a "worst case" scenario of $10 billion. The timing was also sooner than had been anticipated.

The outcome prompted a surge in Philips' shares, which were up €5.80, or 29.4 per cent, at €25.54 at the close in Amsterdam. However, the shares remain about 40 per cent below the levels at which they were trading before the recall of millions of devices began in 2021 amid concerns that foam used to reduce noise from the devices could degrade and become toxic, including posing a potential cancer risk. The problems have led Philips to cut thousands of jobs and to target a recall of about 5.6 million devices.

The settlement was announced alongside first-quarter profits that were better than expected. Roy Jakobs, the chief executive of Philips, said the deal was a "significant milestone and provides further clarity on the way forward for Philips. Patient safety and quality is our highest priority and we have taken important steps in further resolving the consequences of the respironics recall.

"The remediation of the sleep therapy devices for patients is almost complete and the test results to date show the use of these devices is not expected to result in appreciable harm to health."

Philips did not admit that any injuries had been caused by the devices.

Payments as part of the $1.1 billion settlement are expected in 2025 and will be funded from the company's cashflows. It has made a €982 million provision, recognised in its first quarter. The company also said that it had concluded an agreement with insurers.

Analysts at Jefferies, the broker, said the settlement was "much milder than feared and shall mark the end of litigation uncertainty".

Although Philips is still facing lawsuits in Europe, the company expects the American settlement to finalise most of the issue for investors.

As part of the agreement, in America Philips can continue to service sleep and respiratory care devices already with healthcare providers and patients, as well as supply accessories, consumables and replacement parts. Outside the US, Philips will continue to provide new sleep and respiratory care devices, "subject to certain requirements".

Getir will deliver food orders only in Turkey

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'Bad timing' at Beazley drives fall in cyber insurance sales

Patrick Hosking Financial Editor

Sales of cyberattack insurance fell by 10 per cent for Beazley in the first quarter of the year as the insurer reported otherwise robust trading.

Beazley, which has made cyberrisks a key part of its growth plans, said that written premiums in the cyber category had dropped from $280 million to $253 million. Premium rates for cyber fell by 5 per cent.

It blamed the fall on timing issues because it was using more distribution partnerships and said the trend would be reversed. "We remain confident in the short and long-term growth opportunities in [cyber] and underlying rates, which, despite the continued softening, remain adequate. We are expecting moderate growth in 2024."

Adrian Cox, the chief executive, said that overall it had been "a solid start to the year", with total written premiums up by 7 per cent to $1.48 billion. Premium rates on renewed business were up 1 per cent. Property insurance was the standout product category, with premium sales growth of 26 per cent to $451 million and rates up by 7 per cent.

Soaring demand from companies anxious about cyberattacks has led to a huge increase in capacity from insurers, pushing down rates.

Cox, 53, said he was confident of achieving growth in gross written premiums for the full year in the "high-single-digit" percentage range.

Beazley, a FTSE 100 company based in London, manages seven Lloyd's of London syndicates. In February it merged its cyber services team with Lodestone, which advises corporate and government customers on cyber security.

James Pearse, at Jefferies, said Beazley was "on track". Its shares closed up 19½p, or 3 per cent, at 657½p.

UMIT BEKTAS/REUTERS

The food delivery company was a pandemic star but is withdrawing to home turf

Getir is to quit all its remaining international markets as it struggles to stem losses amid waning demand for online groceries (Isabella Fish writes).

The food delivery business, whose valuation was cut recently from $12 billion to $2.5 billion, said it would stop trading in Britain, Europe and America to focus on Turkey, its core market.

It said it had generated only 7 per cent of its revenue from the markets it planned to leave.

Getir said it would close the Gorillas brand in Britain. It acquired the German rival in a $1.2 billion deal in 2022 after snapping up Weezy in the UK a year earlier. It did not disclose how many jobs would be affected, but it employs 1,500 people in Britain. It pulled out of Spain, Italy and Portugal last year.

Getir was one of the hottest start-ups of the pandemic but has struggled since then.

The Istanbul-based business said it had secured new financing led by Mubadala Investment Company, an Abu Dhabi sovereign wealth fund.

It did not reveal its valuation under the latest funding round, but said it would use the funds "to bolster its competitive position in its core food and grocery delivery businesses in Turkey".

Court files offer rare peek into Shell's secretive oil trading unit

Emma Powell

Oil trading activities in the United States make about $1 billion a year for Shell, according to court disclosures that give a rare insight into the energy major's secretive trading division.

The figure was revealed in documents filed in a court in Texas by a former Shell employee as part of an employment dispute involving one of the company's previous trading managers.

John Dimech, who was a manager in Shell's crude oil trading group in Houston for 11 years, said in a deposition that the unit typically made between $950 million to $1 billion a year, which equates to between 13 per cent and 15 per cent of Shell's pre-tax profits made in America in recent years. Shell's 2022 tax contribution report showed a total pre-tax profit of just over $7 billion in the US that year, while its 2021 pre-tax profit was about $6.36 billion.

Shell declined to comment on the court disclosures.

In the court action for alleged breach of contract, Eva-Maria Frohn, a former trading manager, sought $15 million, including $6 million for 2021's bonus. Shell denied the claim.

The court filings also laid bare the multimillion-dollar bonuses bestowed upon the group's traders. Frohn received a bonus of more than $5 million in 2020 for her work the previous year.

Investors will get another glimpse on how the FTSE 100 group's trading business is faring when the company reports first-quarter results on Thursday. Shell does not disclose figures relating to the individual performance of its powerful oil and gas trading division. The business, which operates by buying and selling oil and gas, is inherently volatile. It exploits gaps in the market to generate profits, but can also generate losses.

Shell is the world's largest trader of liquefied natural gas. Britain has become increasingly reliant on imports of LNG as Europe tries to wean itself off Russian gas and seeks to improve the security of energy supplies. The company can benefit from the volatility in gas prices by buying LNG cargoes or contracts and then selling when and where prices are higher. It also trades with a portion of the LNG it produces at its own facilities.

The company's oil trading division in the US is said to make $1 billion a year

In February Shell revealed that an "exceptional" performance from the business during the fourth quarter had helped to push profits above market expectations. At the time Wael Sawan, 49, who took over as Shell's chief executive in January last year, said the trading unit had benefited from volatility in global prices of LNG in the fourth quarter, as well as from higher demand among buyers stocking up before the winter.

Adjusted earnings for the integrated gas business, within which sits Shell's trading and optimisation division, were $3.96 billion in the quarter, down from $5.97 billion over the same period in 2022. However, that was against a consensus forecast of $3.47 billion.

The shares were down 16p, or 0.6 per cent, at £28.87½ at the close.

Investor bags French supermarkets

Jessica Newman

Supermarket Income Reit is making its first foray overseas after agreeing to buy a portfolio of Carrefour supermarkets in France.

The property investment trust has snapped up 17 "strong-performing omnichannel" supermarkets in a sale-and-leaseback deal for €75.3 million, reflecting a net initial yield of 6.3 per cent.

The stores occupy about 40,000 sq ft, on average, and have a "long history of successful trading".

Carrefour, which operates in 30 countries, generated sales of €94 billion in 2023 and has the second largest market share in France.

The portfolio has been acquired with a weighted average lease term of 12 years, with a break option in the tenth year, as well as annual uncapped inflation-linked rent reviews.

"This accretive transaction is complementary to our existing portfolio, providing further tenant diversification, and continues our strategy of investing in the future model of grocery," said Ben Green, a director at Atrato Capital, the investment adviser to Supermarket Income Reit.

Andrew Saunders, an analyst at Shore Capital, said that the deal was "an attractive opportunity to secure a sizeable block of stores in one transaction", while Peel Hunt said the acquisition "benefits from a wider yield on spread than in the UK and this should benefit earnings".

Acquisitions was one of the reasons the property investor managed to raise the rent it collected to £104.7 million in the six months to the end of December.

The value of the company's portfolio, which comprises 73 stores, stands at more than £1.7 billion. It is focused predominantly on larger stores on the edge of towns that are also used for click-and-collect or online deliveries, with 93 per cent of its stores providing one or both services.

The majority of its income comes from Tesco and Sainsbury's, Britain's biggest supermarket chains, which helped operating income to rise by 18 per cent to £45 million in the first half.

In a boost to the FTSE 250 company, the pair of grocers gained market share over the period, taking up 44 per cent of the market, while Aldi and Lidl, discount competitors that tend to operate smaller stores, slowed their rates of expansion last year.

Activity in the market has been higher than usual, with a record £2.1 billion invested in British supermarket property in 2023.

The private equity-backed Asda and Morrisons chains have sought to release cash by selling their stores and then leasing them back and, at the same time, Sainsbury's and Tesco have been looking to buy back their supermarkets thanks to their considerably stronger positions.

Shares in Supermarket Income Reit are down by nearly 15 per cent since this time last year, but they closed up ¼p, or 0.3 per cent, at 73p last night.

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UK Corp Bond C ‡@	104.79	...	-0.78	3.87
UK Eqty C ‡@	6317.26	...	-14.91	3.28
UK Eqty Inc A ‡@	324.18	...	+2.42	5.30
UK Gwth A ‡@	8224.74	...	+31.08	...
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High Income R Inc ‡@	64.68	...	+0.30	5.82
Income R Acc ‡@	576.32	...	+5.20	3.60
Income R Inc ‡@	242.58	...	+2.19	3.71
Monthly Dist R Inc ‡@	69.81	...	+0.09	4.53
SmartGARP European Equity R Acc ‡@	502.74	...	+0.37	1.52
SmartGARP Global Equity R Acc ‡@	395.69	...	+0.94	2.03
SmartGARP UK Equity R Acc ‡@	2478.82	...	+10.06	2.97
Strategic Assets R Acc ‡@	90.85	...	-0.10	...
Strategic Bond R M Acc ‡@	100.70	...	+0.38	3.76
Strategic Bond R M Inc ‡@	50.22	...	+0.19	3.86
Strategic Bond R Q Acc ‡@	100.52	...	+0.37	3.82
Strategic Bond R Q Inc ‡@	50.32	...	+0.19	3.91
UK Select R Acc ‡@	867.95	...	+4.86	1.69
UK Smaller Cos R Acc ‡@	1971.88	...	+6.46	1.72
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Health Acc ‡@	3206.00	...	+5.00	...
Jap Smlr Co Ac @	62.56	66.09	-0.19	0.30
Managed Inc ‡@	138.30	...	...	...
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	214.30	...	+1.40	4.57
UK Growth Inc ‡@	214.20	...	+1.10	0.94
UK Select Opps Inc ‡@	1875.00	...	+12.00	1.53
UK Sml Cos Inc ‡@	273.70	...	+1.00	0.19

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Gen Inc ‡@	1079.00	...	-2.00	...

UK/Global Investment Companies

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Acc A ‡@	234.70	...	...	1.18
Extra Inc Inc B ‡@	86.74	...	+0.24	1.16
Global Gwth Acc R ‡@	288.10	...	+4.10	0.52
Japan Acc A ‡@	162.30	...	+2.20	1.51
Pac Gwth Acc A ‡@	479.80	...	-17.60	...

CIS UNIT MANAGERS LTD
08457 46 46 46

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Gwth ‡@	232.20	...	+1.30	1.59
Sus Leaders ‡@	844.90	...	+6.00	1.43
UK Growth ‡@	670.00	...	+5.10	2.17
UK Income ‡@	212.70	...	+1.10	4.65

CLOSE FUND MANAGEMENT LTD
0870 606 6402

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Beacon Inv ‡	84.88	...	+0.35	...

Dealing: 020 7426 6232

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Winchester ‡	3973.61	...	+45.88	1.02

COLUMBIA THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS
Enqs: 0870 601 6183 Dealing: 0870 601 6083
Share Class 1 - Retail

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bd ‡@	49.99	...	-0.31	...
Emerging Mkts ‡@	116.50	...	-0.50	...
Euro Gwth & Inc 1 ‡@	1418.00	...	+4.00	0.08
Extra Inc Bond ‡@	45.07	...	...	1.83
FTSE All-Shr Track ‡@	455.20	...	+3.40	2.16
Global Gwth SC1 ‡@	352.80	...	+2.80	...
High Inc Trst @	11.53	12.14	+0.03	5.15
Max Inc Bond ‡@	44.28	...	...	4.40
Multi Man Caut ‡@	70.41	...	...	3.18
Multi Man Distr ‡@	60.44	...	...	3.37
North Amer ‡@	1035.00	...	+7.00	...
Pacific Gwth ‡@	477.40	...	...	0.04
Strategic Bd ‡@	199.30	...	+0.30	1.41
UK Equity ‡@	3446.00	...	+2.00	1.27
UK Gwth & Inc Acc 1 ‡@	658.50	...	...	...
UK Gwth & Inc Dist ‡@	234.70	...	...	...
UK Smaller Cos ‡@	1051.00	...	+4.00	1.54

EDENTREE INV MGMT LTD
0800 358 3010

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Resp & Sust Sterling Bond ‡	85.54	...	+0.27	4.24
Resp & Sust Eurp Eq ‡	357.70	...	+4.50	2.36
Resp & Sust Glbl Eq ‡	362.60	...	+4.10	0.96
Resp & Sust Mgd Income ‡	121.30	...	+0.70	4.53
Resp & Sust UK Eq ‡	215.70	...	+1.90	1.51
Resp & Sust UK Equity Opps ‡	293.60	...	+1.30	1.54

FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL
Private Clnts 0800 414161 Broker Dlgs 0800 414181

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Spec Sits ‡@	2623.00	...	+49.00	...
American ‡@	6355.00	...	+127.00	...
Euro Opps ‡@	627.90	...	+6.20	0.35
European ‡@	3869.00	...	+33.00	0.60
Extra Income ‡@	22.57	...	-0.04	6.17
Glob Spec Sits ‡@	6352.00	...	+83.00	...
Global Focus ‡@	3193.00	...	+41.00	...
International ‡@	149.50	...	+0.20	0.08
Japan ‡@	636.80	...	-0.20	0.45
Moneybldr Bal ‡@	42.95	...	+0.08	4.10
Moneybldr Glob	327.60	327.60	-0.10	0.21
Moneybldr Gwth ‡@	76.12	...	-0.95	...
Moneybldr Inc ‡@	28.90	...	-0.06	5.01
Moneybldr UK Ind ‡@	142.06	...	+0.53	3.32
Special Sits ‡@	4971.00	...	+10.00	2.55
Wealthbuilder	69.75	72.18	+0.53	...

HALIFAX INVESTMENT FUND MGRS LTD
01296 386 386
Authorised Inv Funds
Share Class `C

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corporate Bond ‡@	33.97	...	+0.11	3.56
Ethical ‡@	131.50	...	+1.70	0.17
European ‡@	128.10	...	+1.20	1.72
Far Eastern ‡	123.30	...	+0.60	3.12
Fund of Inv Tst ‡@	150.70	...	+0.70	0.70
Intl Gwth ‡	149.00	...	+1.10	1.20
Japanese ‡	83.22	...	+0.34	1.19
North Amer ‡	182.90	...	+1.60	0.30
Smaller Cos ‡@	112.00	...	+0.40	1.59
Special Sits ‡@	50.20	...	+0.51	1.04
UK Equity Inc ‡@	101.40	...	+0.80	3.87
UK FTSE 100 IT ‡@	78.31	...	+0.66	2.43
UK FTSE All-S IT ‡@	87.61	...	+0.69	2.44
UK Growth ‡@	92.97	...	+0.74	2.49

HSBC GLOBAL ASSET MGMT (UK) LTD
Enq: 0845 745 6123 Dlg: 0845 745 6126 Mon-Fri 8-6
HSBC Index Tracker Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Amer Ind Acc ‡@	1139.62	...	+10.63	1.05
Amer Ind Inc ‡@	903.25	...	+8.43	2.08
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	1359.89	...	+2.73	2.33
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	847.30	...	+1.70	2.39
FTSE 100 Ind Acc ‡@	309.97	...	+0.86	3.09
FTSE 100 Ind Inc ‡@	136.27	...	+0.38	3.18
FTSE 250 Ind Acc ‡@	308.91	...	+1.50	3.35
FTSE 250 Ind Inc ‡@	184.17	...	+0.90	2.84
FTSE All-S Acc ‡@	784.44	...	+6.03	3.15
FTSE All-S Inc ‡@	383.40	...	+2.95	3.23
Jap Ind Acc ‡@	166.62	...	+3.15	1.61
Jap Ind Inc ‡@	127.36	...	+2.41	1.65
Pac Ind Acc ‡@	542.01	...	+8.35	3.12
Pac Ind Inc ‡@	329.18	...	+5.07	3.23

HSBC Investment Funds (OEIC) - Retail Share Class

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced Acc ‡@	266.32	...	+1.62	1.33
Balanced Inc ‡@	151.95	...	-0.14	...
Corp Bd Acc ‡@	282.87	...	+0.96	3.73
Corp Bd Inc ‡@	104.36	...	+0.35	3.81
Gilt & Fd Int Acc ‡@	497.78	...	+1.62	1.19
Gilt & Fd Int Inc ‡@	74.17	...	+0.24	1.58
Income Acc ‡@	794.24	...	+6.27	3.95
Income Inc ‡@	312.05	...	+2.46	4.08
Monthly Inc Acc ‡@	313.41	...	+0.77	3.21
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	133.82	...	+0.80	4.04
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Acc ‡@	160.66	...	+1.11	3.77
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Inc ‡@	68.05	...	+0.47	3.89
UK Gth & Inc Acc ‡@	160.66	...	+1.11	3.77
UK Gth & Inc Inc ‡@	68.05	...	+0.47	3.89

HSBC Specialist Investment Funds (OEIC)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Index Retail Acc ‡@	1139.62	...	+10.63	1.05
American Index Retail Inc ‡@	903.25	...	+8.43	2.08
Asian Gth Acc ‡@	147.77	...	-0.07	...
Asian Gth Inc ‡@	130.99	...	-0.06	...
Chinese Eq Acc ‡@	513.81	...	+0.27	0.40
Chinese Eq Inc ‡@	434.76	...	+0.22	0.34
Euro Gth Acc ‡@	973.97	...	+4.05	0.41
Euro Gth Inc ‡@	817.05	...	+3.39	0.44

IGNIS ASSET MGMT
Dlg: 0141 222 8282

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American Gth Inc @	322.55	340.42	-3.34	...
Balanced Growth @	262.17	276.69	-0.93	1.52
Balanced Growth Acc @	393.13	414.92	-1.40	...
Corporate Bond ‡@	99.69	...	-0.89	4.77
European Growth @	403.88	426.26	-3.57	2.18
European Growth Acc @	475.71	502.07	-4.21	2.24
Glob Gwth @	331.53	349.90	-3.09	0.12
Higher Yield @	83.98	88.64	-0.29	...
Higher Yield Acc @	275.04	290.28	-0.92	...
Japan @	49.06	51.78	-0.03	0.94
Managed @	130.89	138.15	-0.06	...
Managed Trust @	71.96	76.96	+0.17	...
Mngd Pfolio Inc @	95.54	100.84	-0.11	0.58
Pacific Grth @	498.71	526.34	-2.81	1.34
Smaller Comp @	756.24	798.14	+1.64	0.15
Smaller Cos @	628.94	663.79	+1.36	0.21

INSIGHT INVESTMENT FDS MANAGEMENT LTD
Client Servs: 0207 163 4000
Insight Investment Multi-Manager Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Well Bldr Bal Acc ‡@	96.05	...	-0.32	...
Well Bldr Gwth Acc ‡@	93.79	...	-0.36	...

INVESCO FUND MGRS LTD
Dling: 0800 085 8571 Inv Serv: 0800 085 8677
Brkr Serv: 0800 028 2121
INVESCO Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Str Inc N/Trl ‡@	323.57	...	-0.12	...

INVESCO PERPETUAL Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Childrens Acc ‡@	520.71	...	+5.98	...
Corp Bond Acc ‡@	212.05	...	+0.75	3.12
High Income Inc ‡@	338.35	...	+2.56	3.12
Income & Grth Inc ‡@	434.60	...	+3.31	1.71
Income Inc ‡@	1325.80	...	+9.24	3.26
Money Acc ‡@	97.61	...	+0.04	3.80
Monthly Inc Plus Inc ‡@	93.56	...	+0.34	5.81
UK Aggressive Inc ‡@	154.28	...	-0.24	...
UK Growth Acc ‡@	995.89	...	+7.13	...
UK Sml Cos Eqty Acc ‡@	1300.38	...	+0.71	1.44
UK Sml Cos Gwth ‡@	82.54	...	+0.04	...

INVESTEC FUND MGRS
Broker Support and Dealing: 020 7597 1900
OEIC Series i,ii,iii, & iv

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
American A Acc ‡@	813.99	...	-4.78	...
Asia ex Japan A Acc ‡@	720.30	...	+5.83	...
Capital Accumulator A Acc ‡@	231.48	...	-3.81	...
Cautious Managed A Acc ‡@	387.42	...	+0.90	2.14
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡@	236.98	...	+0.55	2.17
Diversified Growth A Acc ‡@	127.92	...	+0.49	0.49
Diversified Growth A Inc ‡@	134.79	...	+0.52	...
Diversified Income A Acc ‡@	330.57	...	+0.74	3.16
Diversified Income A Inc ‡@	66.76	...	+0.15	4.60
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Acc ‡@	119.45	...	+0.55	4.10
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Acc Gross ‡@	125.82	...	+0.20	...
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Inc ‡@	64.37	...	+0.30	5.81
Emerging Mkts Equity A Acc ‡@	160.96	...	+0.91	1.27
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt A Acc ‡@	187.29	...	+0.78	4.38
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt A Inc ‡@	68.22	...	+0.28	6.22
Emrg Mkts Local Curr Debt Gross I Acc ‡@	220.49	...	-0.05	...
Enhanced Natural Resources A Acc ‡@	134.24	...	-1.25	...
Global Bond A Acc ‡@	139.30	...	+4.03	0.82
Global Bond A Inc ‡@	109.33	...	+3.00	0.82
Global Bond I Gross Inc ‡@	1167.00	...	+29.78	...
Global Dynamic A Acc ‡@	193.61	...	+1.95	0.47
Global Energy A Acc ‡@	170.97	...	-1.14	...
Global Equity A Acc ‡@	266.02	...	+0.01	...
Global Franchise A Acc ‡@	339.06	...	-2.30	...
Global Free Enterprise A Acc ‡@	1461.96	...	-1.34	0.23
Global Gold A Acc ‡@	211.05	...	+0.59	0.33
Global Special Situations A Acc ‡@	396.46	...	+0.30	...
Global Special Situations A Inc ‡@	306.06	...	+0.24	0.17
Managed Growth A Acc ‡@	271.80	...	+2.24	1.16
Monthly High Income A Acc ‡@	243.45	...	+0.43	3.54
Monthly High Income A Inc ‡@	63.17	...	+0.01	5.01
Multi-Asset Protector A Acc ‡@	171.46	...	+0.15	0.89
Strategic Bond A Acc ‡@	244.54	...	+0.19	1.96
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡@	119.47	...	+0.09	3.32
Target Return A Acc ‡@	102.03	...	+0.44	0.82
Target Return A Inc ‡@	87.63	...	+0.01	0.87
UK Alpha A Acc ‡@	2821.22	...	+11.40	1.30
UK Blue Chip A Acc ‡@	770.11	...	+3.15	...
UK Smaller Companies A Acc ‡@	4735.28	...	+35.32	...
UK Smaller Companies A Inc ‡@	4222.01	...	+31.49	...
UK Special Situations A Acc ‡@	1779.08	...	+5.62	1.25
UK Special Situations A Inc ‡@	627.99	...	+1.99	1.27

For ISIS Asset Mgmt see F&C Fd Mgmt Ltd (OEICS)

JANUS HENDERSON INVESTORS
Investors Serv: 0800 832 832 Dlng: 0845 946 4646

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
All Stks Credit A Inc ‡@	113.50	...	+0.40	3.10
Asian Div Inc U Trst Inc ‡@	79.26	...	+0.45	4.73
Cautious Man Fd A Acc ‡@	298.20	...	+1.50	3.60
Cautious Man Fd A Inc ‡@	141.60	...	+0.70	3.69
China Opp Fund A Acc ‡@	1003.00	...	+5.10	0.59
Emg Mkts Opps Fd A Acc ‡@	205.50	...	+2.90	0.04
Erpn Grth Fund A Acc ‡@	339.10	...	+1.60	0.67
Erpn Sel Opps Fd A Acc ‡@	2687.00	...	+11.00	0.75
Fix Int Mnthly Inc Fd Acc ‡@	28.95	...	+0.14	4.19
Global Equity Fund Acc ‡@	5186.00	...	+37.00	...
Global Equity Income A Inc ‡@	69.54	...	+0.44	3.04
Global Tech A Acc ‡@	4258.00	...	+53.00	...
Instl UK Idx Opps A Acc ‡@	126.75	...	+0.31	2.97
M-Asset Abs Ret A Acc ‡@	170.30	...	+0.10	1.30
M-Man Active Fd A Acc ‡@	277.30	...	+0.50	1.11
M-Man Inc Grth A Inc ‡@	148.40	...	+0.40	3.59
M-Man Inc Grth Fd A Acc ‡@	198.10	...	+0.60	3.45
Sterling Bond U Trst Acc ‡@	210.80	...	+0.60	2.73
Sterling Bond U Trst Inc ‡@	55.43	...	+0.17	2.78
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡@	95.64	...	+0.56	3.26
UK Abs Ret Fd A Acc ‡@	180.80	...	+0.30	1.66
UK Alpha Fund A Acc ‡@	151.30	...	+1.00	1.50
UK Irsh Sm Co Fd A Acc ‡@	742.50	...	-1.70	...
UK Property A Acc @	264.95	278.15	+0.01	2.63
UK Property A Inc @	105.80	111.07	...	2.68
US Growth Fund A Acc ‡@	2249.00	...	+29.00	...

JP MORGAN ASSET MGMT
OEIC

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Equity Core E Net Acc ‡@	493.40	...	+3.80	3.49

JUPITER UT MGRS LTD
020 7581 3020

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Absolute Return ‡@	31.60	...	...	...
Distribution and Growth ‡@	102.32	...	+1.05	2.45
Emg Euro Opps ‡@	145.34	...	-31.23	...
Euro Special Sits ‡@	492.65	...	+1.29	...
European ‡@	3236.96	...	+16.05	...
Financial Opps ‡@	829.75	...	+0.63	1.26
Income Trust ‡@	522.70	...	+2.61	4.48
Merlin Bal (Acc) ‡@	249.27	...	+0.68	2.50
Merlin Gwth (Acc) ‡@	603.15	...	+0.27	0.31
Merlin Inc (Acc) ‡@	360.02	...	+1.59	3.32
Merlin Wwide (Inc) ‡@	430.81	...	+1.53	...
UK Growth ‡@	266.51	...	+1.52	0.76
UK Special Sits (Inc) ‡@	218.98	...	+1.18	2.36

LEGAL & GENERAL (UT MGRS) LTD
Enquiries: 0870 050 0955 Dealing: 0870 050 0956

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Equity Acc @	2616.00	2639.00	-8.00	...
Equity Dist @	893.80	902.00	-2.70	...
Euro Ind Acc ‡@	599.40	...	+2.70	2.09
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	383.60	...	+1.70	2.14
Fixed Int Acc ‡@	137.20	...	+0.40	...
Fixed Int Dist ‡@	61.93	...	+0.20	3.16
Glob Gwth Acc @	243.90	243.90	-1.30	1.15
Glob Health Acc ‡@	114.80	...	+0.60	0.81
Glob Tech Acc ‡@	132.80	...	-0.30	0.03
Gwth Tst Acc @	106.00	106.50	-1.00	...
High Inc Acc ‡@	133.80	...	+0.40	...
Japan Ind Acc ‡@	79.93	...	+0.38	1.40
Pacific Ind Acc ‡@	216.20	...	+2.30	2.45
UK 100 Ind Acc @	180.90	180.90	+0.90	...
UK Active Opps Acc @	249.90	252.90	-0.10	...
UK Index Acc ‡@	383.20	...	+2.90	3.05
UK Index Dist ‡@	176.10	...	+1.30	3.13
US Ind Acc ‡@	1001.00	...	+2.30	0.68
Worldwide Acc ‡@	368.70	...	+2.70	...

M & G SECURITIES
Enq: 0800 390 390 Dealing Line: 0800 328 3196
Authorised Inv Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Charifund Inc ‡	1508.64	...	+9.44	5.91

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 1

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Euro Smlr Cos Acc ‡	525.29	...	-3.39	...
Euro Smlr Cos Inc ‡	462.50	...	-3.00	0.69

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 2

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Extra Income Inc ‡	689.83	...	+3.57	5.72
Gilt & Fxd Int Inc ‡	71.91	...	+0.27	4.22
Gl Hi Yd Bd Inc ‡	39.81	...	+0.11	6.00
Index Linked Bd Inc ‡	109.70	...	+0.72	0.08
Index Trckr Inc ‡	81.17	...	+0.61	3.76
Short Dated Corp Bd Inc ‡	25.18	...	+0.04	4.93
UK Select A Inc ‡	2867.38	...	+28.54	2.65

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 3

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bd A Inc ‡	33.61	...	+0.13	4.49
Dividend Inc ‡	52.05	...	+0.34	6.26
Recovery A Inc ‡	109.02	...	+1.19	3.76
Sml Cos Inc ‡	338.78	...	+0.89	3.00

Sterling Class A Investment Funds 4

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Episode Allocation A Inc ‡@	144.81	...	+0.93	...

MARKS & SPENCER UNIT TRUST LTD
0808 005 5555

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
High Income	87.11	87.11	-0.10	3.70
High Income Acc	257.30	257.30	-0.20	3.57
UK 100 Comp Acc @	505.80	505.80	+3.80	1.02
UK 100 Cos @	240.50	240.50	+1.80	3.14
UK Select Pflo @	362.30	362.30	+2.50	2.94
UK Selection Port Acc @	773.90	773.90	+5.30	3.26
Worldwide Mgd Acc @	1021.00	1021.00	+2.00	1.44
Wwide Mgd @	586.50	586.50	+1.00	0.74

MORGAN STANLEY INVESTMENT MGMT LTD
Enquires: 0800 0961 962
The Morgan Stanley Funds (UK)
Class A Shares
Equity

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Dev Opp Fund F Acc ‡@	843.59	...	+1.92	...
Dev Opp Fund I Acc ‡@	837.27	...	+1.89	...
Glob Bal Inc F F Acc ‡@	1013.02	...	+4.58	2.40
Glob Bal Inc F F Inc ‡@	910.34	...	+4.11	2.46
Glob Bal Inc F I Acc ‡@	1010.57	...	+4.56	2.36
Glob Bal Inc F I Inc ‡@	908.56	...	+4.10	2.43
Glob Bal Sust F F Acc ‡@	998.03	...	+4.15	1.99
Glob Bal Sust F F Inc ‡@	957.47	...	+3.99	2.02
Glob Bal Sust F I Acc ‡@	995.88	...	+4.14	1.92
Glob Bal Sust F I Inc ‡@	957.16	...	+3.98	1.96
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund F Inc ‡@	1314.62	...	-6.76	3.79
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund I Acc ‡@	1900.57	...	-9.81	3.77
Glob Br Eq Inc Fund I Inc ‡@	1401.02	...	-7.24	3.86
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	1720.82	...	-5.70	0.63
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	14799.91	...	-67.45	0.64
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡@	1631.31	...	-5.20	0.64
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡@	4023.77	...	-18.34	0.64
Glob Ins Fund F Acc ‡@	654.00	...	+2.45	...
Glob Ins Fund F Inc ‡@	654.00	...	+2.45	...
Glob Ins Fund I Acc ‡@	649.11	...	+2.41	...
Glob Ins Fund I Inc ‡@	649.13	...	+2.42	...
Glob Sust Fund F Acc (PH) ‡@	1344.59	...	+1.36	0.42
Glob Sust Fund F Inc ‡@	1420.00	...	-0.31	0.42
Glob Sust Fund I Acc ‡@	1444.22	...	-0.34	0.29
Glob Sust Fund I Acc (PH) ‡@	1339.74	...	+1.36	0.29
Glob Sustain Fund F Acc ‡@	1454.47	...	-0.32	0.42
Stg Corp Bond F F Acc ‡@	128.33	...	+0.42	3.90
Stg Corp Bond F F Inc ‡@	96.60	...	+0.32	3.99
Stg Corp Bond F I Acc ‡@	2724.21	...	+8.80	3.60
Stg Corp Bond F I Inc ‡@	1368.25	...	+4.42	3.71
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F F Acc ‡@	977.11	...	+2.27	3.72
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F F Inc ‡@	892.74	...	+2.07	3.81
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F I Acc ‡@	970.54	...	+2.24	3.54
Sust Fixed Inc Opps F I Inc ‡@	892.46	...	+2.05	3.62
US Adv F F Acc ‡@	1768.86	...	+0.82	...
US Adv F F Acc (PH) ‡@	1005.13	...	+1.85	...
US Adv F I Acc ‡@	1875.23	...	+0.82	...
US Adv F I Acc (PH) ‡@	1048.33	...	+1.91	...

SANTANDER UNIT TST MGRS
08457 413002

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Bal Pfolio Inc ‡@	110.50	...	+0.40	...
Bal Port Gwth Acc ‡@	248.20	...	+0.10	1.91
Equity Inc Inc ‡@	212.30	...	+0.60	4.61
N&P UK Gwth Inc ‡@	182.80	...	+0.10	...
Stkmkt 100 Tkr @	291.70	291.70	+2.50	3.04
UK Growth Acc ‡@	529.40	...	+2.00	2.89
UK Growth Inc ‡@	269.90	...	+1.00	2.96

SCOTTISH MUTUAL INV MNGRS LTD
0141 248 6100

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
European Inc	1777.00	1873.48	+4.40	...
Far Eastern Inc	584.69	617.09	-0.73	...
Intl Growth Inc	380.56	400.59	+0.02	0.75
Japanese Inc	41.85	41.85	+0.43	0.56
Mutual European	2762.93	2908.99	-21.63	...
Mutual Far Eastern	903.38	953.44	+5.13	1.04
Mutual North Am	1983.00	2092.88	+6.23	0.24
Mutual UK Eq	1419.40	1428.80	-10.35	2.59
Nth American Inc	1227.65	1295.67	-7.28	...
UK Equity Inc	562.23	593.38	+1.31	1.56

SCOTTISH WIDOWS UNIT TRUST MGRS
0845 300 2244
Authorised Inv Funds (OEICs)
OEIC A Class
Managed Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Bal Port A Acc ‡@	237.60	...	+0.80	0.01
Caut Port A Acc ‡@	207.10	...	+0.30	...
Caut Port A Inc ‡@	152.00	...	+0.30	...
Opps Port A Acc ‡@	280.20	...	+1.30	...
Prog Port A Acc ‡@	266.60	...	+1.10	...

Overseas Growth Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Eur Sel Gth A Acc ‡@	3692.00	...	+33.00	1.68

Tracker and Specialist Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr A Acc ‡@	429.80	...	+3.50	2.71
UK Trkr A Inc ‡@	206.50	...	+1.60	2.77

UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond A Acc ‡@	296.10	...	+0.60	2.77
Corp Bond A Inc ‡@	105.80	...	+0.20	2.82
Envir Invtr A Acc ‡@	370.10	...	+2.70	2.23
Hi Inc Bond A Ac ‡@	253.10	...	+0.70	5.93
Hi Inc Bond A Inc ‡@	69.98	...	+0.19	6.13
Hi Res A Acc ‡@	417.10	...	+3.00	3.90
Hi Res A Inc ‡@	124.00	...	+0.90	4.01
Safety Plus A Acc ‡@	40.49	...	...	...
Strat Inc A Acc ‡@	202.90	...	+0.40	3.61
Strat Inc A Inc ‡@	84.97	...	+0.15	3.69
UK Gwth A Acc ‡@	221.30	...	+1.90	2.84
UK Sel Gwth A Acc ‡@	2341.00	...	+26.00	1.80

OEIC B Class
Tracker and Specialist Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Trkr B Acc ‡@	475.10	...	+3.90	2.80
UK Trkr B Inc ‡@	205.30	...	+1.70	2.86

UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Corp Bond B Acc ‡@	370.70	...	+0.90	...
Corp Bond B Inc ‡@	136.30	...	+0.30	...
UK Gwth B Acc ‡@	205.60	...	-0.30	...
UK Sel Gwth B Acc ‡@	2481.00	...	...	...

OEIC C Class
UK and Income Investment Funds

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Gth C Inc ‡@	138.50	...	+1.10	3.21
UK Sel Gwth C Acc ‡@	2598.00	...	...	...

STANDARD LIFE INVESTMENTS
0845 279 3003
Investment Funds (OEIC) - Retail Shares

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
AAA Inc CAT Acc ‡@	90.98	...	+0.18	1.77
AAA Inc CAT Inc ‡@	50.09	...	+0.10	1.79
AAA Income Acc ‡@	99.54	...	+0.19	2.16
Amer Eq Gth Acc ‡@	217.10	...	+0.30	...
Corp Bond Acc ‡@	164.20	...	+0.50	3.72
Corp Bond Inc ‡@	52.38	...	+0.18	3.82
Euro Eq Gth Acc ‡@	262.10	...	+3.90	...
Glb Advtg CAT Acc ‡@	162.10	...	+1.40	1.78
Glob Advtg Acc ‡@	213.90	...	+1.70	1.75
Glob Eq Uncstrd Acc ‡@	200.30	...	+1.60	0.04
Higher Inc Acc ‡@	157.60	...	+0.20	5.03
Higher Inc Inc ‡@	46.07	...	+0.06	5.19
Japan Eq Gth Acc ‡@	127.40	...	...	...
Managed Acc ‡@	382.00	...	+0.30	1.68
Select Inc Acc ‡@	91.51	...	...	2.21
Select Inc Inc ‡@	51.26	...	-0.26	2.21
UK Eq Gth Acc ‡@	372.70	...	+1.70	...
UK Eq Hi Alpha ‡@	230.00	...	+1.00	...
UK Eq Hi Inc Acc ‡@	247.90	...	+0.20	...
UK Eq Hi Inc Inc ‡@	65.11	...	+0.06	...
UK Ethical Acc ‡@	213.40	...	+1.30	2.78
UK Opps Acc ‡@	234.40	...	...	...
UK Opps Inc ‡@	211.70	...	...	...
UK Smlr Cos Acc ‡@	782.50	...	+1.80	1.55

SVS BROWN SHIPLEY FUNDS
Enquiries:0141 222 1151

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Balanced A Acc ‡@	147.62	...	+0.89	...
Balanced A Inc ‡@	129.24	...	+0.78	...
Cautious A Acc ‡@	116.17	...	+0.44	...
Cautious A Inc ‡@	97.47	...	+0.37	...
Dynamic A Acc ‡@	372.73	...	+2.95	...
Dynamic A Inc ‡@	331.50	...	+2.62	...
Growth A Acc ‡@	377.29	...	+2.69	...
Income A Acc ‡@	263.77	...	+1.34	...
Sterling Bond Acc ‡@	242.37	...	-0.28	...
Sterling Bond Inc ‡@	97.00	...	-0.11	...

THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS
Client Serv: 0800 0683000
Intermediary Serv: 0800 0684000
Institutional Shares (Class 2) (500000 GBP)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle UK Eq Opps Ins Inc ‡@	132.22	...	...	1.66

Retail Shares (Class 1)

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Threadneedle HY Bd Rtl Inc ‡@	38.10	...	+0.05	4.65
Threadneedle Mthly Etr Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	83.61	...	+0.52	3.80
Threadneedle SterlingCorpBd Ins Inc ‡@	54.20	...	+0.17	3.34
Threadneedle SterlingCorpBd Rtl Inc ‡@	54.10	...	+0.16	3.03
Threadneedle Stg Bd Ret Inc ‡@	41.51	...	+0.18	3.97
Threadneedle Strat Bd Ret ‡@	41.68	...	+0.11	4.05
Threadneedle UK Eq Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	100.29	...	+0.78	3.98
Threadneedle UK Growth & Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	96.26	...	+0.71	3.09
Threadneedle UK Insti Rtl ‡@	194.91	...	+1.65	1.77
Threadneedle UK Mthly Inc Rtl Inc ‡@	70.60	...	+0.44	4.21
Threadneedle UK Rtl Inc ‡@	144.21	...	+0.98	1.69
Threadneedle UK Smaller Coms Rtl Inc ‡@	361.19	...	+2.02	0.32

For Resolution see Ignis

TU FUND MANAGERS LIMITED

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
British	1001.00	1001.00	+6.30	0.91
European	210.70	219.40	+1.00	...

* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return); † Ex dividend; ‡Middle price; . . . No significant data. # Periodic charge deducted from capital; @ Exit charge

British funds

Index-linked

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
384.20	373.57	Tr IL 2½% 24 *	384.20	+ .03	1.41	2.07
99.88	95.63	Tr IL 0⅛% 26	99.59	+ .04	...	0.34
105.68	99.63	Tr IL 1¼% 27	103.81	+ .10	1.32	0.18
101.48	94.64	Tr IL 0⅛% 28	99.72	+ .12	...	0.19
101.18	94.22	Tr IL 0⅛% 29	99.04	+ .14	...	0.32
352.15	327.00	Tr IL 4⅛% 30 *	341.95	+ .62	1.89	0.43
102.04	94.31	Tr IL 0⅛% 31	98.89	+ .25	...	0.28
111.37	102.81	Tr IL 1¼% 32	107.08	+ .31	1.17	0.41
105.97	96.67	Tr IL 0¾% 34	101.48	+ .34	...	0.60
255.16	232.58	Tr IL 2% 35 *	244.83	+ .90	1.00	0.75
97.51	86.94	Tr IL 0⅛% 36	92.48	+ .43	...	0.75
109.84	97.89	Tr IL 1⅛% 37	103.73	+ .48	1.14	0.83
93.98	82.06	Tr IL 0⅛% 39	87.92	+ .52	...	1.00
101.46	87.85	Tr IL 0⅝% 40	93.88	+ .58	...	1.04
92.49	78.66	Tr IL 0⅛% 41	84.94	+ .60	...	1.08
100.75	84.97	Tr IL 0⅝% 42	91.40	+ .69	0.68	1.14
89.69	73.97	Tr IL 0⅛% 44	80.19	+ .68	...	1.25
88.20	71.18	Tr IL 0⅛% 46	77.44	+ .71	...	1.31
101.36	81.61	Tr IL 0¾% 47	88.65	+ .83	0.86	1.31
87.02	68.36	Tr IL 0⅛% 48	74.92	+ .79	...	1.34
95.55	74.48	Tr IL 0½% 50	81.14	+ .88	...	1.37
89.47	67.57	Tr IL 0¼% 52	74.23	+ .90	...	1.36
118.33	89.61	Tr IL 1¼% 55	97.15	+1.14	1.42	1.36
85.40	61.33	Tr IL 0⅛% 56	68.49	+ .96	...	1.32
84.89	60.17	Tr IL 0⅛% 58	67.14	+ .99	...	1.33
93.41	65.01	Tr IL 0⅜% 62	72.12	+1.11	...	1.31
85.48	56.59	Tr IL 0⅛% 65	63.27	+1.11	...	1.26
85.44	55.84	Tr IL 0⅛% 68	62.19	+1.16	...	1.25
90.76	57.30	Tr IL 0⅛% 73	64.24	+1.30	...	1.07

Longs (Over 15 years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
110.65	97.75	Tr 4¾% 38	102.41	+ .44	4.64	4.52
68.96	58.95	Tr 1⅛% 39	63.46	+ .31	...	4.55
104.41	91.74	Tr 4¼% 39	96.54	+ .39	4.40	4.57
104.06	90.94	Tr 4¼% 40	95.89	+ .42	...	4.61
65.96	55.47	Tr 1¼% 41	59.92	+ .34	...	4.62
89.38	76.53	Tr 3¼% 44	81.51	+ .39	...	4.70
106.98	92.93	Tr 4½% 42	98.07	+ .45	4.59	4.66
92.46	78.97	Tr 3½% 45	84.07	+ .39	...	4.71
86.07	65.49	Tr 0⅛% 51	71.98	+ .85	...	1.37
54.44	43.31	Tr 1¼% 51	47.40	+ .31	...	4.69
95.61	79.70	Tr 3¾% 52	84.98	+ .45	...	4.72
56.99	45.42	Tr 1½% 53	49.50	+ .33	...	4.69
58.53	46.56	Tr 1⅝% 54	50.74	+ .34	...	4.67
104.47	87.03	Tr 4¼% 55	92.44	+ .49	4.60	4.71
59.81	47.33	Tr 1¾% 57	51.46	+ .33	...	4.62
101.27	83.11	Tr 4% 60	88.56	+ .46	...	4.66
35.11	25.35	Tr 0½% 61	28.93	+ .23	...	4.37
71.88	57.02	Tr 2½% 65	61.67	+ .38	...	4.57
92.27	74.17	Tr 3½% 68	79.76	+ .49	...	4.57
53.52	40.77	Tr 1⅝% 71	44.54	+ .34	...	4.43
43.26	31.56	Tr 1⅛% 73	35.20	+ .31	...	4.30
95.12	79.19	Tr 3¾% 53	84.52	+ .45	...	4.73
103.20	88.06	Tr 4¼% 46	93.48	+ .43	4.55	4.72
54.50	44.13	Tr 0⅞% 46	48.34	+ .29	...	4.69
61.84	50.63	Tr 1½% 47	54.98	+ .33	...	4.71
64.47	52.73	Tr 1¾% 49	57.13	+ .34	...	4.70
103.39	87.41	Tr 4¼% 49	92.99	+ .46	4.57	4.72
45.18	35.01	Tr 0⅝% 50	38.99	+ .29	...	4.66

Mediums (5-15 years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
101.63	95.72	Tr 4 ⅛% 27	99.13	+ .11	...	4.46
92.93	86.03	Tr 1¼% 27	90.99	+ .13	...	4.27
103.26	96.63	Tr 4¼% 27	99.97	+ .15	4.25	4.26
87.89	80.26	Tr 0⅛% 28	85.89	+ .14	...	4.23
92.76	84.91	Tr 1⅝% 28	89.78	+ .16	...	4.15
112.23	104.85	Tr 6% 28	107.58	+ .18	5.58	4.17
87.00	78.59	Tr 0½% 29	84.25	+ .17	...	4.19
87.56	79.16	Tr 0⅞% 29	84.15	+ .18	...	4.14
82.30	73.68	Tr 0⅜% 30	78.93	+ .19	...	4.11
108.84	100.56	Tr 4¾% 30	103.57	+ .22	4.59	4.13
79.41	70.82	Tr 0¼% 31	75.84	+ .21	...	4.14
83.29	74.53	Tr 1% 32	79.12	+ .22	...	4.18
106.47	97.27	Tr 4¼% 32	100.69	+ .25	4.22	4.15
98.51	88.88	Tr 4 ⅛% 27	92.93	+ .27	...	4.22
78.94	69.76	Tr 0⅞% 33	74.46	+ .27	...	4.24
108.46	97.71	Tr 4½% 34	101.57	+ .31	4.43	4.31
71.97	62.36	Tr 0⅝% 35	67.19	+ .30	...	4.34
106.09	94.63	Tr 4¼% 36	98.76	+ .36	4.30	4.38
78.76	68.31	Tr 1¾% 37	72.96	+ .33	...	4.46
99.47	87.49	Tr 3¾% 38	92.34	+ .40	...	4.50
91.67	85.12	Tr 0⅜% 26	90.62	+ .08	...	4.41
95.10	89.51	Tr 1½% 26	93.94	+ .07	...	4.38

Shorts (under 5 years)

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/-	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld
99.63	94.79	Tr 1% 24	97.04	+ .12	...	3.91
96.99	92.80	Tr 2% 25	96.51	+ .04	...	4.69
99.21	95.02	Tr 3½% 25	98.19	+ .04	...	4.78
93.02	87.71	Tr 0⅛% 26	92.82	+ .06	...	4.43
95.71	91.28	Tr 0⅝% 25	95.66	+ .04	...	4.70
101.79	99.24	Tr 5% 25	100.14	+ .02	4.99	4.87
96.78	92.14	Tr 0¼% 25	96.78	+ .05	...	4.65
99.35	96.82	Tr 2¾% 24	99.35	+ .01	...	4.49

* maturities having an eight-month indexation lag.

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Petrofac shares on brink of suspension after results delay

Emma Powell

The pressures on Petrofac have grown after it warned that it would miss its next bond payment and had delayed the release of its annual results.

Shares in the oilfield services group, which has been battling a cashflow crunch, fell sharply, closing down 7½p, or 34.1 per cent, at a record low of 14¾p last night, after it said that it would fail to make its next bond payment, which is due on May 15.

However, a group of bondholders representing about 41 per cent of the outstanding notes said they would not take any action until the end of June, while Petrofac attempts to restructure its debt and sell non-core assets.

The Jersey-based company, which at its peak was a FTSE 100 constituent, had been expecting to collect advance payments on new contracts secured last year, but these have been delayed as it struggles to secure performance guarantees needed from its banks to unlock the payments.

Obtaining performance guarantees, a form of project financing received up front, has become more difficult throughout the industry as banks become more reluctant to finance oil and gas work.

The distressed state of Petrofac's balance sheet has compounded the challenge for the company.

Covid caused project delays, but Petrofac also entered the pandemic while attempting to recover from the financial and reputational damage caused by a long-term Serious Fraud Office inquiry. That investigation culminated in the payment of $104 million in penalties in 2021 after the company had been found to have failed to prevent bribery.

Its core engineering and procurement division is expected to incur an additional loss of $130 million relating to negotiations over its Thai Oil Clean Fuels project, in addition to $180 million losses already forecast for the business.

Meanwhile, the asset solutions business may only break even on an operating basis. Net debt stood at $583 million at the end of last year.

Discussions are continuing over how much additional funding the company needs and on what form a restructuring would take.

A group of bondholders has said that it will provide $300 million in new funding to help to secure performance guarantees for some of Petrofac's existing contracts. This also would require the conversion of a "significant portion" of the company's debt being converted to equity. Debt-for-equity swaps can wipe out existing shareholders.

René Médori, 66, the chairman of Petrofac, said the board was "focused on arriving at a comprehensive refinancing solution as quickly as possible".

With the restructuring yet to be finalised, a delay in auditing the company's accounts means that it will fail to publish results for last year by a deadline of the end of this month.

The shares are set to be temporarily suspended on May 1, until the results are published, which is expected to be before the end of May.

The suspension of the shares and announcement of further losses in both engineering and construction and the asset solutions divisions pointed towards a "very harsh financial restructuring for shareholders", Guillaume Delaby, an analyst at Bernstein, the broker, said.

Petrofac designs, builds and operates installations for oil and gas companies and others in the energy sector. It was listed in London in 2005 and its market value has slumped from a peak of just over £6 billion a decade ago to £80 million.

PETROFAC

Petrofac, which designs, builds and operates installations for energy companies, has faced a cashflow crunch and warns it will fail to make its next bond payment

Investor says Elementis head must roll

Tom Saunders

A shareholder in Elementis has written to the company's chairman calling on him to replace Paul Waterman as its chief executive and accusing the leadership team of demonstrating a "continued failure of judgment".

Gatemore Capital, an activist investor that holds about four million shares, or 0.6 per cent of the speciality chemicals company, wrote an open letter before Elementis's annual meeting today claiming that the company had "lost its direction".

Steve Raineri, the senior vice-president portfolio manager of Franklin Mutual, the largest Elementis shareholder, said that Gatemore's recommendations, which also include an acceleration of a cost-saving programme and a portfolio review, were "among the scenarios" it had considered and "could represent a step in the right direction towards the full realisation of shareholder value". However, Raineri reiterated that the American fund manager's position remained that the company should launch a formal sales process. It has a 9.8 per cent stake in the business.

The share price of the London-listed Elementis has fallen by about 30 per cent since Waterman, 59, was appointed as chief executive.

Elementis said it believed that shareholder value was best driven by delivering on the "substantial actions that are currently being progressed at pace throughout the business" to meet its 2026 targets. Shares in Elementis closed up 5p, or 3.6 per cent, at 142¼p.

BHP and Vale offer to settle Brazil disaster

Emma Powell

BHP and Vale have offered a payment of just over $25 billion to settle action taken by Brazilian federal authorities over the Samarco dam collapse, one of the worst environmental disasters in the country's history.

The collapse of the Fundao "tailings", or mining waste, dam at the Samarco iron ore joint venture of BHP and Vale in Minas Gerais province in 2015 unleashed 40 million cubic metres of toxic waste, destroyed villages and killed 19 people.

BHP and Vale, the Brazilian iron ore miner, have proposed a $25.7 billion payment to settle the claim brought by Brazil's federal public prosecution office. Almost $15 billion will be paid over an extended period, "well in excess of a decade", to the federal government, the states of Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo and the relevant municipalities; BHP said.

"The negotiations between the parties are ongoing and no final agreement has been reached on the settlement amount or terms," it said.

The settlement also will include $7.7 billion already made in remediation and compensation payments and $3.6 billion to be distributed by the Samarco joint venture and the Renova Foundation to those affected.

BHP is in the midst of a £31 billion bid for Anglo American, which would make the Australian group the world's largest copper producer.

BHP's London-listed shares closed flat at £22.50 last night.

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Buy, sell or hold: today's best share tips

A bigger offer may await tech firm

DARKTRACE

Market cap	Deal premium
£4.2bn	on share 20%

Traders and investors have mourned Darktrace's take-private deal as a loss for London's stock market as yet another technology company flees into the arms of an American private equity firm. This is certainly a change in tune, given that the market hasn't been particularly forgiving towards the technology company during its short life on the London Stock Exchange.

Darktrace, which specialises in artificial intelligence-powered cybersecurity and which counts the likes of KPMG and Rolls-Royce among its clients, was listed in 2021 amid a frenzy for new technology businesses. Its shares jumped as high as 946p that year, but hit a nadir of 239p in early 2023.

Thoma Bravo's offer of $7.75 per share, equivalent to 620p, places it at a 20 per cent premium to its closing price on April 25 and a 44 per cent premium to its volume-weighted average in the three months leading up to the offer.

Frankly, shareholders are better off getting this investment out of London. The stock market is — rightly or not — spooked by Darktrace's connection to Mike Lynch, one of its early backers who is facing fraud charges in the United States over the sale of his Autonomy software company to Hewlett-Packard.

He denies all charges, but analysts continue to believe that his legacy is one of the main reasons Darktrace trades at such a wide discount to its American peers.

The Lynch case has stalked Darktrace. Its executive team includes several former Autonomy staff, including Poppy Gustafsson, its boss, who worked in Autonomy's finance department from 2009 to 2011. It will not be lost on investors that the takeover would be beneficial for Lynch, who together with his wife owns just under 7 per cent of the company, worth £290 million under the terms of the deal.

The shadow of Lynch's legacy has drawn the attention of several short-sellers over the past three years, not least from the ShadowFall and Quintessential Capital Management hedge funds. The latter's questions about the accuracy of Darktrace's financial statements prompted the company to hire an independent auditor last year. EY gave it the all-clear, but reputational damage can be hard to shake off.

So long-term shareholders may agree that the London stock market is not the best home for Darktrace. The real question then is: how opportunistic is Thoma Bravo's offer?

A 20 per cent premium is decent and nothing to balk at, certainly not when in comparison with some of Thoma Bravo's previous takeovers. When it bought Sophos, the London-listed cybersecurity business, in 2020, it did so at a 37 per cent premium. It paid a 48 per cent premium for SailPoint, the American identity security company, in 2022, bought Proofpoint, a cybersecurity and compliance player, at a 36 per cent premium in 2021 and McAfee for a 22 per cent premium, also in 2021.

That being said, Darktrace was at such a wide discount to its American peers that even this smaller premium brings its valuation much closer in line with the industry average.

Thoma Bravo's deal places it at an enterprise value to earnings before tax, interest and other charges multiple of 28 for 2024, compared with an average of 32.5 among its cybersecurity peers listed in New York, according to an analysis by Liberum, the broker.

This figure is inflated by CrowdStrike, whose share price has more than doubled in the past year. Excluding this company, the average falls to 27.3.

Yet these companies trade on much larger scales. CrowdStrike had a net income of $89.3 million on revenues of $3 billion last year. Palo Alto made $440 million on $6.9 billion in sales.

This compares with Darktrace's operating profit of $36.5 million on $545 million in sales.

Both businesses also spent considerably more than Darktrace in research and development, at $768 million and $1.6 billion, respectively. Darktrace spent $47.9 million. This may hurt eventually, especially given the highly competitive nature of cybersecurity, made even tougher by the presence of Microsoft.

But Darktrace has channelled its focus on growth via its sales team: in the first half of the year alone it spent $135 million on sales and marketing, 41 per cent of the top line. This strategy has helped to keep momentum going. Its latest quarterly update showed annual recurring revenue of $731 million, up 23.5 per cent compared with the same period last year. However, this has decelerated: annual recurring revenue is expected to be about 23 per cent this year, by no means weak but much lower than the 42 per cent recorded only two years ago.

Still, some shareholders may ask Darktrace's board to wait for a higher offer, given that the business has made good progress this year. A rival bid is not completely out of the question: indeed, analysts at Panmure Gordon believe that Thoma Bravo's offer could trigger interest from a trade buyer such as Palo Alto. The company had $1.8 billion in cash as of the end of January and has form for acquisitions, though normally at a smaller scale.

Still, Thoma Bravo seems the most obvious buyer. The firm has more than $138 billion under management, including $45 billion or so in cybersecurity. It should be able to help Darktrace to achieve the scale that it needs globally, especially in the United States.

Analysts at Panmure Gordon believe the offer does not price in any significant synergies that Thoma Bravo could capture, especially from sales and marketing, if it combined Darktrace with one of its other cybersecurity assets. They target the shares at 650p, about 8 per cent higher than the close on Friday.

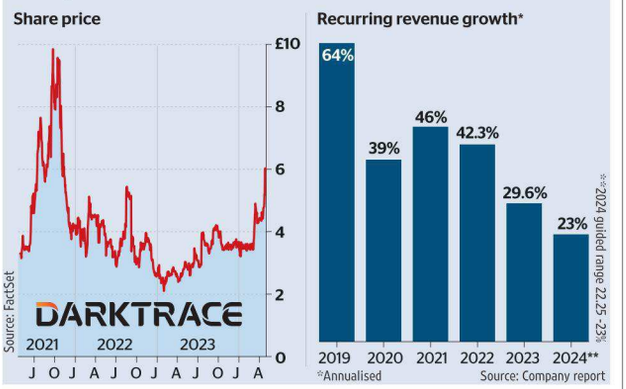
Last night, the shares were at 603½p, which suggests the market does not share the view that a rival bid is coming.

Darktrace's board said last week that it had reviewed and rejected previous unsolicited offers from Thoma Bravo, but that this one fairly reflected the company's value and that it intended to unanimously recommend the offer.

Thoma Bravo has already secured binding agreements for a stake of 14.4 per cent from KKR, Summit Partners and employees. The acquisition is expected to be completed during the third or fourth quarter of this year.

This is not an especially knockout deal for shareholders, but, given the London market's attitude towards Darktrace for the past three years, it seems a sensible one.

Security investment



ADVICE Hold
WHY Offer values it more in line with peers, private market will be more forgiving toward Lynch connection

NEWS IN BRIEF

Money pours into UK

More than £1 billion of foreign direct investment flowed into Britain's financial and professional services sector last year. The investment was spent on 222 projects, creating about 7,000 jobs. According to the City of London Corporation, the governing body of the Square Mile, London kept its position as a top global financial centre in attracting FDI in the financial and professional services sector over five years, with 697 projects, ahead of Singapore on 590, Paris with 420, New York on 321 and Hong Kong with 258.

German inflation rises

Inflation in Germany has risen unexpectedly in the past month, driven by the food and energy sectors, preliminary figures show. It climbed to 2.4 per cent on an annual basis in April from 2.3 per cent in the previous month, according to the harmonised price index from Destatis, Germany's statistics agency. Analysts had expected it to hold at 2.3 per cent. The European Central Bank is considered likely to lower interest rates from a record high of 4 per cent in June.

Domino's sales recover

Domino's Pizza topped expectations for first-quarter sales and profit as consumers in America tapped into offers through the pizza chain's loyalty scheme. Same-store sales rose by 5.6 per cent in the three months, beating forecasts of a 4 per cent increase. Domino's said there was a higher percentage of single-user transactions through Uber Eats than through its own channels. Its shares rose 5.6 per cent, or $28.05, to $527.12 in New York last night.

Ocado boss bonus deal

The boss of Ocado has had a potential bonus deal worth almost £15 million approved, despite criticism. At the online retailer's annual meeting, 19.4 per cent of shareholders who voted were against a bonus package for Tim Steiner, chief executive and co-founder of the company. He is set to receive a £824,570 salary, but could get a bonus worth up to £14.84 million if Ocado's share price reaches £29.69 in three years' time. The shares closed at 355½p, up 2¼p, or 0.7 per cent.

PRICES

Major indices

New York	
Dow Jones	38,386.09 (+146.43)
Nasdaq Composite	15,983.08 (+55.18)
S&P 500	5,116.17 (+16.21)
Tokyo	
Nikkei 225	37934.76 n/a
Hong Kong	
Hang Seng	17746.91 (+95.76)
Amsterdam	
AEX Index	882.27 (-0.36)
Sydney	
AO	7906.60 (+69.20)
Frankfurt	
DAX	18118.32 (-42.69)
Singapore	
Straits	3282.05 (+1.95)
Brussels	
BEL20	3886.76 (+11.89)
Paris	
CAC-40	8065.15 (-23.09)
Zurich	
SMI Index	11332.36 (-11.96)
DJ Euro Stoxx 50	4981.09 (-25.76)
London	
FTSE 100	8147.03 (+7.20)
FTSE 250	20084.79 (+260.63)
FTSE 350	4481.53 (+11.44)
FTSE Eurotop 100	4019.02 (-8.27)
FTSE All-Shares	4435.18 (+11.59)
FTSE Non Financials	n/a
techMARK 100	6794.30 (+79.07)
Bargains	n/a
US$	1.2567 (+0.0059)
Euro	1.1719 (+0.0037)
:SDR	0.98 (+0.00)
Exchange Index	82.30 (-0.04)
Bank of England official close (4pm)	
CPI	133.00 Mar (2015 = 100)
RPI	383.00 Mar (Jan 1987 = 100)
RPIX	378.10 Mar (Jan 1987 = 100)
Morningstar Long Commodity	n/a
Morningstar Long/Short Commod	n/a

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	Jun 24	96.140	96.570	96.070	96.490	211448	637112
	SEP 24	96.010	96.010	95.990	96.610	12	335
3-Mth Sterling	Jun 24						
	Sep 24						
	Dec 24						
	Mar 25						
	Jun 25						
3-Mth Euribor	Jun 24	96.285	96.305	96.285	96.300	100024	696411
	Sep 24	96.510	96.555	96.510	96.545	138730	462987
	Dec 24	96.710	96.765	96.705	96.760	133067	512565
	Mar 25	96.885	96.945	96.885	96.940	85708	360364
	Jun 25	97.035	97.095	97.030	97.090	78898	354228
3-Mth Euroswiss	Jun 24						
	Sep 24						
	Dec 24						
	Mar 25						
FTSE100	Jun 24	8181.0	8209.5	8154.5	8163.5	68912	548979
	Sep 24	8151.0	8184.5	8151.0	8192.0	3	150
FTSEurofirst 80	Jun 24				6591.0		
	Sep 24				6650.5		

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Commodities

ICIS pricing (London 6.00pm)

Crude Oils ($/barrel FOB)

Brent Physical	88.80	-0.78
BFOE(Jun)	88.60	-0.79
BFOE(Jul)	87.58	-0.66
WTI(Jun)	82.99	-0.87
WTI(Jul)	82.38	-0.72

Products ($/MT)

Spot CIF NW Europe (prompt delivery)

Premium Unld	975.00	979.00	-8.00
Gasoil EEC	782.25	783.25	-6.50
3.5 Fuel Oil	479.00	479.00	-1.00
Naphtha	680.00	694.00	-8.00

ICE Futures

Gas Oil

May	787.00-786.50	Aug	790.25-790.00
Jun	788.75-788.50	Sep	791.50-791.25
Jul	789.75-789.50		Volume: 683360

Brent (6.00pm)

Jun	88.55-88.53	Sep	86.02-86.00
Jul	87.49-87.48	Oct	85.31-85.29
Aug	86.75-86.73		Volume: 2040605

LIFFE

Cocoa

May	8080-8037	Jul	5675-5056
Jul	7555-7524	Sep	5566-4868
Sep	7014-6979	Dec	5237-4872
Dec	6324-6299		
Mar	5628-5624		
May	5334-5293		Volume: 98157

RobustaCoffee

May	4500-4350	Jan	3869-3858
Jul	4140-4137	Mar	3900-2658
Sep	4068-4065		
Nov	3980-3971		Volume: 16424

White Sugar (FOB)

Reuters		Mar	543.30-542.80
		May	542.60-539.00
Aug	573.20-572.90	Aug	541.60-526.40
Oct	552.50-552.00	Oct	536.70-527.30
Dec	543.80-543.30		Volume: 70342

DAVE BENETT/GETTY IMAGES

Monsoon owner's sales fall

The owner of Monsoon and Accessorize warned of persistent trading challenges as it announced a fall in annual sales (Isabella Fish writes).

Nick Stowe, 54, the chief executive of Adena Brands, which also owns East, said that over the past year the retail group had "faced an increasingly difficult trading landscape that has persisted into the current financial period". Group sales at Adena Brands fell by 4 per cent to £248 million in the year to August 26, 2023, compared with a year earlier. The group earned £20 million in the year, £4.4 million less than the previous 12 months.

The clothing and accessories retailer said that after a year of "strong demand post-Covid in 2022, the group's sales and costs were impacted by a more challenging environment in 2023. A mix of lower demand driven by the cost of living, weaker online sales post-Covid, unseasonable weather in the summer and cost inflation made the period a difficult one to navigate."

Monsoon Accessorize, as it was known, collapsed during Covid. It was bought out of administration by Peter Simon, the founder, who had started the business selling coats on a market stall in west London in the 1970s. One of his daughters, Zara, above, became a jewellery designer and launched her first collection called Z by Accessorize. Before it went into administration, the group had about 230 stores. It now has 150 stores in the UK.

The day's biggest movers

Company	Change
Playtech Expands in Czech Republic	14.1%
Frasers Announces £80 million share buyback	3.1%
Prudential Positive read-across from sector peer	2.4%
Hipgnosis Songs Fund Agrees takeover bid	0.4%
AstraZeneca Progress on drug treatments	0.3%
NatWest Pares back last week's gains	-1.6%
Convatec Extends losses	-1.8%
Ashtead Investor nerves ahead of capital markets day	-2.1%
Moonpig Follow-through selling from investor dumping shares	-2.3%
JD Sports Fashion Downgrade from Barclays	-3.0%

Change in rating weighs heavily on JD Sports

***Emma Taggart* Market report**

The big acquisition by JD Sports Fashion last week may have cheered the stock market, but it certainly didn't impress Barclays. The bank thinks the retailer's purchase of Hibbett Sporting Goods, an American rival, for $1.1 billion has the potential to increase risk and it believes that concentrating on JD's core business would have been a better move.

Its analysts warned that investors were nervous about JD Sports' ability to deliver against expectations and noted that poor performance from Nike had weighed on its shares.

The bank downgraded shares in JD Sports to "equalweight" from "overweight" and cut its price target to 140p from 165p. It was the biggest loser on London's leading index, closing down 3½p, or 3 per cent, at 116½p.

Early gains and a new record intraday high gave way to a disappointing close for the FTSE 100. After reaching 8,189.14 points in morning trading, the index slipped to close up by only 7.2 points, or 0.1 per cent, at 8,147.03. It was the eighth rise in nine sessions.

Frasers Group, the owner of Sports Direct and a long-time rival to JD Sports, was among the big risers after it announced a new £80 million share buyback plan. Shares in the retailer rose by 24½p, or 3.1 per cent, to 820½p.

Prudential climbed, too, by 17½p, or 2.4 per cent, to 741½p, in a sector read-across from AIA Group. The Hong Kong-based, Asia-focused insurer reported positive results, prompting its shares to advance by 6.1 per cent on the Hang Seng.

A positive note on the grocery industry from HSBC boosted **Tesco**, which rose by 3p, or 1.1 per cent, to end the day at 292p. Analysts at the bank praised the growth of Tesco's popularity and improvements to its customer loyalty efforts. It added that the trend in consumers favouring discounters such as Aldi and Lidl was changing and claimed that Tesco would benefit from the shift in customer behaviour.

Shares in **Entain** were buoyed by news that the gambling group had agreed new terms for two loans. It finished up 34p, or 4.3 per cent, at 818¼p.

HSBC rose 4½p, or 0.7 per cent, to 668p as investors awaited Tuesday's trading announcement, while shares at **St James's Place** added 9½p, or 2.2 per cent, to 444¾p before its first-quarter update. **NatWest**, which reported strong annual results on Friday, lost momentum after an eight-day run to shed 5p, or 1.6 per cent, to 302½p.

The more domestically focused FTSE 250 rose 42.8 points, to 0.3 per cent, to 19,882.59 as UK-based companies benefited from a stronger pound. **Playtech** topped the FTSE 250 leaderboard after it announced that it had expanded into the Czech Republic, with shares in the gambling technology provider climbing 63½p, or 14.1 per cent, to 514p.

Also among the risers was **Hipgnosis Songs Fund**, which agreed to a $1.57 billion takeover offer from Blackstone, the American asset manage that tops an offer made last week from Concord, a rival suitor. Shares in the music catalogue business edged up ½p, or 0.4 per cent, to 104¼p as investors think Concord may put in another bid.

On Aim, the junior market, **Eagle Eye Solutions** rose 10p, or 2.1 per cent, to 480p after the digital promotions company said it had secured a one-year contract with Tesco for its AI-powered platform. An upbeat quarterly update from **Yellow Cake** boosted shares in the uranium investment company, which added 20p, or 3.2 per cent, to 650½p.

Wall Street report

Apple and Tesla shares led indices higher ahead of tomorrow's Federal Reserve rate decision. The Dow Jones industrial average rose 146.43 points, or 0.4 per cent, to 38,386.09 and the S&P 500 was up 16.21 points, or 0.3 per cent, at 5,116.17.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Storms blow Jadestone to loss

Lower oil prices have dented annual revenues at Jadestone Energy and have sent the company to a loss.

The energy minnow reported a pre-tax loss of $102.8 million for 2023. Revenue slid to $309.2 million, down by 25 per cent from $421.6 million in the previous year.

The Asia Pacific-focused business also narrowed its production forecasts for 2024 after its Australian assets were affected by cyclones.

Paul Blakelely, the chief executive of Jadestone Energy, said the loss was "partly as a result of the challenges at Montara and lower realised oil prices". The Montara project, 430 miles west of Darwin, is best known for a 2009 spill that was one of Australia's worst oil disasters. Jadestone bought the project in 2018.

Storms affected oil production from Jadestone in Australia

Jadestone reported a realised oil price per barrel of $87.34 last year, down significantly from $103.85 in 2022. Lower production levels from its oilfield in Montara reduced the volume of oil produced by the company last year.

However, Jadestone Energy is hopeful that its Akatara gas processing facility is nearing completion and will become a key asset for the business.

The shares fell ¾p, or 2.7 per cent, to 27½p last night.

London Grain Futures

LIFFE Wheat (close £/t)

May	183.00	Jul	172.00	Nov	205.85
Jan	unq	Mar	unq	Volume: 1087	

London Metal Exchange (Official)

Cash	3mth	Dec 22
Copper Gde A ($/tonne)		
9930.0-9935.0	10040.0-10041.0	10160.0-10170.0
Lead ($/tonne)		
2176.5-2177.5	2210.0-2212.0	2270.0-2275.0
Zinc Spec Hi Gde ($/tonne)		
2881.0-2882.0	2896.0-2897.0	2900.0-2905.0
Alum Hi Gde ($/tonne)		
2536.0-2536.5	2567.0-2568.0	2680.0-2685.0
Nickel ($/tonne)		
19105.0-19115.0	19320.0-19330.0	20365.0-20415.0
Tin ($/tonne)		**15mth**
32625.0-32675.0	32500.0-32550.0	31940.0-31990.0

Gold/Precious metals (US dollars per ounce)

Because of a technical issue, the gold fix prices are from Friday.

Bullion: Open $2335.82

Close $2345.48-2345.80 **High** $2346.22

Low $2322.85

AM $2349.80 **PM** $2343.10

Platinum $ (£)

Silver $27.41 (£21.81)

Palladium $ (£)

European money deposits %

Currency	1mth	3mth	6mth	12mth
Dollar	0.13	0.20	0.29	0.55
Sterling	4.20	5.30	4.74	0.81
Euro	0.10	0.15	0.20	0.50

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks 5.25 ECB Refi 4.50 US Fed Fund 5.25-5.50

Halifax Mortgage Rate (SVR) 8.74

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.7097-8.7397	8.7397-8.7411	134ds	393ds
Euro	1.1721-1.1683	1.1720-1.1719	10pr	30pr
Montreal	1.7077-1.7152	1.7148-1.7150	6ds	18ds
New York	1.2508-1.2568	1.2567-1.2568	2pr	6pr
Oslo	13.756-13.813	13.806-13.809	95ds	251ds
Stockholm	13.646-13.727	13.724-13.729	198ds	597ds
Tokyo	193.63-200.28	196.61-196.64	95ds	262ds
Zurich	1.1402-1.1445	1.1437-1.1438	39ds	114ds

Premium = pr Discount = ds

Dollar rates

Australia	1.5222-1.5223
Canada	1.3646-1.3646
Denmark	6.9547-6.9553
Euro	0.9325-0.9326
Hong Kong	7.8262-7.8269
Japan	156.45-156.47
Malaysia	4.7650-4.7700
Norway	10.985-10.988
Singapore	1.3590-1.3592
Sweden	10.918-10.927
Switzerland	0.9101-0.9102

Other Sterling

Argentina peso	1101.2-1101.2
Australia dollar	1.9130-1.9132
Bahrain dinar	0.4701-0.4771
Brazil real	6.4232-6.4270
Euro	1.1719-1.1720
Hong Kong dollar	9.8347-9.8363
India rupee	104.85-104.85
Indonesia rupiah	20387-20393
Kuwait dinar KD	0.3857-0.3881
Malaysia ringgit	5.9922-6.0010
New Zealand dollar	2.1017-2.1035
Singapore dollar	1.7078-1.7081
S Africa rand	23.399-23.410
U A E dirham	4.6099-4.6102

Exchange rates

	Bid	Change
Australia $	1.913	
Canada $	1.713	+0.01
Denmark Kr	8.735	+0.03
Euro	1.171	
Hong Kong $	9.821	+0.07
Hungary	458.166	-0.42
Indonesia	20397.535	+197.40
Israel Shk	4.717	-0.05
Japan Yen	196.622	+0.63
New Zealand $	2.102	
Norway Kr	13.799	+0.05
Poland	5.055	+0.01
Russia	117.328	+2.12
S Africa Rd	23.390	-0.05
Sweden Kr	13.715	+0.07
Switzerland Fr	1.143	
Turkey Lira	40.652	+0.20
USA $	1.255	+0.01

Rates supplied by Morningstar

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Business Equity prices

Dividend yields Please note dividend yields are supplied by Morningstar. The yield is the sum of a company's trailing 12-month dividend payments divided by the last day's closing share price.
12-month high and low High/low prices for UK equities are based on closing prices. Investment trust high and low prices are based on intra-day figures.

Automobiles & parts

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
395⅜	151	Aston Martin Lag	156	+ 4		2.6

Banking & finance

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
236⅝	136⅛	Abrdn‡	147	+ ⅞	10.0	...
9¾	3⅜	Acuity RM♦	3½	...		-0.4
2837	2029	**Admiral**	2733	+ 34	2.8	22.6
26	10½	ADVFN♦	10½	...		-2.6
332½	249	AJ Bell	324	+ 12½	3.4	19.6
27637	22466⅞	Aon Corpn	22466⅞	- 247⅜	...	22.8
1105	877½	Arbuthnot Bkg♦‡	1060	- 5	4.3	23.4
9½	4½	Argo Group♦	5½	...		2.5
244	166¼	Ashmore	190⅝	+ 4½	9.0	13.1
1551⅛	1180⅛	Aus New Z	1467	+ 4⅛	...	12.2
496½	369⅛	**Aviva**‡	467⅞	+ 4	7.2	12.5
407½	260½	Banco Santander‡	406	- 7½	2.9	7.2
5380	2650	Bank of Georgia	5380	+ 20	5.0	4.8
203⅝	129⅛	**Barclays**	203⅝	- ⅝	3.9	7.5
⅛	...	Blue Star Capital♦	...	...		0.6
512½	304	BP Marsh&Ptnrs♦‡	494	...	1.3	13.6
15⅛	6¼	Braveheart Inv♦	6½	...		2.7
...	...	Brewin Dolphin	515	+ 1	...	28.1
289½	166⅞	Bridgepoint‡	233⅜	+ 7⅛	3.8	25.9
38	24½	Cenkos Secs♦	29	...	...	5.9
286	250	Chesnara‡	254½	+ 2½	9.5	-7.4
...	...	City of Lon Gp♦	10	+ 1	...	-0.6
450	301	City Lon Inv Gp	341	+ 1	9.7	11.8
976½	299⅛	Close Bros	477¾	+ 9⅜	14.4	5.0
273½	89⅛	CMC Markets	273½	- ½	1.7	73.9
1190⅜	783	Commerzbk	1173	- 31⅛	1.4	8.3
1320¾	778⅞	Deutsche Bk	1289⅜	- 121⅞	1.8	5.3
225¾	133⅞	Direct Line Ins‡	187½	+ 3	2.1	...
68	40	EFG-Hermes Hldg	55¾	...		6.4
180	145	EPE Special Opps♦	170	- 5		4.6
1179¼	947¾	FBD	1173¾	...	7.2	7.1
87½	46½	Fiske♦	77½	+ 2½	0.3	15.5
70	47	Frenkel Topping♦	53½	...	1.9	28.1
1374	796	Georgia Capital	1346	+ 14		2.5
1120	670	Gresham House♦	1100	- 20	...	30.5
490	335	H&T Group♦	427	+ 1	3.8	13.6
55½	39½	Hansard Global	50¾	- ¼	8.7	10.5
927	690⅜	Hargreaves Lansdown	785½	+ 30½	5.5	14.0
182½	115	Helios Under♦	167½	...	1.7	32.7
668	571⅝	**HSBC**	668	+ 4½	7.3	7.4
778	611	IG Group	747	+ 10	6.1	10.1
836	368½	Impax♦	458½	+ 14	6.2	15.3
2124	1246	**Intermed Capital**	2032	- 16	3.8	26.2
131	96	IPF‡	104	- 2	9.7	5.4
148	115⅜	International Public P'ship‡	126¾	+ 2⅜		23.5
539	406	Investec	519	+ 6½	6.4	7.0
340	283	Investment Co	320	+ 1		39.7
61⅜	43½	IP Group	49	+ ⅛	2.6	1.8
160½	46½	Jarvis Securities♦	62½	- 3½	11.3	4.4
130	73½	Jupiter Fund Mgmt‡	79	+ 2⅝	9.0	2.9
107½	68⅛	Just Group‡	104½	+ 1½	2.0	67.0
689	538	Lancashire Holdings	604	+ 18	2.0	5.8
256¼	205¾	**Legal & Gen**‡	237½	+ 3	8.6	32.6
...	...	Liberty Group	502⅝	- 2⅝	...	...
866	523½	Liontrust	684	+ 15	10.7	8.5
44	27	Livermore Invs♦	31¼	+ 1¼		...
53⅞	39¾	**Lloyds Banking Group**‡	51⅞	- ⅜	5.2	6.9
24½	15¼	LMS Capital	18½	...		-4.0
9674	7986	**Lond Stk Ex Gp**‡	8790	- 144	1.2	63.6
238¾	183	**M&G**‡	199¼	...	9.8	16.0
277¾	202	Man‡	255	+ 8	5.2	16.7
26	15	Manx Fin♦	21	...	1.7	7.0
2⅛	1	Marechale Cap♦	1	...		-2.6
798	490	Mattioli Woods♦	792	...	3.4	41.2
...	...	Metal Tiger♦	9	+ ¾	...	-8.0
125½	28¾	Metro Bank	34⅝	+ ½		49.5
1826⅞	1309⅛	Nat Aust Bk	1757⅛	+ 5¾	...	14.3
302½	176⅛	**NatWest**‡	302½	- 4⅞	5.5	6.1
343	204	Numis♦	343	...	...	...
536½	280¾	Onesavings Bank‡	418⅜	+ 14⅜	7.9	7.3
576	377½	PayPoint	525	+ 12	3.7	12.3
...	...	PCF Group♦	⅞	+ ¼	...	-0.4
591¾	441½	**Phoenix**‡	493¾	+ 8¾	10.8	...
1211½	687⅜	**Prudential**‡	741⅜	+ 17½	2.2	7.4
3	¾	Quantum Blockchain♦	1	...		-3.2
110⅞	71¼	Quilter‡	110⅞	+ 3¼	4.8	35.7
62	2	Randall & Quilter♦	2	...		...
2005	1458	Rathbone Grp‡	1646	+ 38	5.4	22.6
⅝	⅛	RiverFort Global Opps♦#	⅛	...	1.6	-1.8
234	162½	Rockwood Strategic	234	+ 2		6.0
2570	1800	S & U	1900	- 10	6.8	7.0
1⅛	⅜	Sancus Lending Grp♦	½	...		-0.1
46½	39½	Schroder REIT	44	+ ⅛		-4.0
485⅝	358¾	**Schroders**‡	358¾	+ 5⅜	6.0	14.8
1239½	402	**St James Place**‡	444¾	+ 9⅜	5.4	...
758¾	573¾	**Stand Chart**‡	683¾	+ 2⅜	3.1	8.2
12	4½	Starvest♦	11⅝	+ ⅛	...	-1.9
60	24½	STM Group♦	57½	...	1.0	59.2
4352¾	3623¾	Sun Life Can	4143¾	+ 18	4.3	13.2
8¼	3¾	Tavistock Inv♦	4¼	...	1.6	...
3460	2300	TBC Bank Group	3460	+ 10	4.9	5.9
8½	1⅝	Tern♦	2⅝	...		-0.9
51½	44	Thames Ventures VCT	44	...		-5.6
42⅝	24½	Time Finance♦	41¼	+ ½		9.7
230	46⅛	Vanquis‡	48	...	12.5	0.9
1275	1060	Volvere♦	1225	...		16.0
23	3½	WH Ireland♦	4¼	...		-0.6
26½	20½	Walker Crips Grp	21	+ ½	2.4	16.6
4891⅝	2939¾	Wells Fargo	4788⅝	+ 14¼	...	12.6
1441⅜	1042¼	Westpac	1346¼	+ 3⅝	...	13.0
29½	23⅜	Worsley Investors Ltd	24¾	...		9.3
42771	35515⅜	Zurich Fincl	38878½	+ 385	...	16.6

Investment companies

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld %	Dis(-) or Pm
2899	1704¾	**3I Group**	2875	- 4	2.8	40.6
339½	276⅝	3i Infrastructure	333½	+ 7	3.3	-7.9
1440	1126	Aberforth Smlr	1440	+ 28	3.2	-12.8
1255½	967	Alliance	1236	+ 2	1.9	-3.4
400	323	Asia Dragon Tr	372	+ 4	1.5	-16.1
210	160	Athelney Trust	177½	...	5.0	-6.5
239	185	AVI Global Trust	237½	+ 1	1.4	-10.2
245	175	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	205	+ 2	0.8	-10.8
100	75⅜	BaillieGifford Eu Gr	95½	- ⅜	2.3	-14.6
802	633	Baillie Gifford JpnTr	717	- 2	1.1	-12.7
150¾	110⅜	Baillie Gifford SN	113	...	...	-16.3
174½	141⅜	Baillie Gifford UK Gr	163	+ ½	1.9	-15.1
84½	60	Bal Comm Prop	79⅛	...	4.6	-27.7
113⅛	91½	Bankers Inv Trst	112⅛	+ ⅛	2.0	-10.8
429	325⅜	BH Macro	359	+ 4	...	-13.5
1034	715	Biotech Growth	952	+ 15	...	-5.2
128¾	104	BlckRck Com Inc	123	+ 1½	3.4	-10.8
159⅞	131¼	BlckRck Fro Inv	148	- 1½	3.8	-8.1
653	457½	BlckRck Grt Euro	619	- 1	1.0	-5.6
195	170	BlckRck Inc & Gwth	187½	+ 1	3.5	-12.2
1420	1146	BlckRck Smlr	1412	+ 12	2.7	-11.7
201	172½	BlckRck Sustain Amer	198½	+ 1	3.5	-10.1
626	503	BlckRck Throgmorton	592	+ 3	2.2	-10.3
662	490	BlckRck Wld Min	603	+ 21	5.9	-6.3
1360	1065	Brown Adv US sm	1300	...	...	-11.9
1350	964	Brunner	1310	- 5	1.6	-4.9
3700	3110	Caledonia Inv	3560	+ 10	1.2	-35.4
426¼	371½	City of Lon IT	413	+ 3½	4.9	-2.2
91	60	Crystal Amber Fd♦	77	...	22.6	-31.2
534	406	CT Priv Eq Ord	460	+ 9	3.9	-35.8
96	72	CT Property	73½	- 1¼	4.1	-14.5
327	266½	CT UK Cap&Inc	323	+ 1	3.6	-3.5
93	75	CT UK HIT B	83¼	...	...	-8.7
89	71	CT UK HIT	84	- 4½	5.9	-4.9
590	448⅝	Dunedin Entp	484	...	5.7	-22.3
727	612⅝	Edinburgh IT	722	...	3.6	-9.5
157¾	120¾	Edin Wwide	142⅛	+ 1½	...	-11.7
335	273⅛	EP Global Opp	294	- 4	1.3	-21.6
95⅝	73	European Assets	86⅛	+ ½	5.6	-11.7
888	740⅞	European Opp Trust	861	+ 11	0.3	-10.6
1008	825⅝	**F&C Invest Tr**	996	+ 4	1.3	-10.8
536	473⅝	Fidlty Asian Val	526	+ 8	2.6	-9.6
237½	181⅛	Fidelity China Sp	221½	+ 3½	2.7	-10.9
740¼	568	FdltyEmrgMkt	682	+ 6½	2.0	-11.9
396	311½	Fidelity European Trust	390½	+ ½	2.0	-4.9
187	151	Fidlty Jap Tru	175½	+ 1	...	-10.5
298	252	Fidlty Spec Val	298	+ 3	2.8	-9.5
923	788⅝	Fins Gwth & Inc	824	...	2.0	-7.4
93⅝	59½	GCP Infrastructure	76½	+ 2¼	6.3	-35.8
36⅝	22½	Gldn Prosp Prc Mtl	32⅞	+ ⅞	...	-18.7
1455	127¼	Greencoat UK Wind	142⅛	+ 2	6.3	-16.9
224	161	Hansa Investment	210	...	0.8	-43.2
218	160	Hansa Inv Co 'A'	203	- ½	0.8	-45.9
2450	2015	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	2310	+ 20	...	-42.8
185	149	Hend Euro Foc	182	- ½	2.1	-11.7
179	136	Hend High Inc	158	- 1	6.0	-8.2
832	626	Hend Smlr	795	+ 6	2.9	-14.4
2160	1590	Herald	2100	+ 25	...	-12.4
499	329⅝	HgCapital Trust	480	- ½	1.3	-4.6
156¾	111	HICL Infra	124	...	5.2	-22.6
...	...	Highbridge Tactical	...	...	...	61.1
1276	1038	ICG Ent Tr	1212	+ 2	1.6	-38.7
421½	331⅛	Impax Env Mkts	386	- 2½	1.0	-11.0
349	283	Invesco Asia Tr	314	+ 2	4.2	-12.3
174½	154½	Invesco Bond Inc	168½	- ½	6.9	2.1
148	112	IPST Bal	142½	...	2.5	-9.4
276	222	IPST Gbl Eq	268	- 1	2.3	-9.8
106	88	IPST Managed	106	...	0.9	-6.6
176⅛	144½	IPST UK Eq	160½	- 4	3.7	-13.3
992	694	JPM American	964	- 5	0.7	1.7
364	309¼	JPM Asia Gro & Inc	359	+ 1	3.9	-9.3
303½	189	JPM China	228½	+ 5	5.2	-10.6
714	622⅞	JPM Claverhs	708	- 4	4.8	-4.7
804	514	JPMorgan Emerg E & ME & Africa	648	- 1¾	1.0	158.6
109¼	96	JPM Em Mkts	104¾	+ ½	1.4	-11.7
471½	352⅝	JPM Euro disc	468½	+ 3½	2.0	-10.4
137¾	116	JPM GEMI	134	+ 2	3.5	-11.2
566	447	JPM GG&I	546	...	3.2	1.3
949⅛	774	JPM Indian	945	...	...	-19.4
337	283⅝	JPM Jap Sml Co	302½	+ ½	3.8	-12.8
553	435	JPM Japan	507	...	1.1	-8.7
1430	995	JPM Mid Cap#	1220	- 1⅜	2.9	-14.6
107	90¾	JPM Multi-asset G&I#	101¾	- ⅜	5.7	...
319½	229	JPM Smllr Co	316	+ 4¾	3.3	-13.4
234	182	Keystone Positive Change Inv plc	218	+ 1	0.1	-11.5
855	718	Law Debenture	853	+ 4	3.9	-1.0
128½	103¼	Lowland	122	...	3.5	-12.5
254	179	Majedie	242	- 4	2.6	-9.0
399	294⅝	M Currie Port	370	- 2	1.0	-1.7
96	76	Marwyn Val In	93½	...	4.9	-52.2
230	177⅛	Mercantile IT	227½	+ 3	3.0	-12.1
583⅝	476	Merchants	560	+ 5	5.3	-0.2
785	665	Mid Wynd	768	- 2	1.2	-1.6
1160	880	Monks Inv Tst	1154	+ 8	0.2	-11.1
144½	106	Montanaro Eur Sml	137½	...	0.6	-13.9
881	766½	Murray Income Trust	864	+ 1	4.3	-9.7
270½	218½	Murray Int	253	+ 1½	4.1	-10.8
80⅛	50	Nb Global Floating	56	+ 3⅜	7.0	-33.3
390	338	Pacific Assets	365	+ 5	0.5	-12.6
336	245	Pantheon Int	327	+ 1½	...	-32.6
4207	2670	**Pershing Sq**	3932	+ 2	0.5	-26.7
487	457	Personal Assets	485	...	1.5	-0.7
3050	1916⅝	Polar Cap Tech	2935	+ 10	...	-9.8
150	87	Prem Glb & Inf	92½	...	6.7	-14.9
130⅛	95½	Renewables Inf	101⅜	+ 2⅞	5.7	-24.0
2030	1696	RIT Cap Ptnr	1972	+ 22	...	-28.0
1045	510	Riverstone	914	+ 2	...	-26.9
464	382	Schroder TotRt	439	+ 7	2.3	-7.8
513¼	456	Schrd Asia Pac	508	...	2.1	-12.3
312	247	Schrod Inc Gwth	281	+ 3	4.5	-10.9
263	204⅜	Schrod Jap Gwth	253	+ 2	1.8	-9.9
594¾	482	Schrod UKMid	568	+ 8	3.1	-14.8
15⅞	11⅞	Schroder UK PP Tr	12	- ¼	...	-47.6
543	450	Scot American	506	+ 4	2.8	-6.7
899⅛	608	**Scot Mtge**	833⅛	- 1⅛	0.4	-9.1
227	207	Secs Tst Scot	215	...	3.0	-0.4
88¼	71	Sequoia Eco	79½	...	7.4	-13.5
261½	211½	Temple Bar	261	+ 1½	3.7	-7.5
157⅛	140⅜	Tplton Emg Mkt	157⅛	+ ¾	2.7	-15.2
162	128⅛	The Glbl Smaller	160½	...	1.3	-9.8
¼	...	Tiger Royal and Inv♦	⅛	...	...	122.2
345	252⅞	TR Property	312	+ 3	4.4	-6.1
87	74⅛	Troy Inc&Gth#	79¾	+ ¾	3.7	-0.3
150	103	Utilico Ord	107	...	3.2	-42.5
238	203¼	Utilico Emerging Mkt	228	+ 2	3.1	-18.5
660	508	Vietnam Ent Inv	583	- 1	...	-16.9
255½	209	Witan	255½	+ 3½	2.2	-8.4
341	286	Ww Health	341	+ 2	0.8	-9.5

Construction & property

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
189	137½	Alumasc♦	179	- 1	5.7	8.1
10⅜	6⅜	Aseana Props	9½	+ 2¾		-2.4
52½	39⅜	Assura	41⅝	+ ¼	7.9	-7.4
2⅛	¾	Aukett Swanke♦	1⅜	...		-2.0
393⅜	295¾	Balfour Beatty	369	+ 7¾	2.9	8.8
566⅜	392¼	**Barratt Devs**‡	457	+ 2	6.1	20.3
2860	1921	Bellway	2558	+ 12	5.5	14.1
4940	3773	**Berkeley**	4750	+ 48	1.9	11.2
1239	910	Big Yellow Group	1104	+ 20	4.2	10.8
540	290	Billington Hldgs♦	540	...	2.8	9.6
250	170	Boot (Henry)	187½	+ 4	3.7	12.8
396½	304½	BREEDON‡	367½	+ 3	3.7	11.8
413	291¾	Br Land	391⅛	- 1½	5.9	-3.4
160	125	Caledonian Tst♦	125	...		20.5
60¾	49½	Cap & Regnl‡	49½	- ½	11.4	-9.4
2450	2300	Cardiff Prop	2300	...	0.9	21.9
8	1¾	Carecapital♦#	1⅞	...		-0.2
161¼	118½	Clarke T	160½	- ¾	3.4	11.5
...	...	Countryside Partner	229¾	+ 14	...	16.7
18	11½	Craven House♦	15⅞	...		-0.1
2434	1779	Derwent London‡	2076	+ 34	3.8	9.2
4⅞	3⅝	Dolphin Capital♦	4¾	...		-5.0
28	15½	First Prop♦	19	...	1.3	...
40½	33	Fletcher King♦	35	...	2.1	16.0
60	34¼	Foxtons Group‡	58⅜	- ½	1.5	17.1
273	175	Galliford Try	245	- 2	4.6	17.7
444	261½	Genuit Group	444	+ 9	2.8	28.8
540	350	Gleeson (MJ)	502	- 3	2.5	17.2
1008	751	Grafton‡	966⅝	+ 14⅝	3.8	11.2
274¾	217½	Grainger	261	+ 2	2.5	74.5
534½	356⅛	Great Portland	399	+ 8½	3.2	-3.0
29¾	20⅞	Hammerson‡	27½	+ ½	5.5	...
139	95⅜	Harworth Gp‡	131	...	1.1	11.3
425	275	Heath (Samuel)♦	275	...	4.3	8.1
305½	185	Helical PLC	208	- 1½	5.6	-1.4
890	587½	Highcroft Invs	587½	- 12½	...	-2.5
176⅜	120⅞	Ibstock	150	+ 2⅜	6.0	19.4
225	188	James Halstead♦	202	+ 2	4.0	19.8
1106	635	Keller	1094	+ 28	3.6	9.0
6520½	4768¾	Kingspan Group	6214⅛	- 221⅞	0.5	20.5
725⅛	559⅜	**Land Sec**	653	- 1	6.0	-7.9
77	37	Life Science Reit‡	39⅛	...		-4.6
17½	8½	Lon & Assoc	11½	+ 1		-3.2
203⅛	156⅜	Londonmetric Property	197	+ ¾	4.9	...
62	31⅜	Macau Prop Op	42	...		-2.1
314⅜	198	Marshalls	268½	+ 5	4.7	31.2
104	75	Michelmersh♦	97½	+ ½	4.5	10.2
2⅜	½	Mindflair PLC♦	½	...		-0.5
2345	1676	Morgan Sindall‡	2265	...	5.0	9.0
11800	9500	Mountview	9600	...	5.2	14.0
90¾	72	NewRiver REIT	74¼	- 1½	8.7	-9.9
260	200	Palace Capital	245	+ 4	6.2	-4.6
315	255	Panther Securities♦	300	...	4.0	3.7
1485	960⅜	**Persimmon**	1326	+ 8	6.0	16.6
50	30	Plaza Cent	50	...		-1.4
107	85½	Primary Health Properties‡	92½	+ ⅝	7.4	46.2
34¼	27½	Real Estate Invs♦	33½	...	7.4	27.0
688½	427⅜	Redrow	647½	+ 3	3.8	10.0
990½	653	Safestore	783½	+ 20½	3.9	8.5
1094	763½	Savills‡	1082	+ 18	1.9	17.9
6	3¾	Secure Property♦	4	...		...
907¾	679⅛	**Segro**‡	855⅜	+ ½	3.2	...
44⅜	26½	SIG	26½	- ½		-6.9
70⅜	45	SigmaRoc♦	65	+ ¼		34.2
97⅞	78¼	Sirius Real Estate	97⅛	+ 1¾	5.4	32.2
168½	117½	Smart (J)	125	...	2.5	...
40	17	Steppe Cement♦	19	...		6.7
148¾	99⅝	**Taylor Wimpey**‡	135	+ ⅝	7.1	13.6
147	110	Town Centre	141	...	3.5	5.5
958	692⅛	Travis Perkins‡	761½	- 4½	2.3	42.7
170¼	123½	Tritax Big Box Reit	151½	+ 1⅞		-2.9
69¼	44	Tritax Eurobox	54⅞	+ 1		...
396½	235	Tyman‡	378	...	3.6	20.2
1057	847	**Unite**‡	933½	+ 1½	3.8	10.8
1250	636	Vistry Group	1193	+ 19	2.7	16.6
109⅜	69⅝	Warehouse REIT	79⅞	+ ⅛		-2.9
604	454⅜	Workspace Grp	505	+ 14	5.3	-4.3
730	630	Wynnstay Props♦	685	- 5	3.5	15.7

Consumer goods

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
1¼	⅝	Agriterra♦	¾	...		-0.2
36½	22	Airea♦‡	30½	- 1	1.7	11.3
880	652	Anglo-Eastern	766	+ 4	4.2	8.2
226	168½	Animalcare♦	226	+ 9	2.0	...
2731	1825½	**AB Foods**	2654	+ 19	1.8	19.7
123	81	Bakkavor Group‡	119½	+ 4½	6.3	12.9
587	451½	Barr (AG)	572	+ 6	2.3	19.0
1⅞	⅛	Bidstack Group♦#	⅛	...		-0.3
36	20½	Brand Architekts♦	27½	...		-1.3
3007	2267	**Brit Amer Tob**‡	2345	+ 19	9.9	-3.6
936	785½	Britvic	874½	+ 4½	3.5	18.2
2607	1122	**Burberry**	1155½	+ 3½	5.4	9.6
167⅜	123⅜	C&C Grp	167	+ 1⅛	2.9	-9.9
5½	1	Capital Metals♦	4⅜	...		...
149¾	93¾	Carr's Grp	134	+ ¼	6.0	...
378	238	Character Grp♦	277	...	6.8	15.4
1560	1000	Churchill China♦	1200	+ 25	2.7	16.0
2576	2065	**Coca Cola HBC**	2576	+ 6	2.5	17.1
805	655	Colefax♦	805	...	0.6	9.3
4260	3100	Cranswick	4255	- 35	1.9	18.1
...	...	Devro	329	...	...	17.8
3724½	2685½	**Diageo**	2769½	- 6½	2.9	18.8
¾	⅜	Distil♦	½	...		-6.8
882	670	Evans (M.P.)♦‡	834	+ 10	5.4	10.9
110	89	Finsbury Food♦	110	+ ½	...	13.1
11700	9125	Games Workshop‡	9790	+ 190	4.3	23.1
1552⅜	1121¾	Glanbia‡	1494	...	2.0	14.8
134¾	68¾	Greencore	133	+ ⅛		18.4
297	172	Headlam	176	- 1	8.5	18.3
927	623	Hilton Food	913	+ 5	3.4	74.2
38½	14½	Hornby♦	33½	+ ½		-6.4
2000	1580	**Imperial Brands**	1824	+ 12½	8.1	7.2
1⅜	1	J Lewis Hford♦	1¼	+ ¼	...	7.9
8418⅛	6149⅝	Kerry Gp‡	7000½	+ 281⅝	1.4	19.7
123	25⅜	McBride	111	+ ½		10.9
260	100	Mulberry Group♦	111	+ 3½	0.9	35.9
1200	882	Nichols♦‡	998	+ 4	2.8	30.3
195	135½	Norcros	183½	+ 4½	5.7	10.9
347¼	235¾	Origin Ents♦	281⅝	...	5.0	8.9
8⅞	4¼	Pittards♦#	5⅜	+ 1	...	2.5
510	204	Portmeirion♦‡	267	+ 9½	2.1	7.8
¾	⅜	Provexis♦	⅝	...		...
205	82⅞	PZ Cussons	104	+ 2⅜	5.1	...
103½	49⅛	REA	80	+ ¼		-9.6
1¾	⅞	Real Gd Fd♦#	1⅜	...	...	-0.1
250	115	Tandem♦	192½	...	3.4	...
724	370	Treatt	486	...	1.6	27.1
3	1¾	Ukrproduct Gp♦	2⅛	- ¼		18.3
5051	4314	Unilever (NV)	4806	- 19	3.5	21.6
4443½	3694	**Unilever**	4105	- 28	3.5	18.5
722	202	Victoria♦	202	+ 7		-1.4

Engineering

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
...	...	Ass Br Eng#	15	...		-5.1
1232	593	Avon Rubber	1170	- 10	1.9	...
533	269	Babcock	514	+ 3½	0.3	81.5
1369	888⅛	**BAE**	1355	+ 15	2.2	22.4
1675	1200	Braime A N/V♦	1300	- 50	1.0	5.9
2400	1750	Braime Group♦	1850	...	0.7	8.5
580	450	Caffyns	525	...	3.9	11.1
2¾	...	Cap XX Ld♦	...	...		-0.1
419	326	Castings	372	- 4	4.6	10.5
4	1⅛	Chamberlin♦	1⅛	...		5.3
30½	18½	Checkit♦	20½	...		-2.1
770	428	Cohort♦	756	- 2	1.8	23.2
...	...	Crestchic Plc♦	399	...	...	...
1175	710	Dewhurst♦	1175	+ 25	1.3	18.8
237	144	Dialight	161	+ ½		...
1274¼	632⅝	Electrolux 'B'	718⅜	+ 22⅜	...	-4.7
140	58	Feedback♦	92½	- 5		-3.5
670	450	Gooch Hsego♦	556	+ 6	2.3	34.7
6980	3850	Goodwin	6980	- 40	1.6	33.4
2498	1810½	**Halma**	2239	+ 20	0.9	35.6
1966	1320	Hill & Smith	1926	+ 24	1.9	23.9
76	38½	Holders Tech♦	50½	...	...	-3.9
2¼	1	Image Scan♦	1¼	...		14.4
1828	1445	**IMI**‡	1753	+ 7	1.6	23.9
...	...	Inspirit Energy♦	...	...		-1.5
11800	7400	Judges Scientific♦	11200	+ 50	0.7	78.0
101½	61½	LPA♦	64	...	1.5	...
...	...	Meggitt	798¾	+ ⅛	...	...
677½	403¾	**Melrose**‡	641⅜	+ 1	0.7	...
316	218½	Morgan Advanced‡	316	+ 10	3.9	15.4
467½	187½	Mpac♦	440	...		...
935	446	MS Intl♦	910	- 10	1.7	21.8
2855	1712	Oxford Inst	2260	+ 80	0.9	21.9
2180⅜	1482½	Philips El nv	2180⅜	+ 494⅝	...	...
13	5½	PipeHawk♦	5¾	- ¼		-0.8
44½	24	Pressure Tech♦	37½	...		...
4370	2950	Renishaw	4245	+ 50	1.8	31.7
48½	26¾	Renold♦	48½	...		7.1
429	143¼	**Rolls-Royce**	414¾	- 6¼		14.4
¾	⅝	Ross Gp#	⅝	...		-1.6
342⅛	281	Rotork‡	316	+ 4½	2.3	34.3
178½	55	SDI Group♦	55	+ 1		35.4
181⅛	154⅛	Senior	165	+ ½	0.9	22.5
75	50	Severfield	68⅛	+ ½	5.1	10.0
8¾	2⅜	Six Hundred♦#	2⅝	...	...	15.5
1734⅞	1243	SKF B	1669⅝	+ 27⅝	...	15.2
300	190	Slingsby (HC)♦	250	...		4.1
1766½	1526	**Smiths**‡	1617	- 8	2.6	24.3
1440	1025	Solid State♦	1370	...	1.5	20.8
378	257	Somero Enter♦‡	335	+ 3	7.4	9.2
3840	2935	Spectris	3324	+ 50	2.3	10.9
11445	8058	**Spirax-Sarco**‡	8945	- 35	1.7	28.1
38⅜	2⅞	Surface Trsfms♦	2⅞	...		-0.9
4¼	2⅝	Tanfield♦	3¾	...		...
448	329	Thorpe FW♦	398	...	1.6	21.1
...	...	TP Group♦	2⅛	...	...	-3.3
115½	79	Transense Tech♦	93	- 1½		8.7
...	...	Ultra Electrncs	3500	+ 6	...	37.4
497	389¾	Vesuvius‡	485	+ 9	4.8	12.9
335	240	Volex♦	320	+ 7	1.2	18.8
2074	1675½	**Weir**‡	2042	+ 32	1.9	23.1
2440	776	XP Power	1088	+ 4	4.9	...
140	55	Zytronic♦	57½	+ 2½		-3.7

Health

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
...	...	Abcam♦	1226	+ 123	...	...
258	177⅛	AdvancedMedical♦	189	+ 3⅛	1.1	21.1
3	⅜	Allergy Therap♦	2⅞	...		-0.4
31⅜	9¼	Angle♦	14	- ½		-1.6
275	178½	Anpario♦	260	+ 5	4.1	22.8
12070	9501	**AstraZeneca**	12024	+ 36	1.9	40.2
293⅜	196⅛	**Convatec**‡	253⅛	- 4½	1.9	51.2
37	18	Creighton	25	...		15.9
3866	3102	Dechra Pharma	3866	+ 2	...	57.7
1½	...	Deltex Medical♦	⅛	...		-0.8
23	8⅛	e-Therapeutics♦	9⅛	- ⅝		-5.1
122½	84	Eco Animal Hlth♦	110	+ 2½		...
37	23½	EKF Diagnostics♦	28	+ ⅜	4.3	...
65	25½	Futura Medical♦	34¾	- ½		...
2774	1637	Genus	1782	+ 46	1.8	35.2
1711⅛	1316	**GSK**	1670	+ 17	3.5	13.9
⅜	...	Gunsynd♦	⅛	...		-0.4
353	308½	**Haleon**‡	331¼	- 3	1.7	29.3
2205	1722	**Hikma Pharms**‡	1930	+ 17	2.9	28.9
326	173½	Hutchmed China♦	304	+ 14		32.3
3⅜	¾	ImmuPharma♦	2⅛	...		-2.3
1885	1135	Indivior	1463	+ 55		...
56	28½	Inspiration Health♦	31	- ½	1.9	...
20¼	7¼	IXICO♦	8⅛	- ½		-3.3

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
501	493⅜	Mediclinic	501	+½	...	31.3
2⅛	⅝	N4 Pharma◆	¾	...		-1.9
72¾	45¼	NIOX Group◆	70	+3⅜		38.2
94.52	79.21	Novartis	CHF 88.87	-0.63	...	24.1
2⅞	2	Omega Diags◆	2⅛	...		-1.6
14	½	Ovoca Bio◆	¾	...		-0.3
470	166¾	Oxford Biomedica	260	+31½		-4.0
3⅛	⅞	Physiomics◆	1½	...		-3.7
8½	2⅞	Proteome Scies◆	3½	-½		17.1
6570	4110	**Reckitt Benckiser**‡	4457	+34	4.3	14.4
44½	8¾	RUA Life Sciences◆	10¾	...		-1.2
142½	10¼	Sareum Hldgs◆	24½	-1¾		-5.2
1314½	896⅛	**Smith & Neph**‡	984	+3	3.0	41.6
250	207	Spire Hcare	250	+3½	0.2	48.0
12	4⅞	Synairgen◆	6½	...		-1.3
71½	49	Tissue Regenix◆	61½	...		...
23¼	4	Totally◆	5	...	2.4	...
485	327½	Tristel◆	470	-10	2.7	37.5
14⅛	3¼	ValiRx◆	3¼	...		-1.3

Industrials

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
107	50¼	Accsys Tech◆	55⅜	-¾		-2.4
4710⅜	3480⅞	BASF	4187⅞	+19⅝	6.6	...
5155½	2218¾	Bayer DM50	2355⅜	+16⅛	8.7	-9.0
175	82½	Biome Tech◆	82½	-17½		-2.8
2¼	...	Byotrol◆	...	...		-0.2
...	...	Camb Gbl Timber◆	6¾	...	...	-9.0
82	64	Coats Grp	81⅜	-½	2.5	20.2
6980	4076	**Croda**‡	4625	-78	2.3	37.8
930	230	Cropper (James)◆	265	...	2.6	7.7
148¾	97⅞	Elementis	142⅛	+5		...
15½	4¾	Hardide◆	6¼	...		-3.2
1963½	1446½	Johnson Math	1778	+31	4.4	18.4
1706	1298	**Mondi**‡	1533	+24½	4.1	15.5
110	87½	Robinson◆	100	...	5.5	...
413	263⅝	**DS Smith**	351½	+11½	5.2	10.5
687¼	500½	Swire Pacific	662¾	...	...	...
9¼	2	Symph Environ◆	3¼	...		-2.4
880⅞	122½	Synthomer	250	+14½		5.2
2501⅛	2022	Takeda Pharm	2086¼	-½	...	33.3
3¾	⅛	Velocys◆	¼	...	...	-0.2
1676	1230	Victrex	1274	+28	4.7	18.0
507	325	Wynnstay Group◆‡	350	...	4.9	11.5
407	276	Zotefoams	390	+9	1.8	23.4

Leisure

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
130	69	888 Hldgs	86⅜	+2½		-2.2
819	507	Accesso Tech◆	642	+6		48.9
605	520	Best of the Best◆	530	...	...	5.9
1377	634¾	Carnival	1082	+4½		...
135	116	Celtic◆	135	...		13.3
1⅛	¼	Cineworld#	⅜	...	...	...
424½	275⅛	Domino's Pizza‡	333¾	+4	3.1	17.0
1492½	734¾	**Entain**	818⅛	+34	2.2	-5.7
17475	12155	**Flutter Ent**	14910	-25		...
38	28½	Gaming Realms◆	36⅛	+⅝		22.9
290	265	Heavitree◆	265	...	2.0	8.5
155	110	Heavitree A◆	155	...	3.5	5.0
125	45	Hermes Pacific◆	47½	+2½		...
8752	5210	**InterContinental Hotels**‡	7912	-122	1.5	22.8
1⅛	⅜	Minoan Gp◆	¾	...		-5.3
269½	167⅜	Mitch & Butlers	239	+2½		...
178	82¾	On The Beach	149⅜	+⅛		23.6
104⅜	62½	Rank Grp	79⅛	+7⅛		-3.8
68	36½	Restaurant Gp	64¾	...	...	...
63	41	Rotala◆	63	...	...	...
175	...	Sportech◆	84	+9	...	...
281⅛	179½	SSP	200⅛	+3½	1.2	...
3¼	⅞	Tasty◆	1⅛	...		-0.1
130	32½	Tintra◆#	32½	-5	...	-1.7
677	401	Tui	585	+7		4.8
1⅝	1	Webis Holdings◆	1⅛	...		-5.8
847½	613	Wetherspoon JD	739½	+6		22.8
3678	3047	**Whitbread**	3047	+4	2.7	...
1240	946	Young & Co - A◆	976	+12	2.1	20.4
892	592	Young & Co - N/V◆	640	+26		13.3

Media

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
107½	54½	Aeorema Comms◆	64	+1½	4.6	22.2
52	27½	Altitude Group◆	31	+2½		43.0
112	63½	Arcontech Grp◆	104	-1	3.3	12.1
316⅜	188¼	Ascential	314	-¾		...
763⅛	587	**Auto Trader**	696½	+1⅛	1.2	27.5
574	381	Bloomsbury Pub	544	-2	2.5	21.0
6	⅜	Bonhill Group◆	⅝	-⅛	...	-1.5
157½	65	Catalyst Media◆	70	...	38.5	5.6
¾	½	Catenae◆	½	...		-0.2
...	...	DCD Media◆#	100	-30	...	5.0
48½	31	Ebiquity◆	39	...		...
1128	577	Future	650	+41	0.5	6.9
215	132	GlobalData◆	212	+4	2.2	10.5
120¾	120	Hyve Group	120½	...	...	...
175½	107½	IG Design Grp◆	121½	+2½		-5.4
837⅜	680½	**Informa**	798⅛	-2½	1.5	...
81	55¾	ITV‡	72	+1½	7.0	13.8
5	3	Jaywing◆	3⅛	...		-0.2
2¾	½	Live Company Gp◆	½	...		-0.1
172¾	119½	ME Group‡	162⅜	-⅜	4.5	12.2
...	...	Mediazest◆	...	...		-1.5
71	42½	Merit Grp◆	61	...		-5.2
19	1½	Mirada◆	1½	-1⅜	...	...
51½	10½	Mission Group◆	23	...	7.2	...
283¾	208	Moneysupermarket‡	218⅛	+2⅜	5.6	16.1
2152	1333	News Corp A	1942⅜	+12¼	...	61.9
2240⅞	1346⅝	News Corp B	2004⅝	+15½	...	63.8
973	554	Next 15 Group◆	915	+33	1.6	35.6
1042	754	**Pearson**‡	983⅛	-3¾	2.3	18.6
5¾	2⅜	Primorus Inv◆	4¼	...		-5.1
198	107½	Quarto	140	+15	...	5.3
87¼	59	Reach	75½	+4	10.2	11.1
85	60	REACT Grp◆	73½	+2½		...
3504	2434	**Relx**	3293	-36	1.6	34.9
594¾	462⅞	**Rightmove**‡	516½	+2	1.8	21.1
100	58½	SpaceandPeople◆	91	+11		-1.0
255	176½	STV Group‡	235	+8	4.9	9.2
500	152½	System1 Group◆	470	...		47.9
2796½	2275¼	21st Cent Fox Inc A	2513¾	+26⅝	...	18.7
2631½	2073½	21st Cent Fox Inc B	2321¾	+25⅞	...	17.3
...	...	Vela Tech◆	...	...		6.0
380	257	Wilmington	369	+1	2.8	18.1
957	681⅛	**WPP**	817⅛	+4¾	4.8	80.9
112½	75	Zinc Media◆	77½	...		-8.2

Natural resources

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
¾	¼	ADM Energy◆	¼	...		-0.5
...	...	Advance Energy◆#	⅛	...		-0.1
22	11¼	AFC Energy◆	18¼	-⅛		...
48¾	23¾	Afentra PLC◆	48¾	+1¾		...
⅛	...	Alba Mineral Res◆	...	...		11.6
⅜	...	Alien Metals◆	⅛	...		-4.1
83¼	35⅞	Alumina	83¼	+3⅜	...	...
1¼	⅝	Aminex	1⅛	...		...
1¾	...	Amur Mins Corp◆#	...	...		-0.5
491451	2860¾	Anglo Amer Plat	2860¾	+150¼	...	13.4
2750	1670⅛	**Anglo American**‡	2750	+107	2.9	...
114½	42	Anglo Asian Mng◆	64	+1	4.9	93.5
2282	1293	**Antofagasta**‡	2282	+27	1.2	23.6
4	1⅝	Arc Minerals◆	1¾	...		-7.0
3	1⅝	Ariana Res◆	2½	...		17.0
½	¼	Arkle Resources◆	¼	...		-2.9
1½	½	Armadale Cap◆	⅝	...		18.1
1½	½	Asiamet Rsrcs◆	⅞	...		-3.9
455	286	Atalaya Mine	455	+12	1.5	19.5
...	...	Baron Oil◆	...	...		-5.9
2½	½	Beowulf Mining◆	⅝	...		-2.6
...	...	Bezant Res◆	...	...		1.0
2700	2175	BHP Group	2250	...	5.3	19.6
3	1⅞	Border & Sthn Pet◆	2⅝	...		...
41⅝	15½	Bougainville	36½	+¾	...	...
1¾	...	BowLeven◆	⅛	...		-0.2
558	444¼	**BP**	523¼	-1½	4.2	7.7
10⅛	3¼	Cadence Min◆	3½	...		-2.5
2¾	1⅜	Cadogan Petrol	2¼	...		...
1175	720	Caledonia Mining◆	825	+15	5.5	...
6⅞	2¼	Caspian Sunrise◆	3⅜	...		...
130¼	78⅛	Centamin	126¼	+1¼	2.8	19.5
218	152¾	Cent Asia Metals◆‡	212½	+7½	8.7	...
11¾	2¾	Chaarat Gold◆	2⅞	...		-0.8
17½	7¼	Chariot Oil & Gas◆	8⅜	-⅛		-5.3
2⅜	⅜	China Nonferr Gold◆#	1¼	...		...
⅛	...	Clontarf Energy◆	...	...		0.5
33¾	14	Condor Gld◆	33½	+2		...
1¼	⅛	Corcel◆	⅜	...		-2.0
10324¾	67¾	DRD Gold	67¾	...	...	7.9
½	⅛	ECR Minerals◆	¼	...		-1.8
1⅜	¼	Empyrean Energy◆	⅜	...		1.2
2180	1250	Endeavour	1745	+40	3.8	...
18⅜	12	EnQuest	16¼	+½		-1.4
3½	1⅜	Eurasia Mining◆	1⅜	...		-2.8
1¾	⅞	Europa Oil&Gas◆	⅞	...		...
111⅜	43	Ferrexpo	52	+½		0.4
734½	440¼	**Fresnillo**‡	590½	+6½	0.7	25.1
...	...	G3 Exploration#	28	...		-2.6
23½	8	Galantas Gold◆	12½	...		-1.1
10	⅞	GCM Resources◆	6⅝	-⅛		-9.4
27	8¼	Gem Diamonds	8¼	+¼		-7.0
15¾	5	Getech◆	8⅝	...		-1.2
485⅝	368⅞	**Glencore**	473⅜	+3⅞	7.5	17.7
⅛	...	Global Petrol◆	...	...		-0.9
150166⅞	1436⅛	Gold Fields	1436⅛	+33⅜	...	25.0
9¼	5½	Goldplat◆	8	+⅜		6.0
4⅝	2⅛	Goldstone Res◆#	2⅛	...		-9.9
11½	5½	Greatld Gld◆	5½	...		...
154	77	Griffin Mining◆	154	+2		37.3
148⅛	84¾	Gulf Keystone	113⅜	...		3.2
17¼	9⅛	Harland & Wolff Gp◆	13	...		-0.2
161⅜	68⅜	Hochschild	161⅜	+3		...
172	⅜	Horizonte Minrls◆	⅜	...		-0.1
369½	197⅜	Hunting PLC‡	369½	+9½	2.2	6.7
...	...	Independ Res◆	...	...		...
202½	7¾	Indus Gas◆	7¾	+¼		0.5
¼	...	Ironveld◆	...	...		-3.3
98½	45	ITM Power◆	51	...		-4.9
9½	4⅝	Jubilee Metals◆	6⅞	+¼		14.3
5⅛	2	Karel Diamd Res◆	3¼	+¼		...
1	½	KEFI Gold and Copper◆	½	...		-3.1
464	294	Kenmare Res‡	332	-1	13.5	3.8
...	...	Lamprell#	8⅞	...	...	-0.7
13	1⅞	Landore Res◆	2⅜	...		-1.1
⅜	...	Lansdowne O&G◆#	...	...		...
13½	8½	Leeds Group◆	10	-1		-3.0
8¾	3½	Lexington Gold◆	5⅛	...		...
12¼	6⅝	MC Mining◆	8	...		-4.2
5⅝	1½	Metals Explorn◆	5½	+⅛		3.2
⅛	...	Nostra Terra◆	...	...		-3.8
14½	5¼	Nostrum O&G	5⅝	...		...
...	...	Oil Search	218⅞	-5⅜	...	60.3
...	...	Oilex◆#	⅛	...		0.1
⅜	...	Oriole Resources◆	¼	...		-2.9
...	...	Ormonde Mining◆#	¾	...	...	-3.4
7¼	2	Orosur Mining◆	3⅞	...		-5.6
25⅝	12	Pan African Res◆	25⅝	+¾	3.0	8.4
40¾	10½	Pantheon Res◆	37¼	+2⅛		...
26½	12½	Parkmead Grp◆	15¾	...		-0.4
⅜	⅛	Pathfinder Mins◆#	¼	...		-3.4
76½	37	Petra Diamonds	46	+1⅛		-1.1
3⅛	⅞	Petrel Resources◆	1¾	...		...
7	2½	Petro Matad◆	2⅞	-⅛		...
87½	14⅝	Petrofac	14⅝	-7½		-0.1
¼	...	Petroneft Res◆#	...	...	...	-0.2
...	...	Petropavlovsk#	1⅛	-⅛	...	1.6
...	...	Phoenix Global◆	6½	+¼	...	-1.6
28½	2½	Plexus Holdings◆	15¾	-¼		63.0
300	150	Polymetal Intl#	215	+50	...	5.8
680	524	Porvair	630	+12	0.9	18.1
9½	4¾	Prospex Energy◆	5⅝	+½		17.1
10¾	2⅜	Proton Motor Power S◆	2⅜	...		-2.2
...	...	Providence Res◆	3¼	...	...	29.0
3	⅝	Quadrise◆	1½	...		-8.2
5⅜	2	Rambler Met&Min◆#	5⅜	...	...	0.1
⅛	...	Reabold Resources◆	...	...		-7.5
¼	...	Red Rock Res◆	...	...		-0.3
7106½	5393⅜	Rio Tinto Ltd	6845⅝	+6¾	...	14.1
5891	4559	**Rio Tinto**	5457	+4	6.2	11.2
29	12½	San Leon Energy◆#	16½	+1½		6.1
½	⅛	Scirocco Energy◆	¼	...		-1.6
69½	21½	Serabi Gold◆	66	+2		13.5
268	172	Serica Energy◆	201⅜	-1¾	11.3	2.8
14¾	9	Shanta Gold◆	14¾	...	1.6	14.6
2937	2220½	**Shell**	2887½	-16	3.5	12.9
15	4¾	Shuka Minerals◆	10	...		-1.4
1⅞	⅝	Sound Energy◆	¾	...		-1.0
19⅜	7⅜	Star Energy◆	12⅛	+⅛		-0.5
...	...	Sunrise Resources◆	...	...		-4.7
⅛	...	Tertiary Minerals◆	...	...		-3.0
3½	1	Thor Mining◆	1⅛	...		-1.1
5941⅞	4348⅞	Total Eng SE	5941⅞	...	4.2	9.2
⅛	...	Tower Resources◆	...	...		-0.7
39	22½	Tullow Oil	36¼	-⅜		-4.5
¾	...	UK Oil & Gas◆	...	...		-0.8
150	42½	URU Metals◆	50	...		-1.0
¾	...	Vast Res◆	¼	...		-0.3
...	...	Victoria Oil&Gas◆#	3¾	...	...	-1.8
...	...	W Resources◆#	2⅝	...	...	-0.3
2½	1⅜	Westmount Engy◆	1⅜	...		-0.3
225⅜	125⅝	Wood Grp (J)	151¼	+4¼		-1.7
⅞	¼	Woodbois◆	⅝	...		2.3
1⅞	¾	Xtract Resources◆	1	...		-6.8
4¾	2	Zephyr Energy◆	4¼	...		...

Professional & support services

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
6540	4200	4imprint Grp	6220	-60	2.3	23.1
742½	497½	Andrews Sykes◆	577½	...	4.4	13.4
5974	4543	**Ashtead**	5974	-130	1.3	20.6
1¼	⅞	Asimilar Group◆	1	...	...	...
56	31	AssetCo◆	33	...		0.2
64	45½	Avisen◆	64	+3½		...
136	103½	Begbies Traynor◆‡	105½	+½	3.7	...
226	154½	Blancco Tech◆	225	+3	...	80.6
3306	2687	**Bunzl**	3080	+10	2.0	19.7
34⅞	12½	Capita	13⅜	...		-1.2
41	17½	CEPS◆	17½	-2½		5.7
160	67½	Christie Group◆	96	-1½	3.0	64.8
2323	1945½	**Compass**	2216	-13	1.9	29.4
212	122½	CPPGroup◆	180	+3		-3.2
73½	43	Croma Security◆	69½	+1	3.1	3.1
5826	4171	**DCC**	5505	+30	3.4	18.1
90¾	30	De La Rue	90½	+1		-4.0
3750	2654	**Diploma**	3608	-8	1.5	39.9
938	593	Discoverie	748	+28	1.6	33.2
33	22¼	Driver Group◆	25½	...	5.8	...
208½	143½	Essentra	178	+8⅛	1.3	...
3502	2390	**Experian**	3257	-15	1.3	35.4
17650	10830	Ferguson‡	17040	-60	1.4	25.2
274	205	FIH Group◆	245	...	2.6	15.3
580	383	Hargeaves Serv◆	562	...	4.2	14.7
890	600	Impellam Grp◆	875	+35	...	25.0
...	...	Ince G◆#	5⅛	...	...	2.9
5062	3755	**Intertek**	4936	-12	2.2	26.9
201⅛	127⅜	IWG	188½	+2¼		...
146⅛	101	Johnson Srvce◆‡	130⅜	+2⅜	2.1	20.3
294	161	Journeo◆	271	+8		16.2
143	74	Kier Gp‡	135	+⅜	1.2	15.0
1300	955	Latham (J)◆	1165	...	2.4	8.0
1125	628	Lok'n Store◆	1110	...	1.7	70.9
3100	2350	Lon Security◆	3050	...	4.0	17.1
304	216	LSL Prop Services	300	+5	3.8	-4.6
145	99	Macfarlane	143	...	2.4	14.0
278	105	Maintel Hldgs◆	278	+3		-5.8
29	15½	Malvern Intl◆	19½	-½		...
373	208½	Mears Group	359	+4	3.0	13.8
120	88⅞	Mitie Gp	117	+2¾	2.8	16.9
9¼	4	MobilityOne◆	5	...		...
92½	47½	Newmark Sec◆	85	...		...
10½	5	Norm Broadbent◆	9¼	...		...
64	44½	Northern Bear◆	59	...	6.7	6.4
275	173½	NWF Grp◆‡	220	+4½	3.6	8.3
498⅜	365	PageGroup	457	+9⅛	3.5	14.4
65	39½	PCI-PAL◆	61½	-½		...
8½	3⅜	Petards◆	7¾	...		36.9
26	12½	PHSC◆	22	...	7.9	10.0
1⅛	¼	PowerHouse Egy◆	⅞	...		-0.8
98	58	Record	61	-1	7.4	11.9
391	311½	Redde Northgate	387½	+5½	6.4	6.7
968	675	Renew Hldgs◆	968	+31	1.9	16.3
734	450	Renewi	578	+4		12.1
655⅛	392½	**Rentokil**‡	414⅛	+2	2.1	29.3
295	125	Restore◆	228½	+3½	2.9	...
610	404	Ricardo	449	+1	2.7	...
480	353	Robert Walters	409	+15	5.9	11.7
15½	11	Roebuck Food Grp◆	12¾	-¾		-7.4
...	...	RPS Group	221	-1	...	...
921⅜	660⅜	**RS Group**	740	+7½	3.0	14.8
95	17	RTC Group◆	82½	...	1.2	...
271½	162⅛	RWS Hldgs◆	175⅜	+4½	7.1	...
431	373	Science Group◆	415	...	1.2	19.1
189⅝	136⅞	Serco‡	184¼	+2⅜	1.8	10.2
55⅛	40⅝	Smiths News	52½	-⅛	7.8	5.2
3638	2554	**Smurfit Kappa**‡	3500	+72	3.8	13.8
19½	8¼	Software Circle plc◆	18	...		-8.6
40¾	22⅜	Staffline Gp◆	31⅜	+1½		-5.9
439½	332	SThree	435	+9½	3.7	10.4
193½	97½	Synectics◆‡	190	...	1.5	14.8
31	17½	Thruvision Group◆	17½	...		...
71⅝	37⅞	Tribal◆	53	+¼	1.2	22.0
120½	63½	Vianet◆	120½	+5½	0.4	...
3½	1	Westminster◆	2½	...		13.6

Real estate

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
144¼	102½	Shaftesbury Cap‡	137⅜	+2⅜	2.3	3.0

Retailing

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
107⅜	63¾	AO World	106¾	+¾		22.1
612⅜	460⅛	**B&M European**	517	-10¾	2.7	14.9
29	13⅞	Brown (N)◆	13⅞	-⅛		-1.0
113⅜	85½	Card Factory	100½	+1¾		6.7
2192	922	CVS Group◆	958	-18	0.7	19.3
135	99½	DFS Furn‡	116	+2	3.6	15.2
1191	967	Dunelm	1028	+34	4.3	13.9
938	672	**Frasers Group**	820½	+24½		7.3
2904	2282	Greggs‡	2762	+62	2.3	20.9
234	147	Halfords	150⅜	-1	6.6	10.1
906¾	613	**Howden Joinery**‡	879½	-8½	2.3	19.0
847	624½	Inchcape	803½	+9	3.8	27.1
5⅝	1¼	IQ-AI	1½	...		-6.1
175⅛	104	**JD Sports**	116½	-3½	0.8	30.4
257½	201⅛	**Kingfisher**	248⅞	+1⅞	5.0	14.3
129¾	80⅝	Lookers	129¾	+⅛	...	7.9
290½	161½	**Marks & Spencer**	259⅝	-1¾	0.3	...
8¾	3¾	Mothercare◆	6⅜	+⅜		35.1
117	28½	Naked Wines◆	51¼	-2½		-1.3
9288	6346	**Next**	9042	-78	2.2	15.8
976⅜	342⅞	**Ocado**	355⅜	+2¼		-9.2
36¼	15½	Pendragon	35½	...		11.3
397½	254⅜	Pets at Home	294	+7⅜	4.4	17.5
156	105	Saga	108⅜	+2½		-1.3
310⅜	245¾	**Sainsbury's**	262⅜	+1	5.0	22.0
1665	1131	WH Smith	1131	+11	2.5	18.9
27	11¼	Sosandar◆	12	-¼		...
...	...	Studio Retail#	115	-2½		2.4
303½	245⅜	**Tesco**	292	+3	3.7	14.8
56⅜	40½	Topps Tiles	43¼	-1⅝	8.0	26.8

Technology

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
79½	53	Access Intell◆	55	+1½		...
39	7⅜	Aferian plc◆	7⅜	...		-0.3
196½	130	Alfa Financial	173	-2⅜	0.6	19.9
...	...	Allied Minds	13¾	+3⅛	...	-1.2
365	230	Aptitude Software	303	-1	1.7	42.6
214	95½	Bango◆	124½	...		...
29½	18	BATM Adv Coms	19	+⅛		...
38	13½	Berkeley Res	18¼	-¾		...
13	5¼	Blackbird◆	5¾	...		-7.1
255	155	Celebrus Tech PLC◆	212½	...	1.4	23.1
1⅛	⅝	CloudCoCo Group◆#	¾	...		-1.7
2944	2026	Computacenter	2588	+16	2.6	15.3
97	55½	Concurrent Tech◆	97	+2		45.3
12	5¾	Corero◆	12	...		...
2290	1155	Craneware◆	2180	+20	1.3	...
320	135	Crimson Tide◆	160	...		...
19	7⅝	CyanConn Hldgs◆	8¼	...		...
21	9	Dillistone Group◆	11½	...		...
23¼	1¾	EQTEC◆	1¾	...		-2.2
702	320	FDM Group	332	-2	10.7	9.2
54	11	Filtronic◆	54	+7		...
2165	812	First Derivts◆	1270	+46		...
327⅛	208⅜	GB Group◆	288⅜	+⅜	1.3	-4.1
163	114	GreshamTech	163	...	0.4	55.8
54	27½	Ilika◆	31	+½		-8.5
191	92	Ingenta◆	152	...	2.4	9.4
112½	41½	Intercede◆	105½	+½		39.0
189⅜	129	Iomart◆	131½	+2½	4.2	22.6
31⅞	13⅝	IQE◆	28⅞	+⅞		-2.6
126	98	K3 Business Tch◆	103½	...		-9.7
1681¼	1075¾	LG Electronics‡	1075¾	-127½	2.2	8.9
134⅜	⅛	Location Sciences◆	⅛	-134⅛		...
52½	31	MTI Wireless◆	42	...	5.8	11.6
23⅜	15½	Nanoco Gp	19¼	-⅛		5.8
116½	71½	Netcall◆	90	...	0.9	28.5
50½	35	Northamber◆	35	...	1.7	...
17¼	9¼	Online Blockchain◆#	15½	+2½	...	-8.1
119	78	Oxford Metrics◆	107	+½	2.5	24.7
4¾	⅝	Parity◆	⅞	...		-0.3
40½	25½	Pennant Intl◆	28½	...		...
634½	370	Playtech	514	+63½		...
379¾	292¾	QinetiQ	351¾	+9⅛	2.3	27.4
92	47⅞	RM	74¼	+½		-4.6
1282	802¾	**Sage**	1162	-11	1.6	56.8
6	4	Seeing Machines◆	4⅜	...		-8.4
62½	35	Shearwater Grp◆	45⅜	+1⅜		-1.4
90	33½	Smartspace S'ware◆	90	...		-9.4
1634	1212	Softcat‡	1586	+10	1.6	28.3
200	90	Spirent Comms	196	+1⅜	3.2	21.5
68	23	SRT Marine◆	24	+1		-6.6
471	358⅜	Tele. Ericsson	411¾	-6⅝	...	-6.6
112½	87½	Touchstar◆	87½	-½	1.1	11.1
990	695	Tracsis◆	860	+30	0.2	56.3
17¼	9	Trakm8◆	9¼	...		4.2
265	105	Triad Grp	265	+19	2.4	...
120	49	Wandisco◆	63½	+½		-1.1
450	312	Water Intel◆	327½	...		18.8
190	91⅛	Xaar	114½	...		...
½	⅛	Yourgene◆	½	...	...	-0.3
185	21¾	Zoo Digital◆	36	-½		-7.6

Telecoms

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
...	...	AdEPT Technology◆‡	200½	...	...	...
133⅝	90⅝	**Airtel Africa**	112	+2¼	4.0	16.4
158¾	102¼	**BT Group**	104½	-½	7.3	5.5
68⅝	43⅝	Currys plc	63	+1¼		2.9
1372	994	Gamma Comms◆	1316	+6	1.2	25.0
104¼	59	Helios Towers	99⅜	+5		...
1488	914	Just Eat T'away	1216	+14		-1.6
⅛	...	Mobile Streams◆	...	...		-0.5
1⅞	¾	Mobile Tornado◆	1	...		-3.3
1940	1362	Telecom Plus	1714	+20	4.8	43.9
96⅛	62⅞	**Vodafone**	70	+⅞	11.1	2.1

Transport

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
306	224	Braemar Ship	276	+2	4.3	...
577¾	359⅞	**EasyJet**	539	+¾	0.8	12.6
5¼	...	Esken Limited#	...	...		...
187⅝	110⅝	FirstGroup	168⅜	+3⅛	2.6	...
425	245½	Fisher (James)	270	-2		64.2
177⅛	138	**International Airlines**	177⅛	+⅞		4.0
286½	196⅛	IDS	273⅛	+2		-2.5
443	366	Irish Cont Uts	443	...	2.7	15.7
1519	991½	Jet2◆	1425	+10	0.8	7.7
121¾	54⅛	Mobico Group	54¾	+2	12.6	-1.1
1420	820	Ocean Wilson	1420	+40	4.0	7.2
23	8½	Sutton Harbour◆	11	...		-6.0
630	206½	Wincanton	605	+2	2.1	28.8
3158	1546½	Wizz Air	2232	+34		-5.0

Utilities

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Yld%	P/E
172½	111⅝	**Centrica**	131	-2⅝	2.4	1.7
...	...	ContourGlobal	251	+½	...	28.3
635	401½	Drax Group‡	526	+8	4.4	3.7
483	405	Jersey Electricity	455	-5	4.2	12.3
1162	932	**National Grid**	1054	+5½	5.4	14.2
13½	7¾	OPG Power◆	10¾	+⅛		3.9
872	551	Pennon	676½	+11	6.5	...
¾	¼	Rurelec◆#	⅜	...		-0.7
2975	2265	**Severn Trent**	2480	+22	4.5	59.6
1900	1508	**SSE**	1676½	+21½	5.3	31.4
1125	900¾	**United Utilities**	1045	+6½	4.5	...

◆AIM company; # Price at suspension; † Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; * figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by Morningstar.

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Thu 13 **Tobermory, Isle of Mull**

Fri 14 **Stornoway, Isle of Lewis**

Sat 15 **Kirkwall, Orkney Isles**

Mon 17 **Arrive in London Tilbury**

Dates not mentioned are spent relaxing at sea

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Home to UNESCO World Heritage site, Bryggen, Bergen is a beautiful city, surrounded by hills and fjords. A short cable car ride offers stunning panoramic views, while 15th century Vågen Harbour has a lively atmosphere

Thu 20 **Kristiansund, Norway**

Sat 22 **Sortland, Vesterålen Islands, Norway** (depart early pm)

Sun 23 **Honningsvåg (for North Cape), Norway** (arrive early pm – depart early am 24th)

Mon 24 **Hammerfest, Norway**

Tue 25 **Alta, Norway**

Thu 27 **Ålesund, Norway** (arrive early pm)
Take a walk through the town streets, and enjoy the sight of the beautiful buildings, decorated with towers, turrets and imaginative and colourful ornaments, that were built after the Town Fire in 1904

Sun 30 **Arrive in London Tilbury**

Dates not mentioned will be spent relaxing at sea

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Wartime bomb aimer turned architect
Peter Banting
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Register

Obituaries

CJ Sansom

Novelist who overcame a troubled childhood to produce the Shardlake novels that combined murder mystery and the Tudor dynasty

CJ Sansom was in his late forties when an inheritance enabled him to give up his job as a solicitor for a year to write fiction and "see what happened". His twin obsessions were popular crime novels and the Tudor dynasty and in combining the two he arguably invented a literary genre.

By the end of that year he had finished a draft of what would become his first novel, *Dissolution*. It was an instant bestseller on publication in 2003. Sansom would go on to sell nearly four million copies in the series featuring the hunchbacked lawyer Matthew Shardlake, who solves murder mysteries related to the religious psychodrama roiling Tudor England from 1537 to 1549, amid endless political intrigue in the court of Henry VIII and scatological odours on the streets of London, York, Portsmouth and Norwich.

The likeable but complicated lawyer sleuth, who is socially awkward and unlucky in love, was something of an alter ego of the author. Sansom was, by his own admission, a loner, psychologically damaged by the relentless bullying he endured during his school years but with an endearingly boyish enthusiasm that came to the fore when he talked about his work.

In a Sunday Times profile in 2018, Rosie Kinchen wrote of approaching his book-lined townhouse: "Stiff and severe, he stands at the window watching me approach his Brighton home but does not open the door until I have rung the doorbell as expected." Once inside she noted six coasters of Henry VIII's wives neatly lined up on a coffee table.

Dissolution introduces Shardlake working for Henry VIII's chief minister Thomas Cromwell, who dispatches him to Sussex to investigate the murder of one of Cromwell's commissioners during the dissolution of the monasteries in 1537.

The result was far more than a page-turning whodunnit. "We watch him attempt to reconcile an intellectual sympathy for Cromwell's reformation with revulsion at the acts undertaken in its name," wrote one reviewer. "Shardlake is a thoughtful, nuanced presence in a sea of religious zealotry, ignorance and superstition; of his time, but not blinkered by it."

Dark Fire (2004) further explored Cromwell, less sympathetically than Hilary Mantel would do in *Wolf Hall*. "Cromwell as a character is ripe for interpretation," Sansom said. "He's been controversial ever since he had his head cut off: some think he was the blackest of villains; others that he was a great, positive reformer. I'm somewhere in the middle, but I do believe he had a dark side; much darker and more brutal than Mantel's portrayal."

Sovereign (2006) — which Lady Antonia Fraser called "the best so far" and was also Sansom's personal favourite — centred on Henry VIII's "Royal Progress to York" in 1541 in an attempt to win the loyalty of his rebellious subjects there. Investigating the murder of a local glazier, Shardlake discovers an intrigue that could threaten the throne. In real life the author's research uncovered a plot concocted in Yorkshire to overthrow Henry, which Sansom later published in an academic journal.

Revelation (2008) is set in 1543 and Henry VIII is wooing his soon-to-be sixth wife Lady Catherine Parr. Her reformist sympathies could be a lifeline to the embattled Archbishop Cranmer, who feels vulnerable because of the King's longing to return to traditional worship. Meanwhile, Shardlake is on the trail of a serial killer who has committed murders inspired by the dark prophecies of the Book of Revelation.

Heartstone (2010) takes the reader to 1545, when England is at war with France. The novel is set in Portsmouth before the Battle of the Solent when the kingdom is in a tumult of rising inflation and economic instability. With the Mary Rose primed for battle at Portsmouth Harbour, Shardlake is reunited with an old enemy close to the throne.

Lamentation, published four years after *Heartstone*, brings us to 1546. The King is dying and there is a power struggle between Protestant and Catholic factions for control of the court that would effectively be a regency over the child king, Edward VI. Catherine Parr has written a treatise that will lead to her swift demise if found. It has gone missing and one page of it is found in the hand of a murdered printer. A swirl of intrigue leads to the burning at the stake of the radical Protestant Anne Askew and exposes Shardlake himself to the threat of the same fate.

In Sansom's final book in the series, *Tombland* (2018), Shardlake comes into contact with a young Princess Elizabeth during the reign of Edward VI. Amid the backdrop of Kett's Rebellion near Norwich in 1549, Shardlake investigates the murder of Elizabeth's distant cousin Edith Boleyn.

The seven books provide a decent history lesson. Indeed Sansom was himself a graduate of the subject and a rigorous researcher. Historical inaccuracies for the purposes of the plot and narrative would be owned up to in the historical note, which was always comprehensive.

And if Shardlake was an essentially modern character, replete with cautionary analogies to the modern world, Sansom partially admitted the charge. "It's difficult, perhaps impossible, to write a character well in the past who is not a projection back of modern sensibilities," he told The Guardian in 2010. "My defence would be that the 16th century was the time when rational, sceptical inquiry was beginning. This is the age of the humanists: we're leaving medieval thought patterns behind. I'm not saying a man like Shardlake did exist then, but he could have, where even 20 years earlier he couldn't. That's enough for me."

Christopher John Sansom was born in Edinburgh in 1952 to Trevor, a naval engineer, and his wife Ann. Growing up in a traditional Presbyterian household that was "Conservative with a small c and a capital C", he described himself as a "noisy and uncontrollable" infant and "a trial and a puzzle to my parents".

The fee-charging George Watson's College in Edinburgh was a living hell. Struggling with undiagnosed ADHD, he could not concentrate. Unusually tall, skinny, awkward and shy, he was a natural target for bullies. Abuse was never violent or sexual, but he felt "permanently scarred" by memories of hiding in a lavatory to escape jeering boys. "The teachers blamed this on me and sometimes collaborated in it." He escaped into books.

"By the time I was 14, I was, I now realise, becoming seriously mentally ill: completely isolated, hardly aware of what was being said in the classroom, consumed with rage, plagued by migraines and tormented by thoughts of suicide and burning down the school."

Aged 15 he nearly died after taking an overdose of his mother's sleeping pills, and was committed to a mental hospital for a year. "For the first time in my life, I was not treated as a pariah, and I owe more than I can say to the devotedly caring staff. They saved my life. My mind came to life and I found interests in literature, history and politics."

Sansom left George Watson's College with no qualifications. He went to college to take his O-levels and A-levels and studied history at Birmingham University, where he stayed on to do a PhD. Describing himself as an "independent socialist", he gave up academia and trained to become a solicitor, mainly working on legal aid cases so that he could "act on behalf of the underdog".

Law provided structure and rules for his own confused existence, and it made sense for Shardlake to work in the profession. "I find legal practice endlessly interesting," Sansom said. "It existed then and now, so it provides a point of contact for readers. And it offers a way into any number of mysteries, and puts Shardlake in the way of an endless variety of characters."

Sansom's novels made him rich, but living alone he continued to struggle with intermittent depression: "If you keep kicking a dog, it expects to be kicked. And I'm afraid that, having been kicked for so many years, the fear of everyone turning around and kicking you again never goes away. All my life I have had the feelings of worthlessness, inferiority and self-blame characteristic of abused children."

The cat-loving Sansom wrote two other novels, *Winter in Madrid* (2006), a spy thriller set in 1940, and *Dominion* (2012), which imagined a postwar Britain ruled by the Nazis. The writer was praised for the forensic detail in which he recast Britain as a fascist state, but his imagining of Enoch Powell as secretary of state for India was criticised as unfair and clunky.

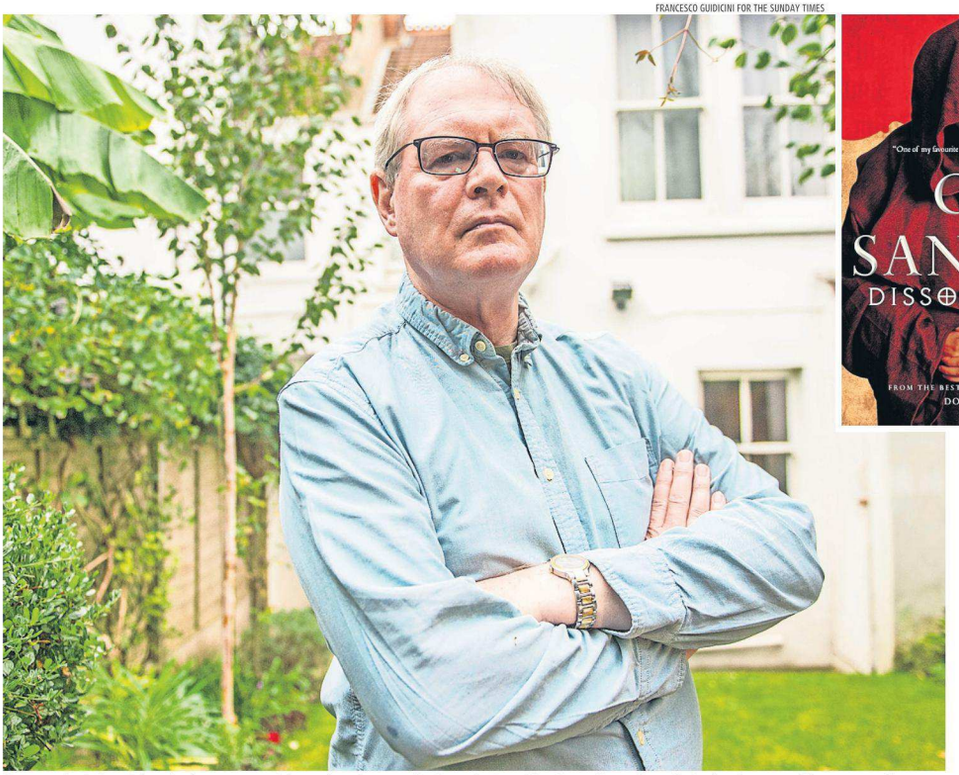
A diagnosis of multiple myeloma in 2012 slowed him down considerably. Illness prevented Sansom from publishing an eighth planned Shardlake novel, set during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, "someone I actually like".

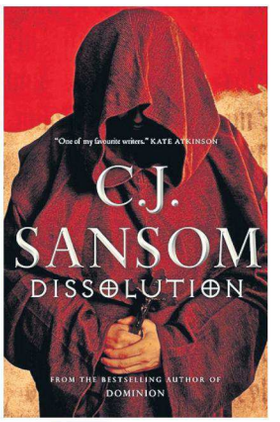
Dissolution and *Revelation* were serialised by BBC Radio 4, but the screen adaptation his work deserved always seemed to get away. A mooted production starring Kenneth Branagh fell into abeyance when the actor chose instead to make *Wallander*. Sansom was then, in the words of one reviewer, "pipped to the Tudor primetime spot by the BBC's *Wolf Hall* and Mark Rylance's mercurial turn as Thomas Cromwell". But a Disney+ series based on his novels, starring Arthur Hughes as Shardlake and Sean Bean as Cromwell, airs this week.

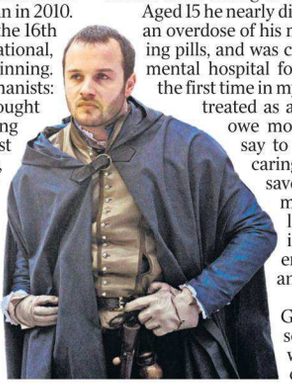
In the end he did not live to see it broadcast, but the admiration of his great friend and mentor PD James meant more. On being given a copy of Sansom's hefty novel *Lamentation* one month before her death at the age of 94 in 2014, the distinguished crime novelist said: "This will see me out."

CJ Sansom, author, was born on September 9, 1952. He died of cancer on April 27, 2024, aged 71

FRANCESCO GUIDICINI FOR THE SUNDAY TIMES







Sansom's debut Dissolution set out his major themes; below, Arthur Hughes plays Shardlake in the new Disney+ series

He said that spending a year in a mental hospital 'saved my life'

Register

Peter Banting

Architect and wartime bomb aimer whose Lancaster helped to sink the 'pocket battleship' Admiral Scheer in April 1945

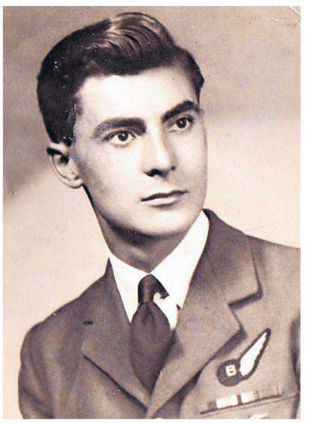
By the time Peter Banting became a bomb aimer with the RAF's Pathfinders in 1945, navigational and targeting technology had advanced considerably, but so too had anti-aircraft technology. Nearing the shipyards at Kiel on the night of April 9, his Lancaster was detected by the Germans' Würzburg radar, enabling the broad-spread master searchlight to lock-on, and in turn successive searchlight and flak batteries. Banting, lying prone in the Perspex nose dome, was dazzled for a full ten minutes while the pilot, the Australian Kenneth Rothwell, "cork-screwed" down and then up to shake off the searchlights.

Until 1942, each aircraft in Bomber Command had two pilots and dual-role aircrew: an observer (or navigator) who also acted as bomb aimer; and a wireless operator who was also the air gunner. When the heavy bombers were introduced into service, they needed seven-man crews: a flight engineer replaced the second pilot, and the other crew members were given single, specialised roles. However, during transit to and from the target area, the bomb aimer acted as lookout and manned the forward-gun turret, and was reserve pilot in case of an emergency.

Banting had received more flying training than many, but knew his reactions were no match for the German air defences, and certainly no equal to those of Rothwell, with whom he became lifelong friends. When they returned from Kiel and saw the rear gunner's turret surrounded by flak holes in the tail plane, the crew gaped in stunned silence. But Banting was sure that their "Tallboy" bomb had been the one that struck the "pocket battleship" Admiral Scheer, causing it to capsize.

Peter Banting was born in 1923 in Brixton, south London, to parents who worked at Cox's and King's Bank in Pall Mall. His mother often spoke of James McCudden VC DSO & Bar, MC & Bar, MM, the First World War fighter ace killed in July 1918, who had banked there, which fired her son's imagination. His parents divorced when he was 12, and Banting returned to Brixton with his mother, going to school locally after his solid grounding at a day preparatory school at Addiscombe, south London. In 1940, aged 17, he began work at the Ministry of Aircraft Production at Millbank, and joined the newly formed Air Training Corps, which prepared young men for entry into the Royal Air Force.

Six months after turning 18 he volunteered for aircrew. Called forward eight months later, after initial training at Cambridge he was sent to EFTS (elementary flying training school) Oxford for pilot selection. With 30 hours on de Havilland Tiger Moths, and his assessor in the back seat, he made a perfect final take-off and landing and was selected for advanced pilot training in Canada under the Commonwealth Air Training Plan. Crossing the Atlantic on RMS Queen Elizabeth — zigzagging to avoid U-boats — he arrived at the De Winton flying school in Alberta, but disaster struck soon after. Banting contracted chicken pox and then scarlet fever, which apparently dulled his reactions. When one day his instructor put his Boeing Stearman into a spin and told him to get it out, "things went pear-shaped". He was reassigned for training



Banting was part of Bomber Command

as a bomb aimer instead at nearby RCAF Lethbridge, followed by navigation training at Edmonton.

After returning to England in 1944 for operational training throughout the summer and autumn, in November he joined 75 (New Zealand) Squadron at RAF Mepal in Cambridgeshire. He flew his first op in early January, a raid on Duisburg in the Ruhr industrial belt, and thereafter two or three ops a week. On March 11 he took part in the largest raid of the war to date, in daylight on Essen: 1,079 aircraft — 750 Lancasters, 293 Halifaxes, 36 Mosquitos — a bomber stream eight miles long and five wide.

Banting recalled listening to music on AFN (American Forces' Network radio) during transit, which helped to steady the nerves. Essen, in the heart of the Ruhr, had been attacked many times, usually with disappointing and costly results. On this occasion, however, 4,661 tons of bombs were released over radar-directed sky-marker flares dropped by the Pathfinders, and in complete cloud cover. The attack was accurate, paralysing industrial capacity.

Rothwell's crew, including Banting, were then invited to transfer to 7 (Pathfinder Force) Squadron, at RAF Oakington, a prestigious role which enabled Bomber Command to carry out precision raids at night rather than area bombing. The first wave dropped illuminating flares while the second dropped coloured flares over identified targets designated by the "master bomber" flying high above, usually in a Mosquito. He then directed the bombing squadrons on to specific flares, adjusting for drift and "creep back". The Pathfinders also carried full bomb loads, so after dropping flares they circled for a second run, for which they were sometimes credited with two ops rather than one. In all, Banting completed 28.

After taking part in Operation Manna in the closing days of the war, dropping food to half-starving civilians in the still-occupied northwest Netherlands, and Operation Exodus, repatriating prisoners of war, Banting's squadron moved to RAF Spilsby in Lincolnshire to convert to the new Lincoln bomber for Tiger Force, the Commonwealth long-range heavy bomber force for Japan. When the Japanese surrendered after the dropping of the two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, however, Tiger Force was stood down.

By now a warrant officer (sergeant major), Banting was offered a regular commission, but he was bent on training as an architect, and after demobilisation in 1946 began the six-year course at Brixton School of Building (now part of London South Bank University). A handsome, well-spoken and courteous man, in 1951 he married Hazel Ascot, a tap-dancing child film star of the 1930s billed as "the British Shirley Temple". Her parents had moved next door in 1942, and romance blossomed after his demobilisation when she became a primary school teacher.

On qualifying, Banting worked first for the Imperial War Graves Commission in France before joining the London County Council, where he worked until retiring in 1987. He is survived by Hazel and two of their three children: Shelly, a clinician; and Joanna, an architect.

In 2013 Banting was invited to 10 Downing Street with other RAF veterans to receive the Bomber Command clasp from David Cameron, then the prime minister, in belated recognition of their role in the war. In the early years especially, Bomber Command had been the only means of taking the fight back to the enemy's homeland. Some 55,573 aircrew were killed out of a total of 125,000, close to a 50 per cent death rate. Banting said he owed his life to failing flying training.

Peter Banting, former Bomber Command aircrew and architect, was born on April 15, 1923. He died on March 27, 2024, aged 100

Bernd Hölzenbein

Speedy footballer who won the crucial penalty for West Germany in the 1974 World Cup final against the Netherlands

In the first minute of the 1974 World Cup Final, Johan Cruyff slalomed through the West Germany defence and won a penalty. Holland were strong favourites to win and the best player in the world had wasted no time in proving it.

The Dutch were expected to win handsomely, but, as someone once said, football is a "funny old game". In the 24th minute the unheralded Bernd Hölzenbein demonstrated that anything Cruyff could do, he could do just as well. Receiving the ball on the left wing, the diminutive West German forward started to run at the retreating Dutch defence. By the time Wim Jansen tried to tackle him it was too late: Hölzenbein had built up such a head of steam that the only way to stop him in the area was to commit a foul. Or so it seemed.

Jack Taylor, the British referee, pointed to the penalty spot, yet the Dutch players surrounded him furiously, convinced that Hölzenbein had dived. It mattered not when Paul Breitner dispatched the penalty to equalise for West Germany in front of a partisan 73,000 crowd in Munich.

For the rest of the afternoon "Holz's" speed, close control and direct running continued to terrorise the Dutch defence as West Germany ran out 2-1 winners to take the World Cup for the second time. He might even have won another penalty in the 86th minute but this time Taylor kept his hands behind his back and shook his head.

The controversy over the penalty refused to go away as the bitter rivalry between the two nations grew over the years. The German newspaper Bild published an article several weeks after the 1974 World Cup in which Hölzenbein admitted he "dived" to win the penalty. He later retracted the statement but from then on he was known as "Swallow" in the Dutch media.

ALAMY

Hölzenbein in action; right, getting his reward with the 1974 winning team

Hölzenbein had a reputation as quiet and unassuming but with just a touch of cunning. Because of the threat of terrorism from the Red Army Faction, the team were mainly confined to their training base in Malente during the tournament. To stave off boredom, a table tennis competition was staged but almost ruptured the West Germany team spirit. A savings bank had offered a gold coin worth 1,000 marks for the champion. Gerd Müller, the team's star striker, was confident of victory, but not for the first time Hölzenbein upset the odds. "He didn't know that I played table tennis in a club," Hölzenbein recalled. Müller, known as "Der Bomber", lived up to his name as he wreaked destruction on the table after Hölzenbein won.

Hölzenbein's preference for a quiet night's sleep worked in his favour after he was dropped for the third group game against East Germany. West Germany calamitously lost the game 1-0 against their neighbour and bitter Cold War rivals, and some players were blamed for sneaking out for a night in Hamburg. The captain, Franz Beckenbauer, was said to have demanded that the national coach, Helmut Schön, change the team. "I don't know anything, I was in bed," said Hölzenbein. "All I know is that in the next game four new players came in and I was one of them."

Another piece of good fortune, for Hölzenbein at least, was an injury to the forward Jupp Heynckes. When Heynckes was declared fit for the final, Hölzenbein recalled how Heynckes's club coach, Hennes Weisweiler, lobbied for him to come back into the team, but Hölzenbein kept his place.

He retracted his 'dive' admission but the Dutch called him 'Swallow'

Two years later in the European Championship final in Belgrade, West Germany were now strong favourites against Czechoslovakia. The Czechs raced into a 2-0 lead and were 2-1 up with a minute to go when West Germany won a corner. Hölzenbein, one of the smallest players on the pitch, nipped in before the goalkeeper could punch the ball clear to head the equaliser. His bravery paved the way for a famous penalty shootout, won by Czechoslovakia when Antonin Panenka cheekily chipped the ball gently into the middle of the net after the goalkeeper had dived — pioneering a type of penalty that still bears his name. Hölzenbein would go on to play in the 1978 World Cup in Argentina, winning 40 caps over his international career and scoring five goals.

Bernd Hölzenbein was born in 1946 in the town of Runkel in the west of Germany. Little is known of his early life except that football played a prominent part in it. As a teenager he signed as an amateur for his home-town club TuS Dehrn. He signed for Eintracht Frankfurt in 1966 and made his debut a year later, making sure that he also had a trade to fall back on as a qualified merchant.

With German domestic football dominated by the great Bayern Munich, the club's best showing in the Bundesliga was third place in 1975, but it did win the German Cup in 1974, 1975 and 1981. Hölzenbein left the club after Frankfurt won the Uefa Cup in 1980, beating German rivals Borussia Mönchengladbach 3-2 over two legs. His 212 goals in 524 games for Eintracht Frankfurt between 1967 to 1981 is a record that still stands.

Hölzenbein went on to manage Eintracht Frankfurt between 1994 and 1996 and in later years served as chief scout and sporting consultant. He was married to Jutta, with whom he had two children, Sabrina and Sascha.

He remained a modest figure, a little embarrassed at the statue of him in the Willy-Brandt-Platz underground station in Frankfurt.

Bernd Hölzenbein, footballer, was born on March 9, 1946. He died of complications from dementia on April 15, 2024, aged 78

Email: obituaries@thetimes.co.uk

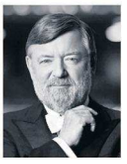
Lives remembered

Lord Field of Birkenhead

Daniel Sanchez, parliamentary researcher to the late Lord Field, writes: I spent the last three years working as Frank Field's assistant and researcher, when I saw him almost every day (obituary, April 24). Frank's unwavering commitment to others in the twilight of his public life contrasted with his humble reluctance to fight for himself. His work continued even after his gradual retreat from the public stage after the revelation of his illness in the Lords in 2021. It was as recently as last year that he completed the herculean task of publishing his memoir *Poverty, Politics and Belief*. Even as he grappled with the effects of his illness, Frank continued to engage with issues of the day. He served on the boards of Cool Earth and Feeding Britain, as well as the Frank Field Education Trust. Climate change, ending hunger and improving life chances were at the core of Frank's mission. He had declined honours, but accepted a seat in the Lords so as to have a platform from which to hold the government to account through frequent written questions. The resilience and steadfast engagement I saw at first hand was a reminder of his enduring legacy as a tireless advocate for the common good. Although we were generations apart and of different backgrounds, he always treated me with the utmost respect. He took a keen interest in everyone he came across, and had a profound impact on their lives.

Stuart Haggett, headmaster, Birkenhead School, 1988-2003, writes: When Tony Blair closed down the Assisted Places scheme, Birkenhead School was forced to consider full independence underpinned by a scholarship programme. To the surprise of many, Frank Field was one of the first to lend enthusiastic support to this project. He was clear about the opportunities which the school had offered so many local boys over the years and he did not want this to stop. Yet another example of his determination not to allow political dogma to interfere with the needs of the individual.

Sir Andrew Davis



Richard Price writes: When at Watford Grammar School Andrew Davis (obituary, April 22) was, of course, a celebrity in short trousers. Although a spellbinding piano soloist he was a somewhat indifferent oboist in the school orchestra, which reached its peak around 1962 when conducted by the classics teacher FW Thomas.

Many years later, honouring the life of a recently deceased Frank Thomas, Andrew returned to conduct that orchestra, manned by its original 1962 players. Like others I fished out my instrument, ready to struggle through a packed performance given in the school hall. I don't think Andrew risked full tempi for Beethoven 3. Reviews varied from inspirational (the conductor) to dire (some of the playing). But most memorable was the jolly humour, soon to become his hallmark, that Andrew brought to the occasion.

Peter Wilson

Alastair MacIntosh writes: I had the unenviable task of trying to organise Peter "PJ" Wilson (obituary, April 23) when running Oxford Hawks Veterans hockey, whilst he was still a master at the Dragon. If we had an away game, which required leaving Oxford at noon, PJ would still be teaching, which should have meant he was unable to play. However, with an embarrassed smile, he would arrive at our meeting point just in time, having set his class enough homework to last until lunch, and then hot-foot it to the match. What his class got up to during his absence we never found out, but I cannot imagine there were many complaints.

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'He'll be shouting for Ireland in the rugby but England in the cricket'

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THE TIMES

Court Circular

Buckingham Palace
29th April, 2024
The Queen this afternoon received the crew of the racing yacht Maiden, winners of the Ocean Globe Race, at Clarence House.

The Lord Harlech (Lord-in-Waiting) was present at Heathrow Airport, London, this morning upon the Arrival of the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas and welcomed Her Excellency on behalf of The King.

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Births, Marriages and Deaths

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THE SON of Man did not come to be a slave master, but a slave who will give his life to rescue many people.
Mark 10.45 (CEV)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Births

GIBSON on 26th April 2024 to Claire (née Collins) and Graeme Gibson, a daughter, Gabriella Grace Gibson. Scotland welcomed a beautiful baby girl born at 6.18am, weighing 8lbs 1oz at St John's Hospital, Livingston. Maternal grandparents are Ralph and Ann Collins and paternal grandparents are Brian and Frances Gibson.

ALFIE TEMPEST
on 24th April 2024 to Alexandrea and Dean, a son, Alfie Michael Tempest, was born 10.23pm weighing 7lb 1oz. Our little thief of hearts.

Deaths

BARR-SIM Susan (née McDouall) died peacefully at home in France on 25th April 2024, aged 86. Beloved sister, adored mother and devoted grandmother. Private family funeral. Memorial service to be announced later.

BIRT Donald "Don", a member of the 3.1P Club, passed away peacefully at home on Tuesday 19th March 2024. The funeral service will take place at Rushcliffe Oaks crematorium on Wednesday 8th May at 10.45am. Donations in Don's memory are for Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. All inquiries to Richard Barnes Funeral Directors, 01664 565311.

CAMPBELL REGAN Jasmine died peacefully on 12th April 2024, aged 82, in Trinity Hospice. Beloved wife of Brian, much-loved mother of Ciaran, Justin and Alice, and grandmother to Freddie, Ben, Holly and Mia. Her funeral will be held at Christ the Prince of Peace, Weybridge, on 31st May at 10am. No flowers. Donations to Cancer Research with details provided by Lodge Brothers: walton@lodgebrothers.co.uk, 01932 250312.

DOREY Thomas Andre Edward on 23rd April 2024, aged 19 years, in London. Dearly beloved son of Robert and Laurence, beloved brother to Charlotte, beloved grandchild of Carolyn Guy, beloved nephew of Suzie and Richard Vowles, Martyn and Wendy Dorey, Jane and Andrew McClelland, Dider Guy, Natalie Guy, and beloved friend to so many. Funeral will be at home in Guernsey — arrangements to be announced — in lieu donations to the Guernsey Sailing Trust and/or the St Peter Port Lifeboat.

DOVER Ann (Sister Giles) peacefully on 17th April 2024. Requiem Mass at the Convent of the Poor Clares, Arundel, on 16th May at 2.30pm. Inquiries to W. Bryder, 01798 342174.

EDWARDS Christine Margaret (née Burton) passed away peacefully on 5th April 2024, aged 69. She will be forever missed by her family and friends. A funeral service will be held for Christine on Wednesday 8th May 2024 at 1pm, St Lawrence Church, Eastcote, Middlesex.

EMERSON Gillian (née Everard) on 11th April 2024, aged 72, while on holiday. Widow of Clive, sister to Rosemary, Michael and William, stepmother to James and Toby, and friend to many. The funeral will take place at Penmount Crematorium, Newquay Rd, Truro TR4 9AA, on Monday 20th May at 11.30am. Family flowers only. Donations in Gillian's memory may be made through https://www.memorygiving.com/gillianemerson for the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and the Hall for Cornwall.

GILBERTSON Cecil Edward Mark on 24th April 2024, aged 74. Outstanding and dearly loved husband to Nicky and father to Georgie and Harry, and a much-adored grandfather. Funeral at St Paulinus' Church, Llangorse, at 2.30pm on Friday 3rd May. No flowers and limited black. Donations to St David's Hospice Care and David Nott Foundation.

The simple way to place your Birth, Marriage or Death announcement in the Register. Available 24 hours a day. Go to: **newsukadvertising.co.uk**

HORDERN Rt Hon Sir Peter died peacefully after a short illness on 18th April, his 95th birthday. Beloved husband of Susan, father of James and Vicky, and of Andrew who died in 2009. Loving grandfather of five. Private funeral to be followed by a memorial service later.

KERRY John Brian died peacefully on 19th March 2024, aged 77, following a sudden stroke. He is hugely missed by Belinda, his wife of 50 years, his three beloved children and his five much-loved grandchildren. Donations to the Stroke Association. www.john kerry.muchloved.com

KINLOCH Nicolas. Fellow of the Historical Association. Rum cove. Went west 17th April 2024. Bad business.

BARONESS MASSEY OF DARWEN
Doreen Elizabeth (née Hall) died peacefully on 20th April 2024, aged 85, in St Peter & St James Hospice. Beloved wife of Dr Leslie Massey and a much-loved mum of Lizzie, Owen and Ben. Private family funeral, donations if desired to St Peter & St James Hospice, North Chailey, Haywards Heath BN8 4ED.

MCMANUS Peter died on 18th April 2024 after a short illness. Beloved husband of Brigid and previously the late Margaret, father of Richard, Robert and Katharine, grandfather of ten. Funeral on 10th May, 1.45pm, at St Peter's Church, Winchester. Donations to Winchester Hospice. Family flowers only.

MOORHEAD Wendy (née Wilson) passed away peacefully on 22nd April 2024, aged 85. Much loved.

PITT
Margo Pitt (née Budge) died peacefully on 23rd April 2024, aged 85. Much-loved wife, mother and grandmother. Funeral to be held at St Peter's Church, Prestbury, Cheshire SK10 4DG, at 11am on Thursday 16th May.

RISK Hamish, James Muir Symington, aged 75, after a short illness. Beloved husband of Alison, devoted father of Alasdair, Christopher and Andrew, and adored grandfather of six grandchildren. Thanksgiving service at St Mary's Church, Sunbury on Thames, on Tuesday 7th May at 11.30am. No flowers please but donations, if desired, to Pancreatic Cancer Research.

SCOTT
Victoria (née Hands) died peacefully on 17th April 2024, aged 86, at home in Wiltshire.
Wife of the late Charles and mother of Sophy, Charlotte and William. Funeral at St Peter ad Vincula Church, Hampton Lucy, on Wednesday 8th May at noon.

TREFGARNE Rosalie, Lady Trefgarne (née Lane) died peacefully on 20th April 2024 ,aged 78. She was surrounded by her family. Beloved and devoted wife to David; mother to George, Justin and Rebecca; grandmother to Louis, Freddy, Cluny, Alice, William, Toby and Rose; a friend to many. Private cremation on Monday 13th May. A celebration of her life and burial will be held at 11.30am on Friday 17th May, St Saviour, Valley End, Chobham, Surrey GU24 8TD. Reception afterwards at Pembroke House. Please make donations to the Woking and Sam Beare Hospice. Enquiries to Alan Greenwood & Sons, Knaphill.

WILEY Rosemary (née Cameron) died peacefully on 23rd April at home in Withcall with her family: beloved wife of Struan, loving mother of Nicola and Myles, and grandmother of Victoria, Lucy and Alice. Great-grandmother to Louis, Romy and Eve. A dearly loved stepmother and friend to Sarah, Fergus and Anna. She will be greatly missed: a vivacious, generous and truly kind person. Private family funeral. Any donations to Macmillan Cancer Support.

Memorial Services

KESWICK Sir Chips at St Paul's Knightsbridge on 30th May 2024 at 12 o'clock.

Legal Notices

PIHL PROPERTY HOLDINGS LIMITED
Company Number: 05716886
Principal Trading Address: Cavendish House, 18 Cavendish Square, London, W1G 0PJ

Malcolm Cohen and Stacey Brown of BDO LLP, 55 Baker Street, London, W1U 7EU were appointed Joint Liquidators of the Company on 22 April 2024. Creditors of the Company are required, on or before the 7 June 2024 to send in their full names, their addresses and descriptions, full particulars of their debts or claims and the names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the Joint Liquidators, and, if so required by notice, to come in and prove their debts or claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such notice. Note: Please note that this is a solvent liquidation. The directors of the Company have made a declaration of solvency and it is expected that all creditors will be paid in full.

Further details contact: Pauline Durrant, Tel: 020 7486 5888, Email: Pauline.Durrant@bdo.co.uk, Reference: 00452035.

Malcolm Cohen, Joint Liquidator

LIGHTHOUSE GREEN FUELS

The Planning Act 2008 - Section 48

The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009 - Regulation 4

Notice Publicising a Proposed Application for a Development Consent Order

Lighthouse Green Fuels

Notice is hereby given that Lighthouse Green Fuels Limited of 1 Cornhill, London, EC3V 3NR (the 'Applicant') intends to submit an application (the 'Proposed Application') to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (the 'SoS') for a Development Consent Order ('DCO') under Section 37 of the Planning Act 2008 (the '2008 Act').

The land required for the Proposed Application (the 'Project Site') is located within the administrative boundaries of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council and Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council.

The Proposed Application comprises the construction, operation and maintenance of a waste-to-sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) project (the 'Project'), which will convert waste and/or waste biomass and/or biomass residues into aviation fuel, with ancillary bulk liquid storage elements and associated development, such as pipeline and cable connections. The pipeline connections include a waste water pipeline to connect the SAF plant with Northumbrian Water's Bran Sands Wastewater Treatment Plant ('WWTP').

The Project Site includes the existing operational Wilton Engineering Wharf and Clarence Wharf at Port Clarence in the west, and extends eastwards and north of the River Tees to include the Navigator Wharf jetties off Riverside Road and the Navigator North Tees Rail Terminal, off Seaton Carew Road. The northern most boundary of the Project follows the A1185 and Seal Sands Link Road, from the National Grid Saltholme Substation to the west to Navigator Terminals Seal Sands to the east.

The Project boundary also follows an existing pipeline corridor from Navigator Terminal, and a tunnel that passes beneath the River Tees, to the Northumbrian Water's Bran Sands WWTP at Tees Dock Road, some 3km west of Redcar. It encompasses a section of the A1053 Tees Dock Road between South Bank and Grangetown, and its junction with the A1085 Trunk Road. Part of the Project Site is currently occupied by the TV1 and TV2 industrial buildings adjacent to an existing Materials Recovery facility.

The SAF plant will be constructed on the former TV1 and TV2 sites, with associated development such as pipelines occupying land surrounding these sites to cover a total area of 274.49 hectares ('ha').

The Project includes the following components

- Feedstock Storage & Pre-Processing Area;
- Gasification Plant;
- Syngas Clean-up;
- Fischer-Tropsch ('FT') Reactor;
- Product Upgrading Unit;
- Future FT Reactor;
- Future Product Upgrading Unit;
- Miscellaneous Tankage;
- Wastewater Treatment Plant;
- Flare Area;
- Auxiliary Boiler and Generating Equipment;
- Surface Water Pond;
- Utilities;
- Air Separation Unit;
- Process Waste Storage;
- Consumables Storage Facilities;
- General Administration & Storage Facilities;
- Car Parking;
- Existing CCGT Plant;
- Bulk Liquid Storage (for SAF and Naphtha);
- Pipeline and cable connections (import and export) and Utility Corridors;
- Flares;
- Heavy Haul Road (for construction phase only);
- Conveying Corridors;
- Rail Terminal; and
- Marine Transport Infrastructure (for construction and operational usage).

Along with associated development and infrastructure including:

- Administration buildings/kiosks;
- Accommodation and welfare facilities;
- Boundary treatments;
- Security infrastructure;
- Temporary and permanent compound areas;
- Hard and soft landscaping;
- Drainage;
- Cables;
- Pipelines; and
- Plant and equipment

The DCO will also seek, if required, the compulsory acquisition of land and/or rights in, on, under or over land required for the Project, as well as rights authorising the temporary occupation of land for the Project.

Other powers that the DCO may seek, if required, include the extinguishment and/or overriding of easements and other rights over or affecting land required for the Project; the application and/or disapplication of legislation relevant to the Project; the temporary stopping up or diversion of public footpaths during construction works; permanent and temporary alterations to the highway network for and in the vicinity of the Project Site, and such ancillary, incidental and consequential works, provisions, permits, consents, waivers or releases as are necessary and convenient for the successful construction, operation and maintenance of the Project.

The Project is an Environmental Impact Assessment Development ('EIA development') as defined by the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (the 'EIA Regulations') and an Environmental Statement ('ES') will form part of the Proposed Application. The Applicant has notified the SoS in writing under Regulation 8(1)(b) of the EIA Regulations that it intends to provide an ES in respect of the Project. The ES will provide a detailed description of the Project and its likely significant environmental effects. Information compiled so far about the Project's likely environmental impacts is contained in a Preliminary Environmental Information Report ('PEIR') and summarised in a Non-Technical Summary, both of which form part of the consultation materials.

Consultation on the proposals will take place from **16 May 2024 to 20 June 2024** (the 'Consultation Period'). Responses must be received no later than 11:59pm on 20 June 2024 and responses received after that date may not be considered.

The consultation documents show the nature and location of the Project and will include plans; maps; and the PEIR and its Non-Technical Summary among other documents ('the Consultation Documents'). The Consultation Documents will be available to view or download free of charge from www.lighthousegreenfuels.co.uk) (the 'Project Website') throughout the duration of the Consultation Period, from 16 May 2024 to 11:59pm on 20 June 2024.

Hard copies of the Consultation Documents, including the Non-Technical Summary of the PEIR and the Statement of Community Consultation, will be available to view free of charge at the location listed below during the Consultation Period.

Location and Address	Opening Times (Subject to change)
Billingham Library, Kingsway, Billingham, TS23 2LN	Monday 08:30 - 19:00 Tuesday 08:30 - 19:00 Wednesday 08:30 - 17:00 Thursday 08:30 - 17:00 Friday 08:30 - 17:00 Saturday 09:30 - 16:00

The Applicant is hosting six public consultation events, comprising three face-to-face events and three online webinars to be held as follows. The Consultation Documents will be available at the three face-to-face events:

Venue	Date	Time
Billingham Forum, Town Centre, The Causeway, Stockton-on-Tees, Billingham TS23 2LJ	1 June 2024	12:00 to 17:00
High Clarence Primary School, Port Clarence Road, Middlesbrough TS2 1SY	5 June 2024	15:00 to 20:00
Billingham Rugby Club, Greenwood Rd, Billingham, Stockton-on-Tees TS23 4BA	6 June 2024	10:00 to 17:00
Online webinar 1 (Please get in touch to register using the contact details at the end of this notice)	28 May 2024	18:30 to 20:00
Online webinar 2 (Please get in touch to register using the contact details at the end of this notice)	4 June 2024	10:00 to 11:30
Online webinar 3 (Please get in touch to register using the contact details at the end of this notice)	12 June 2024	10:00 to 11:30

Responding to this consultation

When providing your response, please include your name and address or, if you would prefer your comments to be anonymous, your postcode only. Please also confirm the nature of your interest in the project. Comments and representations may be submitted in the following ways:

Feedback Questionnaire: Complete or download the Feedback Questionnaire at the Project website www.lighthousegreenfuels.co.uk; or it can be completed and left at one of the Consultation Events; or by request from the project team either at events or via phone or email.

By email or post: Completed Feedback Questionnaires, and any other comments, can be emailed to info@lgf.co.uk or returned by post (no stamp required) to FREEPOST LIGHTHOUSE GREEN FUELS

Responses must be received by the Applicant by no later than 11:59pm on 20 June 2024. The Applicant will consider and have regard to all responses when developing the proposals for the Project once the consultation has closed. Responses will be reported in a Consultation Report which will form part of the Proposed Application. This will be taken into consideration by the Planning Inspectorate when deciding whether the Application can be accepted for examination. Therefore, in providing any comment, it should be noted that the substance of it may be communicated to others as part of the Consultation Report.

Personal data supplied to the Applicant in response to this consultation will be treated confidentially and processed and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR. The information may be disclosed to or shared with the Applicant's connected companies, agents, contractors and advisors who provide services to the Applicant in connection with the preparation of an application for development consent under the 2008 Act. This will allow the Applicant to fully consider the responses and use them in the preparation of application materials. Upon submission of the Proposed Application, the SoS may require the Applicant to supply copies of all consultation responses received. If a request is made, the Applicant is under a legal obligation to supply such copies. By submitting a consultation response to the Applicant, you understand that we may supply a copy of your response to the SoS via the Planning Inspectorate if required.

How to contact us

If you have any questions about this notice, the consultation, or the Project, please contact the Applicant by using one of the contact methods provided below:

Email: info@lgf.co.uk

Telephone: 0800 157 7346

Postal address: FREEPOST LIGHTHOUSE GREEN FUELS (no stamp needed)

April 2024

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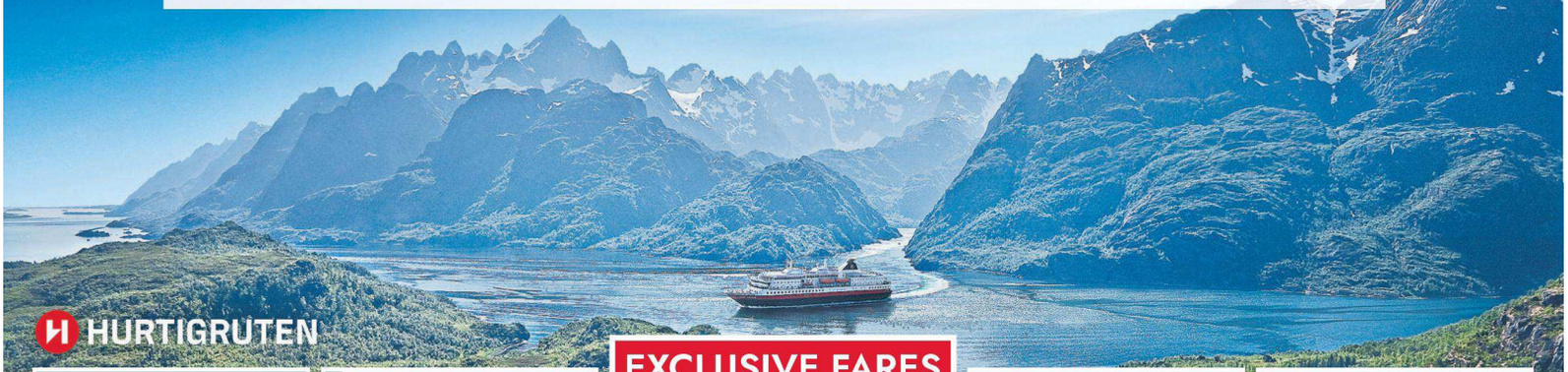

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Day 2 Florø – Molde, Norway
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Day 3 Kristiansund – Rørvik, Norway

Day 4 Brønnøysund – Svolvær, Norway ★*Cross the Arctic Circle*★
Cross the Arctic Circle and mark the moment with a traditional ceremony. Later, call into Bodø, overlooked by the Børvass peaks and home of fabulous street art. This afternoon, the ship enters the Lofoten archipelago. The 1,000 metre-high Lofoten Wall is a stunning sight that seems to stretch for miles on the horizon

Day 5 Stokmarknes – Skjervøy, Norway
Sail into Tromsø, Gateway to the Arctic. Along the waterfront you'll find Polaria, a centre exhibiting environmental research in the Arctic with a small aquarium. Across the fjord, see the iconic Arctic Cathedral with its beautiful stained-glass mosaic

Day 6 Øksfjord – Berlevåg, Norway

Day 7 Båtsfjord – Berlevåg, Norway

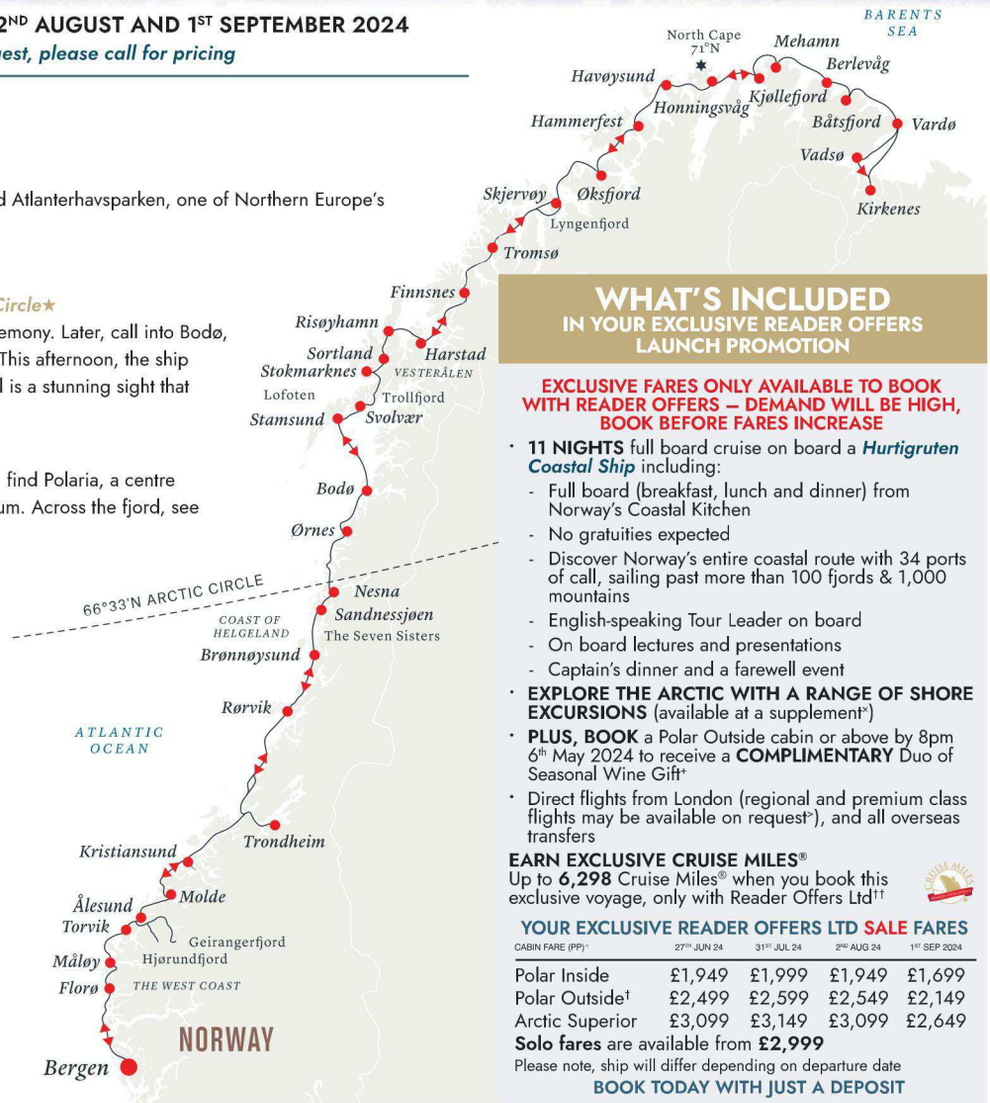
Day 8 Mehamn – Tromsø, Norway

Day 9 Tromsø – Stamsund, Norway
Sailing along Raftsund, the Captain may choose to take the ship into tiny Trollfjord if the weather allows. The mountain walls will look so close you'll think you can reach out and brush them! To exit the fjord, the ship will rotate 180 degrees on the spot. Remember to look out for sea eagles here

Day 10 Bodø – Rørvik, Norway
Admire the stunning landscape of the Seven Sisters mountain range, with peaks up to 1,100m high. You'll also not want to miss views of Torghatten Mountain, with the distinctive hole in it

Day 11 Trondheim – Ålesund, Norway

Day 12 Ålesund – Bergen, Norway
Disembark and transfer to the airport for your return flight to London



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Weather

Today Rain or showers across western areas, but drier with sunny spells further east. Max 19C (66F), min 1C (34F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder
☆=previous day ☆☆=data not available

	Temp C midday yesterday		Rain mm 24 hrs to 5pm yesterday	Sun hr☆
Aberdeen	10	C	2.4	0.1
Aberporth	9	R	5.8	11.6
Anglesey	11	R	3.2	10.4
Aviemore	11	C	0.6	2.0
Barnstaple	14	R	0.4	☆☆
Bedford	14	C	0.0	☆☆
Belfast	11	R	0.6	7.3
Birmingham	12	C	0.0	☆☆
Bournemouth	13	PC	0.0	3.1
Bridlington	12	C	0.0	☆☆
Bristol	13	C	0.0	3.7
Camborne	11	R	6.8	8.0
Cardiff	12	C	0.0	8.0
Edinburgh	12	R	0.2	1.7
Eskdalemuir	10	R	13.8	4.5
Glasgow	10	R	11.6	8.7
Hereford	14	C	0.0	☆☆
Herstmonceux	14	S	0.0	2.8
Ipswich	14	PC	0.0	1.2
Isle of Man	10	C	5.0	10.2
Isle of Wight	13	S	0.0	☆☆
Jersey	13	S	0.0	9.0
Keswick	10	R	11.8	☆☆
Kinloss	13	PC	3.4	1.3
Leeds	11	C	0.2	☆☆
Lerwick	8	C	15.6	7.7
Leuchars	11	D	0.2	0.1
Lincoln	13	C	0.0	0.9
Liverpool	12	C	0.2	☆☆
London	15	PC	0.0	1.8
Lyneham	12	C	0.0	2.8
Manchester	13	C	0.0	5.7
Margate	14	S	0.0	2.3
Milford Haven	11	R	5.0	☆☆
Newcastle	12	C	0.4	☆☆
Nottingham	13	C	0.0	2.3
Orkney	11	PC	15.0	3.7
Oxford	13	PC	0.0	☆☆
Plymouth	13	C	0.8	☆☆
Portland	13	C	0.0	☆☆
Scilly, St Mary's	11	R	3.0	☆☆
Shoreham	15	PC	0.0	1.5
Shrewsbury	12	C	0.0	4.1
Snowdonia	10	C	24.4	☆☆
Southend	15	PC	0.0	1.9
South Uist	10	R	4.2	☆☆
Stornoway	9	S	0.2	10.6
Tiree	8	R	3.0	☆☆
Whitehaven	10	R	26.6	2.2
Wick	10	S	12.6	☆☆
Yeovilton	13	C	0.0	3.8

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	17	PC	Madeira	20	PC
Amsterdam	18	PC	Madrid	16	PC
Athens	22	PC	Malaga	23	PC
Auckland	17	PC	Mallorca	17	B
Bahrain	31	S	Malta	21	PC
Bangkok	35	PC	Melbourne	15	B
Barbados	30	PC	Mexico City	29	PC
Barcelona	14	D	Miami	26	B
Beijing	13	PC	Milan	21	S
Beirut	23	M	Mombasa	32	PC
Belgrade	25	S	Montreal	15	C
Berlin	20	S	Moscow	16	S
Bermuda	17	SH	Mumbai	38	☆☆
Bordeaux	17	S	Munich	20	S
Brussels	19	PC	Nairobi	24	B
Bucharest	21	S	Naples	26	S
Budapest	24	S	New Orleans	28	B
Buenos Aires	19	S	New York	18	PC
Cairo	26	S	Nice	20	S
Calcutta	40	☆☆	Nicosia	26	PC
Canberra	17	C	Oslo	9	SH
Cape Town	21	S	Paris	17	PC
Chicago	19	PC	Perth	24	S
Copenhagen	14	PC	Prague	21	S
Corfu	27	S	Reykjavik	10	PC
Delhi	36	☆☆	Riga	22	S
Dubai	37	☆☆	Rio de Janeiro	34	S
Dublin	13	B	Riyadh	32	B
Faro	17	PC	Rome	25	S
Florence	24	S	San Francisco	17	PC
Frankfurt	19	S	Santiago	14	B
Geneva	16	PC	São Paulo	29	PC
Gibraltar	20	PC	Seoul	25	B
Helsinki	17	S	Seychelles	31	PC
Hong Kong	30	PC	Singapore	32	B
Honolulu	27	PC	St Petersburg	21	S
Istanbul	15	B	Stockholm	14	B
Jerusalem	24	PC	Sydney	26	S
Johannesburg	19	PC	Tel Aviv	24	PC
Kuala Lumpur	33	PC	Tenerife	22	PC
Kyiv	☆☆	☆☆	Tokyo	24	PC
Lanzarote	22	PC	Vancouver	10	C
Las Palmas	22	PC	Venice	22	S
Lima	19	B	Vienna	25	S
Lisbon	17	PC	Warsaw	25	S
Los Angeles	18	PC	Washington	27	PC
Luxor	34	S	Zurich	17	S

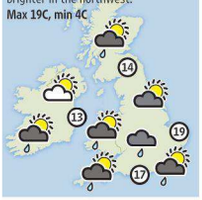
Five days ahead

Rain or showers at times, particularly in central and southern areas, but warm in any sunshine

Tomorrow

Showery outbreaks of rain across southern and perhaps some central parts of Britain. Generally drier and brighter in the northwest.

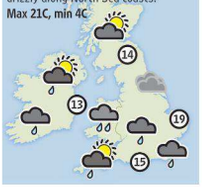
Max 19C, min 4C



Thursday

Cloudy with outbreaks of rain in some central and southern parts of Britain and Ireland. Drier and brighter in Scotland, although perhaps grey and drizzly along North Sea coasts.

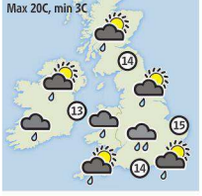
Max 21C, min 4C



Friday

Central and southern areas will be fairly cloudy with occasional outbreaks of rain, the best of the drier, brighter and warmer weather in Scotland.

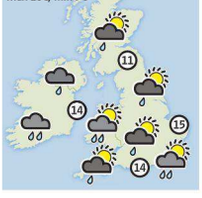
Max 20C, min 3C



Saturday

The local detail is uncertain, but with low pressure close by there will likely be some rain or showers in places.

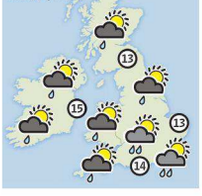
Max 18C, min 5C



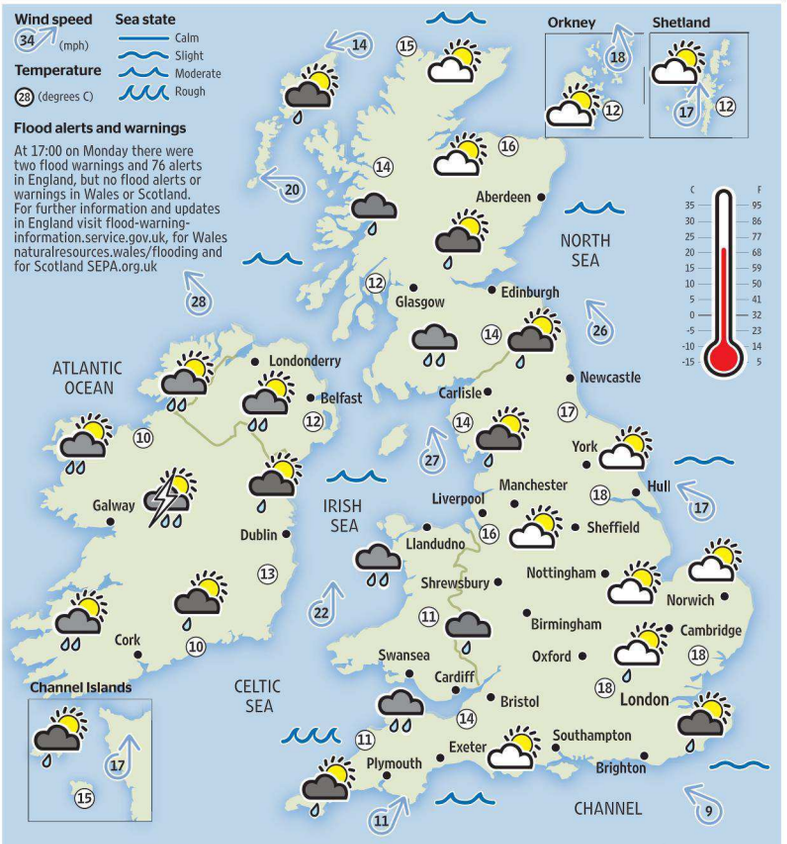
Sunday

An unsettled day with rain or showers in many places, perhaps accompanied by some strong winds.

Max 17C, min 4C



The Times weather page is provided by WeatherQuest



Flood alerts and warnings

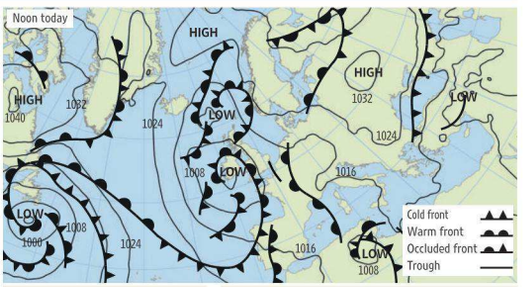
At 17:00 on Monday there were two flood warnings and 76 alerts in England, but no flood alerts or warnings in Wales or Scotland. For further information and updates in England visit flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk, for Wales naturalresources.wales/flooding and for Scotland SEPA.org.uk

General situation: Rain or showers across Ireland and western Britain, mainly dry in eastern areas.
SW Eng, Channel Is, Wales, IoM, Lake District, Edinburgh & Dundee, Glasgow, SW Scotland, NW Scotland, Argyll, Cen Highland: Some dry and bright spells, but often cloudy with outbreaks of rain at times, heaviest and most persistent across Wales and southwest England. Light to strong east or southeasterly winds. Maximum 16C (61F), minimum 4C (39F).
E Anglia, London, SE Eng: Many places will have a dry day, but early sunshine will gradually be replaced by increasing cloud and the chance of a few locally heavy showers in the afternoon. Light to moderate south or southeasterly winds. Maximum 19C (66F), minimum 8C (46F).
Cen S Eng, Midlands, NW Eng, E Eng, Cen N Eng, NE Eng, Borders, Aberdeen, Moray Firth, NE Scotland, N Isles: Most areas will have a dry day with sunny spells and occasional areas of cloud, perhaps an isolated shower or odd spot of rain from any thicker patches of cloud. Light to fresh south to southeasterly winds. Maximum 18C (64F), minimum 5C (41F).
N Ireland, Republic of Ireland: Cloudy with outbreaks of rain clearing gradually northwards followed by bright spells and scattered heavy showers, locally thundery. Winds will be light to strong south or southeasterly. Maximum 14C (57F), minimum 1C (34F).

Tides

Tidal predictions.
Heights in metres

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	06:02	3.6	19:01	3.4
Avonmouth	11:57	10.9	--:--	--
Belfast	03:45	3.1	16:39	2.9
Cardiff	11:38	10.1	--:--	--
Devonport	10:34	4.5	22:52	4.7
Dover	03:20	5.9	15:53	5.7
Dublin	04:25	3.5	17:13	3.3
Falmouth	09:52	4.1	22:28	4.3
Greenock	04:51	3.2	17:33	3.0
Harwich	04:23	3.6	16:42	3.4
Holyhead	02:56	4.8	15:33	4.5
Hull	10:59	6.2	23:50	5.9
Leith	07:24	4.7	20:08	4.6
Liverpool	03:38	8.0	16:11	7.6
London Bridge	06:29	6.4	18:44	6.0
Lowestoft	02:16	2.2	14:27	2.2
Milford Haven	10:59	5.6	23:30	5.6
Morecambe	03:50	7.9	16:23	7.5
Newhaven	03:27	5.7	16:06	5.5
Newquay	09:53	5.6	22:25	5.6
Oban	10:15	3.0	23:00	3.1
Penzance	09:23	4.5	22:00	4.6
Portsmouth	04:01	4.1	16:52	4.0
Shoreham	03:32	5.3	16:09	5.2
Southampton	03:09	4.0	16:20	4.0
Swansea	11:03	7.6	23:34	7.5
Tees	08:28	4.6	21:18	4.5
Weymouth	11:22	1.4	23:41	1.5



Synoptic situation

An area of low pressure over the Republic of Ireland will push an occlusion and associated band of rain erratically northwards across western Britain, clearing to bright spells and scattered heavy showers in Ireland. Eastern Britain will be dry for much of the day, but a trough over northern France may bring a few showers into the southeast.

Highs and lows
24hrs to 5pm yesterday
Warmest: Hull East Park, 17.1C
Coldest: Cairngorm, -3.5C
Wettest: Shap, Cumbria, 26.6mm
Sunniest: Aberporth, Ceredigion, 11.6hrs☆

Sun and moon
For Greenwich
Sun rises: 05.32
Sun sets: 20.21
Moon rises: 02.44
Moon sets: 09.50
Last quarter: May 1

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	21:20-04:48
Belfast	21:26-05:13
Birmingham	21:02-05:04
Cardiff	21:04-05:13
Exeter	21:03-05:17
Glasgow	21:24-05:02
Liverpool	21:10-05:06
London	20:52-05:01
Manchester	21:07-05:02
Newcastle	21:10-04:54
Norwich	20:50-04:51
Penzance	21:09-05:26
Sheffield	21:03-05:00

Weather Eye
Paul Simons

After the cool and cloudy conditions this month, the weather is turning warmer — or to put it another way, it is growing less chilly. And this is happening just as May is about to dawn, as American writer Hal Borland once summed up: "April is a promise that May is bound to keep."

Even though April has been plagued with overcast skies, any sunshine that has managed to break through has been surprisingly strong, despite the cool conditions. April sunlight is especially deceptive because it can pack quite a punch with ultraviolet (UV) light, equivalent in strength to sunshine in late August.

The UV at this time of year can damage skin, especially fair skin, turning it red and even developing into sunburn. Not only are UV levels increasing, but after the long dark days of winter, many people are not yet acclimatised to strong sunshine. It takes some weeks for the skin to build up its defences against the UV by producing brown pigments, and also repairing any damage from UV.

On the other hand, the UV rays have an enormous benefit by getting the skin to produce Vitamin D. Over winter much of the UK population becomes depleted in this vitamin, with a range of effects on overall health and wellbeing. Vitamin D is best known for promoting healthy bones and teeth, but it also boosts the immune system, is thought to improve cardiovascular health, protects against autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, and has been linked to lower risks of certain cancers.

But there is a balancing act between getting enough UV in sunlight for making Vitamin D, and too much UV that damages the skin. The advice, which applies from now until the end of September, is for fair-coloured skin to be exposed to sunshine about ten to 15 minutes daily without sunblock between about 11am and 3pm. For darker skin types, 25-40 minutes of unprotected exposure to sunshine is recommended, although the exact times vary for different people.

Speak directly to one of our forecasters on 09065 777675

8am to 5pm daily (calls are charged at £1.55 plus network extras)

WeatherQuest
weatherquest.co.uk

This is the perfect introduction to Vietnam and Cambodia. Discover the impressive temples of Angkor and explore Hue for a glimpse of an imperial past. Hoi An will charm you with its cobbled streets and riverside setting, whilst Hanoi boasts streets full of life, charming colonial architecture and fascinating history. The tour finishes as it started, with a showstopper – Halong Bay, where you'll take an overnight cruise and witness the breath-taking karst scenery.

*Prices listed are based on two sharing a twin/double room. Single supplement on request. Book by April 30, 2024. Quote TIMES-ON when booking for the extension offer. Flights on holidays booked more than 11 months in advance may be subject to supplements when airline fares are published. Operated by and subject to the booking conditions of Wendy Wu, ABTA W7994 ATOL 6639, a company wholly independent of News UK.

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Sport

ECB pick bank used by United and Chelsea

CONTINUED FROM BACK

and the ECB last week, there is broad agreement over the sell-off of 49 per cent of each of the eight Hundred teams, which are currently owned by the governing body. The sale could raise upwards of £200 million and give a cash windfall to each county of up to £10 million.

There are still a number of smaller details to be agreed about how the revenue will be distributed between the 18 first-class counties, MCC and the recreational game, and the ECB is working with accountancy firm Deloitte to put a value on each of the eight teams.

The remaining 51 per cent stake in each of the eight teams will be handed to the eight host venues: so Nottinghamshire will get Trent Rockets; Yorkshire will get Northern Superchargers; Lancashire will get Manchester Originals; Hampshire will get Southern Brave; Glamorgan will get Welsh Fire; Warwickshire will get Birmingham Phoenix; Surrey will get Oval Invincibles; and, most interestingly, it is the MCC rather than Middlesex who will get London Spirit.

They can either decide to retain complete control themselves or sell off some or all of their shares. The ten counties that do not have Hundred teams and the recreational game could then also be entitled to a further 10 per cent each from any revenue raised by that subsequent sell-off.

Sources at the ECB have indicated that the process could raise up to £500 million in total from both stages of the sell-off. The overall amount is dependant on the level of interest from external investors — there has already been an interest from capital investors in India and the United States, and from some English football clubs — while Surrey have publicly said they will not be selling their shares and want to run the Oval-based team themselves.

The next step is for the counties, plus MCC, to brief their members on the proposals and to then give a "non-binding agreement" to the ECB within the next few weeks. After that a prospectus will be developed so potential investors know what they are buying and what they will get for their investment. There will be a bidding process later in the year with the intention that the new ownership structure takes hold before the 2025 edition of the Hundred.

WHERE WILL THE MONEY GO?

Assuming the ECB sale of 49 per cent of each team raises the estimated £200 million, the recreational game will receive £20 million. The remaining £180 million will be divided between the 18 first-class counties and MCC, meaning they could receive about £9.5 million each in a one-off lump sum.

In theory, an investor could buy 49 per cent of a team from the ECB and then another percentage stake straight from the host team, thereby ending up with a controlling stake. This is likely to make it a more attractive prospect.

WHAT WILL OWNERS GET FOR THEIR INVESTMENT?

They will get 80 per cent of the ticket and sponsorship revenue for their team plus 80 per cent of the annual broadcast revenue. It is estimated a new broadcast deal for the Hundred could be worth £90 million.

It will end up as a similar model to the IPL, where the governing body owns the tournament itself but the teams are owned by private investors.

WHAT ABOUT FUTURE EXPANSION?

For the moment, it will remain as an eight-team tournament because the current broadcast deal with Sky runs until 2028. However, it is likely that there will be an expansion to ten teams after 2028, which could mean that the tournament expands in length from the current 3½ weeks to more than a month.

MARK FLETCHER/MI NEWS AND SPORT/ALAMY

Stokes is back in the nets

Ben Stokes was seen bowling in the nets at Chester-le-Street yesterday.

The England Test captain was due to be in Florida with his family for a holiday. However, he was not able to secure a visa at the last minute so his family flew from Manchester airport without him.

He stayed in Manchester for three days in case a visa came through before returning home to the North East.

He is not expected to play for Durham until mid-May. The Test summer starts in July.

Archer and Duckett set for World Cup

Cricket
Elizabeth Ammon

Jofra Archer, Chris Jordan and Ben Duckett are set to be included in England's provisional T20 World Cup squad which will be announced this morning, but there is no place for the all-rounder Chris Woakes.

Archer will also be named for the tournament in the West Indies and United States, although the fast bowler has not played any competitive cricket since May 2023 because of the issue with his right elbow that has required two lots of surgery.

He will play in the four-match T20 series against Pakistan at the end of May, during which it will become clear whether he has fully recovered before England's first match of the tournament, which takes place against Scotland on June 4 in Barbados, the country of his birth.

Jordan has not always been a regular in England's T20 team in recent years but was part of the squad that won the previous T20 World Cup in 2022. He most recently played for England at the end of last summer against New Zealand but was not selected for the white-ball tour to the Caribbean in December. The Surrey seamer has 88 T20 caps to his name and is known for being particularly good as a specialist at the death and a superbly athletic fielder.

Duckett has been selected as an extra batsman in the 15-man squad because he provides a left-hand option in a top order that is predominantly made up of right-handers, including Jos Buttler, Phil Salt, Jonny Bairstow and Harry Brook. The 29-year-old has played only 12 international T20s but has 185 T20 caps to his name with an average of just over 30 and a healthy strike rate of 137.44.

Jordan's inclusion has come at the cost of his Surrey team-mate Jamie Overton, who had been expected to be included but has been ruled out with a back injury.

Woakes, the Warwickshire all-rounder, was part of England's title-winning squad in 2022 and their most recent T20 series in the Caribbean but has spent the past few weeks warming the bench for Punjab Kings in the IPL, having been omitted in favour of other all-rounders.

The left-arm spinner Tom Hartley, who made his Test debut in the tour to India this year, will be included alongside the leg spinner Adil Rashid and there will be other spin options available from the all-rounders Will Jacks and Liam Livingstone.

Bairstow also makes the squad after having recently come back into form with an explosive unbeaten 108 after a lean period in which he was dropped by Punjab Kings.

England have to name their final 15-man T20 World Squad by May 25, so there is opportunity to bring others in if there are injuries.

Probable squad Jos Buttler (Lancs, captain), Jofra Archer (Sussex), Jonny Bairstow (Yorks), Harry Brook (Yorks), Sam Curran (Surrey), Ben Duckett (Notts), Tom Hartley (Lancs), Will Jacks (Surrey), Chris Jordan (Surrey), Liam Livingstone (Lancs), Moeen Ali (Warks), Adil Rashid (Yorks), Phil Salt (Lancs), Reece Topley (Surrey), Mark Wood (Durham).

Vitality County Championship scoreboards

Division One

Durham v Essex

Riverside Ground (final day of four): Durham (12pts) drew with Essex (14)

Durham: First Innings 358 (C N Ackermann 112; O G Robinson 90; D G Bedingham 52)

Second Innings

A Z Lees not out	48
*S G Borthwick lbw b Porter	4
C N Ackermann c Cox b Critchley	32
D G Bedingham not out	33
Extras (b 4, lb 4, nb 6)	14
Total (2 wkts, 39.2 overs)	**131**

Fall of wickets 1-13, 2-88.

Bowling Porter 6-1-9-1; Cook 4-1-8-0; Harmer 16-1-46-0; Snater 2-0-3-0; Critchley 11.2-0-57-1.

Essex: First Innings (overnight 314-3)

N L J Browne run out	184
J M Cox b Parkinson	36
M J J Critchley b Parkinson	3
N R M Thain c Borthwick b Ackermann	23
†H G Duke run out	20
S R Harmer b Parkinson	3
S Snater not out	7
J A Porter c Coughlin b Parkinson	2
Extras (b 13, lb 11, nb 8)	32
Total (133 overs)	**488**

Fall of wickets 1-64, 2-94, 3-260, 4-360, 5-376, 6-431, 7-476, 8-477, 9-484.

Bowling Raine 23-5-53-0; Potts 28-5-86-1; Carse 22-1-92-0; Coughlin 15-1-58-1; Parkinson 31-1-131-5; Ackermann 14-1-44-1.

Umpires R A White and D J Millns

Surrey v Hampshire

The Kia Oval (final day of four): Surrey (22) beat Hampshire (1) by an innings and 11 runs

Hampshire: First Innings 151

Second Innings (overnight 116-5)

L A Dawson c Pope b Worrall	18
†B C Brown c Patel b Steel	45
J K Fuller c Lawrence b Atkinson	4
K J Abbott c Pope b Worrall	8
B T J Wheal c Pope b Worrall	9
M Abbas not out	6
Extras (b 16, lb 6, nb 10)	32
Total (77.2 overs)	**197**

Fall of wickets 1-21, 2-21, 3-41, 4-87, 5-87, 6-117, 7-139, 8-165, 9-189.

Bowling Roach 19-6-39-2; Worrall 25.2-4-47-5; Clark 16-3-42-0; Atkinson 13-4-31-2; Steel 4-1-16-1.

Surrey: First Innings 359 (R J Burns 113; J Clark 106 not out; K J Abbott 4 for 104)

Umpires R J Warren and A G Wharf

Warwickshire v Nottinghamshire

Edgbaston (final day of four): Warwickshire (14) drew with Nottinghamshire (15)

Nottinghamshire: First Innings 400 (B M Duckett 218; J A Haynes 74; B T Slater 65; O J Hannon-Dalby 5 for 78)

Second Innings

*H Hameed not out	41
B M Duckett lbw b Hannon-Dalby	7
B T Slater not out	26
Extras (w 1)	1
Total (1 wkt, 22 overs)	**75**

Fall of wicket 1-12.

Bowling Hannon-Dalby 5-1-16-1; Ali 4-0-19-0; Jamal 1-0-1-0; Mousley 1-0-4-0; Bethell 6-0-19-0; Briggs 5-0-16-0.

Warwickshire: First Innings (overnight 175-5)

J G Bethell c Clarke b Stone	93
D R Briggs c sub b Harrison	37
†M G K Burgess c Stone b James	43
A Jamal c and b James	40
H Ali c Hameed b James	5
O J Hannon-Dalby not out	0
Extras (b 7, lb 7, w 1, nb 4)	19
Total (105.3 overs)	361

Fall of wickets 1-10, 2-26, 3-26, 4-84, 5-168, 6-252, 7-276, 8-347, 9-355.

Bowling Stone 23-3-74-1; Pennington 26-4-74-3; Paterson 27-6-86-2; James 15.3-0-65-3; Harrison 11-1-41-1; Slater 3-0-7-0.

Umpires R A Kettleborough and P R Pollard

Worcestershire v Somerset

Kidderminster (final day of four): Worcestershire (15) drew with Somerset (12)

Somerset: First Innings 309-9 dec (T Banton 92)

Second Innings (overnight 5-1)

M T Renshaw c Ali b D'Oliveira	12
J T Ball b Finch	29
T A Lammonby not out	81
A R I Umeed c and b Gibbon	60
T Banton not out	1
Extras (b 5, lb 2)	7
Total (4 wkts dec, 75 overs)	**190**

Fall of wickets 1-4, 2-43, 3-66, 4-183.

Bowling Leach 14-8-21-0; Holder 13-7-17-1; Waite 12-2-39-0; Finch 12-3-33-1; Gibbon 8-0-21-1; D'Oliveira 7-1-15-1; Ali 6-1-31-0; Libby 3-1-6-0.

Worcestershire: First Innings 451-9 dec (G H Roderick 122; J D Libby 97; B L D'Oliveira 66)

Umpires R K Illingworth and M Burns

	M	W	L	D	Pts
Surrey	4	2	0	2	71
Essex	4	2	0	2	71
Warwickshire	4	0	0	4	55
Somerset	4	0	0	4	53
Durham	4	1	0	2	50
Worcestershire	4	0	1	3	45
Nottinghamshire	4	0	1	3	43
Hampshire	4	0	1	2	31
Kent	3	0	1	2	26
Lancashire	3	0	1	2	24

Division Two

Gloucestershire v Middlesex

Bristol (final day of four): Gloucestershire (13) drew with Middlesex (11)

Middlesex: First Innings 203 (M de Lange 6 for 49.

Second Innings (overnight 262-3)

M D E Holden c Price b Singh-Dale	111
R F Higgins c Hammond b van Buuren	155
S S Eskinazi not out	65
†J L B Davies c sub b de Lange	33
J M De Caires c Singh-Dale b Goodman	17
T G Helm not out	4
Extras (lb 16, w 3, nb 10)	29
Total (7 wkts dec, 96 overs)	**449**

Fall of wickets 1-5, 2-9, 3-79, 4-280, 5-352, 6-397, 7-438.

Bowling Singh-Dale 22-4-80-2; Goodman 21-2-94-3; Akhter 8-1-32-0; de Lange 21-2-109-1; van Buuren 19-2-81-1; Price 5-0-37-0.

Gloucestershire: First Innings 322 (M A H Hammond 81; G L van Buuren 75)

Second Innings

C T Bancroft c du Plooy b Helm	32
C D J Dent c Davies b Helm	0
O J Price not out	52
M A H Hammond c Stoneman b Brookes	11
†J R Bracey not out	14
Extras (b 4, nb 14)	18
Total (3 wkts, 39.3 overs)	127

Fall of wickets 1-0, 2-75, 3-102.

Bowling Bamber 11-2-38-0; Helm 9-3-25-2; Brookes 9.3-1-34-1; Higgins 5-1-15-0; De Caires 5-1-11-0.

Umpires S Shanmugam and N Prat

Leicestershire v Northamptonshire

Leicester (final day of four): Leicestershire (15) drew with Northamptonshire (15)

Northamptonshire: First Innings 453-7 dec (G A Bartlett 126 not out; E N Gay 88; L A Procter 64)

Leicestershire: First Innings (overnight 97-2)

L Kimber c McManus b Scrimshaw	65
*L J Hill lbw b Scrimshaw	26
P S P Handscomb run out	99
R Ahmed c Scrimshaw b Sanderson	85
†O B Cox c Gay b Sanderson	0
B G F Green c Vasconcelos b Sanderson	34
T A R Scriven not out	54
S W Currie not out	44
Extras (b 4, lb 5, nb 2, p 5)	16
Total (8 wkts dec, 108.1 overs)	**452**

M E T Salisbury did not bat.

Fall of wickets 1-1, 2-57, 3-113, 4-142, 5-309, 6-309, 7-335, 8-360.

Bowling Sanderson 31-6-92-4; Tremain 25-4-97-0; Procter 16.1-2-81-1; Scrimshaw 17-1-85-2; Sales 8-0-39-0; Zaib 11-1-44-0.

Umpires B J Debenham and J Shantry

Yorkshire v Derbyshire

Headingley (final day of four): Yorkshire (16) drew with Derbyshire (13)

Yorkshire: First Innings 450-5 dec (H C Brook 126 not out; J E Root 119; A Lyth 97)

Second Innings

A Lyth not out	20
F J Bean lbw b Lloyd	33
M L Revis not out	0
Extras (b 4, lb 2)	6
Total (1 wkt dec, 21 overs)	**59**

Fall of wicket 1-59.

Bowling Dal 4-1-8-0; Thomson 4-1-3-0; Came 6-2-13-0; Brown 3-0-21-0; Tickner 3-1-8-0; Lloyd 1-1-0-1.

Derbyshire: First Innings (overnight 190-3)

W L Madsen c Brook b Root	104
†B D Guest b Fisher	75
A H T Donald c Tattersall b Root	97
A K Dal lbw b Thompson	18
A T Thomson c Bean b Thompson	5
Z J Chappell c Bean b Fisher	78
B M Tickner not out	11
P R Brown lbw b Root	15
Extras (b 8, lb 5, nb 12)	25
Total (114 overs)	**447**

Fall of wickets 1-15, 2-15, 3-23, 4-193, 5-237, 6-291, 7-297, 8-406, 9-418.

Bowling Coad 24-2-61-1; Fisher 27-7-96-4; Hill 10-3-40-0; Thompson 18-3-82-2; Root 17-1-78-3; Revis 18-1-77-0.

Umpires M H A Syed and M J Saggers

	M	W	L	D	Pts
Leicestershire	4	0	0	4	56
Northamptonshire	4	0	0	4	54
Middlesex	4	1	0	3	53
Suussex	3	1	0	2	51
Yorkshire	4	0	1	3	44
Derbyshire	4	0	0	3	41
Gloucestershire	4	0	1	2	39
Glamorgan	3	0	0	3	34

Abuse charge for Ingebrigtsen's dad

Matt Lawton
Chief Sports Correspondent

The father of the Norwegian middle-distance running sensation Jakob Ingebrigtsen has been charged with physically abusing one of his children, with an allegation of using a wet towel to beat the child.

Last year the relationship between Gjert Ingebrigtsen and his children disintegrated when Jakob, the reigning Olympic 1,500m champion, and his older brothers, Henrik and Filip — also both international athletes — filed a complaint to the Norwegian police, having already sacked their father as their coach.

Gjert denied the accusations but the public prosecutor has now charged the 58-year-old, who is accused of striking one of the younger siblings with a towel in the face. Gjert has seven children in total.

According to a report in the Norwegian newspaper VG, the episode took place early in January 2022 and sparked the split between Jakob, Filip and Henrik and their father, whose coaching of his super-talented sons was the basis of the fly-on-the-wall television series that tracked their progress. *Team Ingebrigtsen* was the most popular show in Norwegian television history.

Police inspector Terese Braut Vage, of Norway's southwest police district, explained to VG that sufficient information had been collected to open a criminal case.

"We have carried out several preliminary investigations, and the information that has come to light has meant that we have now opened a criminal case," Braut Vage said.

"A case has been opened under section 282 of the Criminal Code — abuse in close relationships. This means that we are now in an investigation phase, where the purpose of the investigation is to uncover whether there are criminal circumstances.

"I would like to emphasise that investigations into cases concerning abuse in close relationships are cases which, by their nature, require a thorough investigation over some time."

The public prosecutor's office confirmed to VG that five other matters have been dropped on the status of the evidence, while one allegation is considered out of date.

JON OLAV NESVOLD/BILDBYRAN

The police launched an investigation into claims by Jakob, left, and his brothers that their father, Gjert, right, abused them

Norwegian athletics dynasty

1 Jakob, 23, Olympic 1,500m champion. 2 Filip, 31, won 1,500m gold at 2016 European Championships. 3 Henrik, 33, took gold in the 1,500m at 2012 European Championships. 4 Gjert, 58. 5 Ingrid, 18. Quit athletics in 2022. Image from 2017.

Mette Yvonne Larsen, who represents five of the Ingebrigtsen children, has said at least one of those dropped matters will be appealed against. She said that all of the children had endured a very tough upbringing.

"The indictment that has been brought is serious and concerns one of my clients, who is in a vulnerable situation," she told VG. "The person today feels that they are believed."

John Christian Elden, the lawyer acting for Gjert, said the case had taken on a "completely different character than it initially had".

"Concerning the dismissed charges, we concur that there is no evidence to suggest that Mr Ingebrigtsen has committed any act punishable by law," he said in a statement to BBC Sport.

"Moreover, Mr Ingebrigtsen disputes the account of events that form the basis of the indictment and, as such, does not acknowledge any criminal wrongdoing."

Last year the three international running stars said in a statement: "We have known the fear of growing up with a father who is aggressive, controlling and violent.

"When we were smaller, we were a big group of siblings who were in this together. Now the situation is unbearable."

At the time Gjert described the allegations as "baseless", insisting he had "never used violence" against his children.

The breakdown in the relationship did not dissuade Gjert from remaining involved in athletics. At the World Championships in Budapest last year, he prepared Narve Gilje Nordas for a duel with Jakob over 1,500m. In the end, both athletes lost to Great Britain's Josh Kerr in the final, with Jakob taking silver and Nordas claiming bronze.

Gjert was denied accreditation by the Norwegian Athletics Association for the World Indoor Championships in March in Glasgow and for the Paris Olympics this summer, where Jakob will be looking to defend his 1,500m title.

Nadal wins marathon match – then gives Cachín his shirt

Tennis
Stuart Fraser Tennis Correspondent

The Rafael Nadal farewell presentation that Madrid Open organisers have had on standby since last Thursday will have to wait after the Spaniard survived the toughest physical test of his comeback yet to reach the fourth round.

Tournament staff were on tenterhooks yesterday as Nadal battled for three hours and four minutes, but they can put away the tribute videos and banners for now. The 37-year-old prevailed 6-1, 6-7 (5-7), 6-3 against Pedro Cachín, the world No 91 from Argentina. Even Cachín was thankful to be part of the occasion, asking Nadal to swap shirts during their post-match handshake.

"It's a dream come true for me," Cachín, 29, said. "I'm not sure what the protocol is, but can I ask you for a shirt?" Nadal duly handed one over before heading to the locker room to start a crucial period of recovery. There is no rest day before today's match against Jiri Lehecka, the world No 31 from the Czech Republic. "Let's see how I wake up tomorrow," Nadal said. "I am enjoying playing at home, it means everything to me."

British singles representation in Madrid is over after Cameron Norrie lost 6-2, 6-4 to Casper Ruud, the world No 6. In the women's singles Iga Swiatek, the world No 1, reached the last eight with a 6-1, 6-0 win over Sara Sorribes Tormo, but Coco Gauff, the world No 3, lost.

O'Sullivan hungry for title after intermittent fasting

Snooker Ronnie O'Sullivan hailed the impact intermittent fasting has had on his energy levels during this year's World Snooker Championship after seeing off Ryan Day to reach the quarter-finals.

The 48-year-old, who is bidding to secure a record eighth Crucible crown, wrapped up a 13-7 victory yesterday afternoon.

O'Sullivan revealed the challenge of negotiating a 17-day marathon in Sheffield is being made easier by intermittent fasting, with the Englishman going around 16 hours without food before breaking his fast in a bid to boost his energy.

"This is a tournament of endurance, stamina and concentration," he said. "For me, intermittent fasting just gives me a bit more energy.

"I've always found it works really well for me."

£160m fund to help people in poorer areas get active

Martyn Ziegler Chief Sports Reporter

Falling activity levels among people in poorer social groups are being targeted by Sport England in a new drive to direct funds to those most in need.

The organisation's latest figures show 72.7 per cent of people in the most affluent groups are active — and the numbers taking part in sport and exercise have increased since 2015 — compared with 52.6 per cent in the poorer groups where activity levels are getting worse. Disabled people and ethnic minority groups also have comparatively poor activity levels.

Sport England has announced a Movement Fund to distribute £160 million over the next four years, which it says will "unashamedly prioritise funding for people and communities who need it most".

The money is not new funding, but will be distributed in grants ranging from £300 up to £15,000. Sport England says it will be easier for community groups and clubs as they can apply to a single fund instead of multiple ones.

Tim Hollingsworth, Sport England's chief executive, said poorer social groups were affected by "long-term structural issues" such as access to sports facilities. "People in more affluent groups have more access and more ability to pay for that access," he said. "We are trying to reverse the trend, cut out red tape and make it easier to apply for funding for those that need it most."

Shishkin dead after freak accident in stable

Rob Wright Racing Editor

Nicky Henderson has reported the death of his star chaser Shishkin after a freak injury that occurred when the horse was in his stable. The ten-year-old, who was going to race at Punchestown this week, had to be put down after fracturing a leg.

"Tragically we have lost Shishkin after he got cast [stuck] in his stable and fractured his hind leg," the Lambourn trainer said in a statement on X.

"Everyone involved with [the yard] Seven Barrows, particularly his owners, Joe and Marie Donnelly, Jaydon [Lee, Shishkin's groom], Nico [de Boinville, his regular jockey] and George [Daly, Henderson's assistant] are obviously devastated that such a great horse, friend and warrior has gone.

"He was due to leave for Punchestown tomorrow morning but sadly this is now not to be. He was an absolute superstar and his CV is testament to that — except the King George is not in it, even though we believe it should have been.

"The Supreme Novices' Hurdle and the Arkle were his Cheltenham highlights, but the battle with Energumene in the Clarence House at Ascot was probably his greatest. He was our star and we will never forget him. Thank you Shishkin for the wonderful memories."

The tragic news ends a miserable spell for Henderson, who was forced to withdraw most of his intended runners at the Cheltenham Festival last month after his yard was hit by a bug.

Shishkin won six times at the highest level, including Cheltenham Festival successes in the 2020 Supreme Novices' Hurdle and the Arkle Trophy in 2021, earning his connections £800,000 in prize money. He looked set for another famous victory in the King George VI Chase at Kempton Park in December only to trip and unseat his rider after jumping the second-last fence in the lead.

Banbridge primed to show Champion class

Banbridge struggled on much softer ground when below par in the Ryanair Chase at Cheltenham last month but he can bounce back to form under more suitable conditions in the William Hill Champion Chase (5.25) on the opening day of the Punchestown Festival (Rob Wright writes). He showed classy form when beating Pic D'Orhy on his penultimate start at Kempton and, with the drying ground in his favour, he can see off Captain Guinness, who landed the Champion Chase at Cheltenham.

Brighton
Rob Wright

2.25 Marsh Benham
3.00 Apeeling
3.35 Dee's Dream
4.10 The African Queen
4.45 Elforleather
5.20 Doonbeg Farmer
5.55 Scramble

Going good to soft
Draw no advantage — **Sky Sports Racing**

2.25 Apprentice Handicap (£4,606: 7f) (9)
1 (9) 4400- **PRISCILLA'S WISH** 199 (D) P McBride 6-10-2 **Morgan Cole (3)**
2 (4) 6-241 **INTERCESSOR** 10 (B,T,CD) Dr R Newland & J Insole 7-10-1 **Gina Mangan**
3 (5) 150-0 **LIANGEL HOPE** 15 (P,CD) C Mason 5-9-13 **J Leavy (5)**
4 (3) 3-505 **DAYMAN** 59 (D) D F Davis 5-9-12 **O Lewis (5)**
5 (7) 5613- **MARSH BENHAM** 179 (P,CD) G Baker 5-9-10 **C Hutchinson**
6 (8) 20-36 **TWILIGHT DANCER** 13 (D) J Portman 4-9-9 **Olivia Tubb (5)**
7 (6) -0404 **POETIC FORCE** 39 (CD) A Carroll 10-9-8 **Jack Doughty (7)**
8 (2) 0353- **AMATHUS** 171 (P,CD) P Chamings 7-9-5 **T Heard**
9 (1) -0501 **UNCLE DICK** 10 (P,C) E J-Houghton 6-9-2 **Georgia Dobie**

9-4 Intercessor, 3-1 Uncle Dick, 7-1 Marsh Benham, 8-1 Amathus, 10-1 others.

Wright choice: Marsh Benham is fancied to gain a third success at this track **Dangers** Uncle Dick, Twilight Dancer

3.00 Maiden Stakes (£4,320: 5f) (7)
1 (1) 4-4 **EXCEED NOW** 14 R Varian 3-9-6 **C Noble**
2 (2) 2 **FAHRENHEIT SEVEN** 24 M Usher 3-9-6 **T Heard (3)**
3 (5) 00- **MARCUS** 168 C Wallis 3-9-6 **P Bradley**
4 (7) **RIVER EDGE** (H) C Mason 3-9-6 **Gina Mangan (3)**
5 (3) 552- **APEELING** 223 (H) A Balding 3-9-1 **R Hornby**
6 (4) 2 **CARIBBEAN WIND** 17 J Channon 3-9-1 **C Bishop**
7 (6) 22354 **SOLDIERS DESIGN** 7 (P) J Ryan 3-9-1 **S D Bowen (5)**

6-5 Apeeling, 11-4 Caribbean Wind, 6-1 Soldiers Design, 7-1 others.

Wright choice: Apeeling improved when second at Yarmouth; more to come **Danger** Fahrenheit Seven

3.35 Handicap (£2,983: 1m 4f) (9)
1 (6) 0-505 **RED ROYALIST** 20 (P,T,D) M Murphy & M Keady 10-9-10 **F Marsh**
2 (3) 00006 **DAPHNE MAY** 17 (D) G L Moore 6-9-8 **R Clutterbuck**
3 (4) 5-344 **FAST AFFAIR** 83 (P) J Fanshawe 4-9-8 **J Leavy (5)**
4 (2) 310-0 **DEE'S DREAM** 25 (CD) M Murphy & M Keady 4-9-6 **R Hornby**
5 (7) 022-0 **FEN TIGER** 38 (D) J Feilden 6-9-5 **S Feilden (7)**
6 (1) 22-51 **CHINTHURST** 10 (C) J Boyle 4-9-5 **P Cosgrave**
7 (9) 0-403 **LEXINGTON HERO** 11 (P) J Channon 4-9-5 **C Bishop**
8 (8) 04044 **TOTAL LOCKDOWN** 10 (H) Martin Dunne 5-9-1 **J Crowley**
9 (5) 644-0 **CLOUDY ROSE** 20 (CD) J Berry 6-8-12 **Gina Mangan (3)**

11-4 Chinthurst, 11-2 Total Lockdown, 6-1 Fast Affair, 7-1 others.

Wright choice: Dee's Dream is just 4lb higher than when an easy winner here **Dangers** Fast Affair, Chinthurst

4.10 Fillies' Handicap (£13,500: 1m 2f) (7)
1 (6) 5205- **WISPER** 208 (CD) M Tregoning 6-10-2 **D Costello**
2 (2) 2411- **NEW HEIGHTS** 229 (P,D) J Portman 6-9-11 **R Hornby**
3 (3) 6020- **CHIPS AND RICE** 216 (CD) J Fanshawe 5-9-10 **J Crowley**
4 (4) 6400- **AIMING HIGH** 175 (H,D) D M Simcock 5-9-6 **P Cosgrave**
5 (1) 4-340 **MEASURED MOMENTS** 23 (D) J Butler 5-9-0 **P Bradley**
6 (5) 4213- **ZAYINA** 186 (C) G Boughey 3-8-11 **Grace McEntee (3)**
7 (7) 1031- **THE AFRICAN QUEEN** 136 (C) C Johnston 3-8-5 **J Fanning**

11-4 Zayina, 7-2 The African Queen, 4-1 New Heights, 5-1 others.

Wright choice: The African Queen is well treated and should appreciate this stiffer test of stamina **Danger** Zayina

4.45 Handicap (3-Y-O: £2,983: 1m 2f) (12)
1 (4) 000- **JEAN RIBAULT** 167 D Menuisier 9-11 **Kyle Strydom**
2 (3) 500 **RASMAH** 26 A Watson 9-11 **J Bryan**
3 (5) 4000- **ROCK 'N' ROLL KID** 257 Daisy Hitchins 9-11 **W Carson**
4 (2) 00-0 **RONNIE RAVEN** 20 E Dunlop 9-11 **J Crowley**
5 (11) 0300- **MRS NELL** 197 J Portman 9-9 **Olivia Tubb (7)**
6 (10) 00-36 **ELFORLEATHER** 22 (BF) J Channon 9-8 **E Greatrex**
7 (12) 654-0 **MAKURI** 20 D Cunha 9-7 **R Clutterbuck**
8 (7) 0056- **OUR PAPA SMURF** 171 G L Moore 9-5 **S W Kelly**
9 (6) 6-413 **TENYATTA** 7 James Owen 9-3 **S D Bowen (5)**
10 (9) 0000- **TOUCHING HANDS** 141 J S Moore 9-2 **Georgia Dobie (3)**
11 (1) 05422 **LIGHTNING BAY** 20 (P) J Butler 9-1 **P Bradley**
12 (8) 000-0 **PRISCILLA'S JOY** 17 P McBride 9-0 **Morgan Cole (5)**

11-4 Lightning Bay, 3-1 Tenyatta, 5-1 Elforleather, 7-1 Rasmah, 8-1 others.

Wright choice: Elforleather has shown a fair level of ability; unexposed after five starts **Dangers** Tenyatta, Lightning Bay

● The meeting at Nottingham today has been called off — course waterlogged.

5.20 Handicap (£2,983: 1m) (7)
1 (3) -6450 **SPLIT ELEVENS** 42 (B,CD) J Butler 6-9-10 **J Crowley**
2 (6) 20006 **RIVAS ROB ROY** 10 (B,CD) J Gallagher 9-9-9 **R Clutterbuck**
3 (1) 6052- **DOONBEG FARMER** 277 (T,D) G Brown 6-9-6 **Gina Mangan (3)**
4 (5) 36543 **MY SAND BOY** 39 A Carroll 5-9-4 **W Carson**
5 (2) 0-044 **CAP D'ANTIBES** 47 (D) Marie Martin 7-9-3 **R Hornby**
6 (4) 00553 **ARLO'S SUNSHINE** 10 (D) J Long 7-9-3 **G Rooke**
7 (7) 00-00 **ON THE NOSE** 10 (B,C) A West 6-9-3 **S B Kirrane**

11-4 Arlo's Sunshine, 7-2 Split Elevens, 4-1 My Sand Boy, 5-1 Rivas Rob Roy, 7-1 Doonbeg Farmer, Cap D'Antibes, 25-1 On The Nose.

Wright choice: Doonbeg Farmer was a good second at Chepstow; unexposed at this trip **Danger** My Sand Boy

5.55 Handicap (£2,983: 6f) (11)
1 (9) 650-0 **MY GENGHIS** 23 A Carroll 5-9-9 **W Carson**
2 (7) 30340 **ONE HART** 3 (B,D) D Donovan 7-9-7 **S D Bowen (5)**
3 (11) 1530- **FIRENZE ROSA** 194 (P,C,D) R Cook & J Bridger 9-9-6 **Gina Mangan (3)**
4 (3) 0-514 **SCRAMBLE** 72 (B,D) C Allen 4-9-4 **J Leavy (5)**
5 (1) 22500 **CONFEDERATION** 36 (T,C) D Cunha 4-9-4 **R Clutterbuck**
6 (5) 1435- **VOODOO RAY** 194 (B,CD) G L Moore 5-9-4 **S W Kelly**
7 (2) 00-20 **BERNARD SPIERPOINT** 7 (T,V,CD) Darryll Holland 7-9-4 **P Cosgrave**
8 (10) 5-000 **PEGGOTY** 19 (D) C Poulton 5-9-4 **Jack Enright (7)**
9 (4) 30040 **AUTUMN FLIGHT** 17 (B,E,CD) P McEntee 8-9-0 **Grace McEntee (3)**
10 (6) 4-605 **MY KIND OF GIRL** 20 A Carroll 4-9-0 **Jack Doughty (7)**
11 (8) 0350- **MY BONNIE LASSIE** 301 (V,D) J & S Best 5-9-0 **J Crowley**

9-2 Scramble, 5-1 Confederation, 6-1 One Hart, Voodoo Ray, 7-1 My Genghis, 8-1 Autumn Flight, Bernard Spierpoint, 10-1 My Kind Of Girl.

Wright choice: Scramble has improved since dropped to this distance **Dangers** Confederation, Voodoo Ray

Catterick
Rob Wright

5.10 Asmund
5.45 Englemere
6.20 Lord Torranaga
6.55 Object (nb)
7.25 Highfield Viking (nap)
7.55 Kodi Lion
8.25 Trilby

Going soft, good to soft in places
Draw no advantage — **Racing TV**

5.10 Handicap (£3,664: 7f) (13)
1 (8) 00-25 **LANGHOLM** 10 (T,BF,CD) M Dods 8-9-13 **C Beasley**
2 (11) 50040 **HAILEY YA MAL** 10 A Brittain 4-9-12 **C Hardie**
3 (6) 526-4 **ASMUND** 30 (B,D) D Carroll 7-9-12 **H Shaw**
4 (1) 05-30 **ROCKIN ROSA** 14 (P,BF,D) R Carr 4-9-12 **Joanna Mason**
5 (3) 35-66 **KEY LOOK** 53 (P,CD) G Harker 7-9-10 **Brandon Wilkie (5)**
6 (13) 140-0 **MR TREVOR** 21 (H,D) Mrs A Duffield 6-9-9 **D Allan**
7 (7) 5004- **CHATTEL VILLAGE** 231 (P) J Wainwright 4-9-8 **P Mulrennan**
8 (2) -5040 **RUM RUNNER** 39 (CD) G Harker 9-9-6 **S Gray**
9 (5) -0004 **SHOTLEY ROYALE** 4 R Carr 4-9-5 **JP Sullivan**
10 (9) 00-00 **VARIETY ISLAND** 22 (P) S Whitaker 5-9-5 **P Dennis**
11(10) /000- **MEGATRON** 209 R Barr 4-9-5 **J Peate (3)**
12(12) 6-000 **ESSENCIAL** 20 (B,D) L Bailey 5-9-5 **B Garritty**
13 (4) 0040- **MISS SNUGGLES** 211 Mrs A Duffield 5-9-5 **D Nolan**

3-1 Langholm, 9-2 Shotley Royale, 5-1 Asmund, 6-1 Rockin Rosa, 8-1 Key Look, Variety Island, 14-1 Rum Runner, 20-1 Hailey Ya Mal, Megatron, others.

5.45 Restricted Maiden Fillies' Stakes (2-Y-O: £4,050: 5f) (8)
1 (1) 03 **BIG BUG** 11 (T) Martin Dunne 9-2 **P Mulrennan**
2 (8) 5 **CHEERLEADER** 22 K R Burke 9-2 **P-L Jamin**
3 (7) 2 **ENGLEMERE** 11 G Boughey 9-2 **Billy Loughnane**
4 (2) **IWO JIMA** Craig Lidster 9-2 **T Eaves**
5 (4) 65 **PADDY'S COURAGE** 32 Darryll Holland 9-2 **J F Egan**
6 (6) 3 **SOLID BOND** 10 D Carroll 9-2 **H Shaw**
7 (5) **TEQUILA ROSE** Miss A Murphy 9-2 **J Hart**
8 (3) **WONDROUS WAYS** O Pears 9-2 **C Hardie**

6-5 Englemere, 7-2 Solid Bond, 7-1 Paddy's Courage, 8-1 Cheerleader, 10-1 Big Bug, 14-1 Tequila Rose, 20-1 Iwo Jima, Wondrous Ways.

6.20 Handicap (£3,664: 1m 6f) (14)
1 (9) 3-536 **COLD HENRY** 85 (C) Sara Ender 5-9-11 **Joanna Mason**
2 (8) 224-5 **LORD TORRANAGA** 17 (P,CD) P Kirby 9-9-10 **C Beasley**
3 (2) 33133 **NEY** 40 (B,BF) D Brooke 6-9-8 **B Garritty**
4 (7) 422-6 **TARBAT NESS** 28 (P) J Berry 5-9-7 **Billy Loughnane**
5 (5) 6-352 **PRINCE HECTOR** 38 J Bedi 6-9-6 **Paula Muir (3)**
6 (3) 5000- **RULER OF THE RIVER** J25 (P,T) S England 4-9-5 **P Mulrennan**
7 (4) 0-344 **TWOFORTHEGUTTER** 17 (P) C Kellett 4-9-5 **J Hart**
8 (12) 23303 **STOLEN ENCOUNTER** 26 (B) A Watson 4-9-3 **Laura Coughlan (3)**
9 (13) 5500- **JAMIH** 209 (C) Miss T Jackson 9-9-2 **Mark Winn (3)**
10 (6) 1000- **ODD VENTURE** J133 M Hammond 7-9-1 **A Brookes (5)**
11(14) 53-50 **FREEWHEELIN** 58 J Norton 6-9-0 **A Breslin (3)**
12(11) 06644 **SUGARPIEHONEYBUNCH** 6 (P,BF,C) S G West 6-9-0 **JP Sullivan**
13 (1) 06500 **BROCTUNE AZURE** 22 G Boanas 6-9-0 **J Peate (3)**
14(10) 655-6 **A DAY TO DREAM** 45 O Pears 4-8-13 **C Hardie**

9-2 Ney, 6-1 Cold Henry, 7-1 Tarbat Ness, Stolen Encounter, Lord Torranaga, Prince Hector, 8-1 Twoforthegutter, Sugarpiehoneybunch, others.

6.55 Handicap (£3,664: 5f) (8)
1 (1) 00-04 **FORTUNATE STAR** 10 (B,BF,D) D Carroll 4-9-9 **Z Wheatley (5)**
2 (8) 0123- **DREAM DEAL** 224 (T,BF,C) D Brooke 5-9-9 **J Garritty**
3 (4) 2-514 **LATIN FIVE** 39 (D) P Midgley 7-9-7 **Ryan Sexton**
4 (2) 525-1 **OBJECT** 6 (P,CD) T Easterby 5-9-6 **D Allan**
5 (5) 3-432 **HIGH OPINION** 10 (D) B Smart 5-9-5 **A Breslin (3)**
6 (6) -0605 **MURBIH** 6 (B,D) A Brittain 5-9-4 **C Hardie**
7 (3) 204-0 **TANTALUS** 36 B Haslam 4-9-1 **P Mulrennan**
8 (7) 250-0 **PROBABLE** 59 (H) P Morris 4-8-5 **A Brookes (5)**

9-4 Object, 7-2 Dream Deal, 4-1 High Opinion, 5-1 Fortunate Star, 6-1 Latin Five, 16-1 Tantalus, Murbih, 66-1 Probable.

7.25 Handicap (£4,187: 7f) (10)
1 (7) 653-5 **SHOWTIME MAHOMES** 33 (D) G Tuer 5-9-9 **H Shaw**
2 (3) 2-014 **HIGHFIELD VIKING** 8 (B,D) J & S Quinn 4-9-7 **J Hart**
3 (5) 03-30 **MUTANAASEQ** 6 (CD) R Carr 9-9-7 **JP Sullivan**
4 (1) 200-0 **SLINGSBYTOO** 27 (C) M & D Easterby 4-9-4 **Joanna Mason**
5 (2) -0006 **BOWMAN** 30 (W,D) D Brooke 6-9-4 **J Garritty**
6 (4) 4-043 **RUSSCO** 21 (B,D) Mrs A Duffield 6-9-0 **D Allan**
7 (6) 4-660 **VONDELPARK** 21 Sara Ender 4-9-0 **Billy Loughnane**
8 (9) 50050 **SLUZEWIEC** 41 (D) S Dixon 5-8-12 **K O'Neill**
9 (8) 004-0 **REDROSEZORRO** 27 (P,CD) C Kellett 10-8-11 **C Howarth (3)**
10(10) 650-0 **RUN THIS WAY** 21 (BF,D) P Midgley 6-8-9 **C Hardie**

3-1 Highfield Viking, 7-2 Showtime Mahomes, 5-1 Russco, 8-1 Run This Way, Mutanaaseq, 10-1 Bowman, 12-1 Vondelpark, Slingsbytoo, others.

7.55 Restricted Maiden Stakes (£5,400: 6f) (6)
1 (1) **CASH IN** T Easterby 3-9-5 **D Allan**
2 (6) 00 **EVELYN'S PHOENIX** 10 T Easterby 3-9-5 **D Fentiman**
3 (2) 3-6 **KODI LION** 24 (BF) C Fellowes 3-9-5 **C Rodriguez**
4 (5) 30 **YORKSHIRE GLORY** 28 B Haslam 3-9-3 **A Breslin (3)**
5 (4) 0-4 **DUSK DAME** 15 (T) Alice Haynes 3-8-12 **K O'Neill**
6 (3) 6-023 **MORAL STANDARDS** 6 G Tuer 3-8-12 **H Shaw**

7-4 Kodi Lion, 5-2 Moral Standards, 11-4 Dusk Dame, 8-1 Cash In, 14-1 Yorkshire Glory, 33-1 Evelyn's Phoenix.

8.25 Apprentice Handicap (£4,187: 6f) (8)
1 (2) 56-32 **SLAINTE MHATH** 10 (D) K Scott 6-9-9 **Ryan Sexton**
2 (8) 4600- **KODI RED** 130 (D) Darryll Holland 4-9-8 **C Howarth**
3 (5) -1614 **JUNGLE CHARM** 20 (BF,D) A Watson 4-9-8 **Laura Coughlan**
4 (4) 3-151 **TRILBY** 3 (CD) S England 4-9-8(5ex) **Tom Kiely-Marshall (7)**
5 (6) 063-0 **MUSIC SOCIETY** 10 (CD) T Easterby 9-9-6 **A Fielding (7)**
6 (1) -0205 **CRYPTO QUEST** 18 (D) G Tutty 5-9-4 **Brandon Wilkie (3)**
7 (7) 656-0 **TICKETS** 43 B Haslam 5-8-9 **A Breslin**
8 (3) 030-5 **HIGHJACKED** 21 (BF,D) J J Davies 8-8-6 **Amie Waugh (3)**

11-4 Trilby, 7-2 Jungle Charm, 4-1 Slainte Mhath, 5-1 Highjacked, 8-1 Crypto Quest, 12-1 Music Society, 14-1 Tickets, 16-1 Kodi Red.

Blinkered first time:
Brighton 5.55 One Hart; My Bonnie Lassie. **Catterick** 5.10 Essencial. **Yarmouth** 2.40 Standbackandlook.

Course specialists

Brighton: Trainers J Fanshawe, 4 from 10 runners, 40.0%; M Tregoning, 7 from 18, 38.9%; R Varian, 7 from 19, 36.8%; C Mason, 3 from 10, 30.0%. **Jockeys** J Fanning, 4 from 11 rides, 36.4%; D C Costello, 3 from 15, 20.0%; Grace McEntee, 6 from 33, 18.2%.

Catterick: Trainers A Murphy, 3 from 12, 25.0%; C Lidster, 4 from 18, 22.2%; K Burke, 18 from 84, 21.4%. **Jockeys** K O'Neill, 6 from 13 rides, 46.2%; M Winn, 5 from 22, 22.7%; B Garritty, 12 from 61, 19.7%.

Yarmouth: Trainers H Morrison, 4 from 10, 40.0%; Sir M Prescott, 10 from 34, 29.4%; W Haggas, 30 from 111, 27.0%. **Jockeys** Hollie Doyle, 30 from 118, 25.4%; James Doyle, 11 from 47, 23.4%; K Stott, 3 from 14, 21.4%; O Murphy, 16 from 75, 21.3%.

Yarmouth
Rob Wright

2.10 Gordon Grey
2.40 Honrado
3.15 Red Pixie
3.50 At Vimeiro
4.25 Elladonna
5.00 Elderflower
5.35 Merrimack

Going good to soft
Draw no advantage — **Sky Sports Racing**

2.10 Handicap (£3,768: 1m 2f) (10)
1 (6) 50666 **EKLIL** 17 (T,D) A Irvine 5-9-11 **R Kingscote**
2 (1) 03022 **GORDON GREY** 17 (T) B Brookhouse 4-9-11 **J Gilligan**
3 (5) 640- **DARKZIDEOFTHEMOON** 167 J Butler 4-9-11 **Liam Wright (7)**
4 (8) 04-32 **OYAMAL** 40 P McEntee 4-9-9 **H Doyle**
5 (10) 5-305 **AIM FOR THE MOON** 63 (T) M Wigham 7-9-9 **D Keenan**
6 (2) -0411 **MC'TED** 24 (CD) J Parr 6-9-9 **Alice Bond (7)**
7 (7) 4-504 **KATSTAR** 17 (B) Harry Eustace 4-9-5 **O Murphy**
8 (9) 2050- **LOVERS' LANE** 390 K Frost 5-9-5 **C Fallon**
9 (3) -3355 **STINTINO SUNSET** 68 (H,D) J Feilden 4-9-3 **Dylan Hogan**
10 (4) 020-0 **ELJAYTEE** 17 (B,CD) J Berry 6-8-7 **S De Sousa**

3-1 Mc'ted, 7-2 Gordon Grey, 5-1 Oyamal, 6-1 Katstar, 10-1 Aim For The Moon, Stintino Sunset, 12-1 Eklil, 16-1 Eljaytee, Darkzideofthemoon, 20-1 others.

2.40 Handicap (3-Y-O: £3,768: 1m 2f) (9)
1 (6) 00-6 **EAST INDIA DOCK** 17 J Fanshawe 9-10 **C Shepherd**
2 (1) 600-0 **INAPPROPRIATE** 17 Harry Eustace 9-9 **G Wood**
3 (9) 000- **STANDBACKANDLOOK** 263 (B,H) W Knight 9-8 **C Fallon**
4 (3) 060-3 **PAPAGEI** 48 (BF) J Ferguson 9-8 **S Osborne**
5 (2) 4000- **MISS GITANA** 241 Sir M Prescott 9-7 **J Gilligan**
6 (4) -2220 **MON ETOILE** 48 C Johnston 9-7 **J Mitchell**
7 (8) 0-54 **BUDDING** 105 H Morrison 9-6 **O Murphy**
8 (7) 400- **HONRADO** 180 (H) M Bell 9-3 **H Crouch**
9 (5) -5550 **JAUNTY DANCER** 17 C Dunnett 8-9 **J Haynes**

3-1 Papagei, 4-1 Miss Gitana, 9-2 Budding, 5-1 East India Dock, 7-1 Inappropriate, 10-1 Mon Etoile, Honrado, 12-1 others.

3.15 Maiden Fillies' Stakes (£4,320: 7f) (14)
1 (13) 6/5- **LOVE IS A ROSE** 354 M Wigham 4-10-1 **A Keeley (3)**
2 (5) 0- **ALABAMA ANNA** 197 Harry Charlton 3-9-2 **James Doyle**
3 (2) **AMERICAN ARROW** E Walker 3-9-2 **S Osborne**
4 (6) **BOOGIE NIGHTS** C Fellowes 3-9-2 **C Shepherd**
5 (4) **CAT NINJA** J & T Gosden 3-9-2 **K Shoemark**
6 (8) **DISQUIETUDE** J Butler 3-9-2 **Liam Wright (7)**
7 (11) 0-0 **GLIMPSE THE MOON** 13 K P De Foy 3-9-2 **B Sayette**
8 (10) **ICECAP** P Owens 3-9-2 **J Mitchell**
9 (1) 4- **RED PIXIE** 181 Sir M Stoute 3-9-2 **R Kingscote**
10 (3) **RUN AWAY** A Balding 3-9-2 **O Murphy**
11 (7) **RUNNING SPIRIT** J & T Gosden 3-9-2 **R Havlin**
12(12) 02- **SHY HI BYE** 172 (BF) W Haggas 3-9-2 **K Stott**
13 (9) 5- **TAMBOURINE DREAM** 158 (H) J Fanshawe 3-9-2 **R Coakley**
14(14) 0- **TEATIME** 178 J Chapple-Hyam 3-9-2 **H Doyle**

7-2 Running Spirit, 4-1 Cat Ninja, 5-1 Red Pixie, Shy Hi Bye, 6-1 others.

3.50 Maiden Stakes (£4,320: 1m) (11)
1 (3) 4- **ALMAQAM** 188 E Walker 3-9-2 **S Osborne**
2 (9) 500- **AT VIMEIRO** 188 (BF) J Chapple-Hyam 3-9-2 **H Doyle**
3 (11) 6- **CAMPAIGN MEDAL** 178 (BF) J & T Gosden 3-9-2 **R Havlin**
4 (4) **ENGLISH HARBOUR** R Varian 3-9-2 **J Mitchell**
5 (2) **LEGEND OF KINGS** J Ferguson 3-9-2 **O Murphy**
6 (7) 6- **LORD OF LOVE** 176 (H) J & T Gosden 3-9-2 **K Shoemark**
7 (10) 0 **MINI PUNTER** 11 B Meehan 3-9-2 **C Shepherd**
8 (5) **RETRACEMENT** W Haggas 3-9-2 **T Marquand**
9 (1) 44- **SECRET BEACH** 305 B Brookhouse 3-9-2 **J Gilligan**
10 (6) 0- **SO DEUCE** 179 (W,H) R Varian 3-9-2 **James Doyle**
11 (8) 0 **JONATHAN'S LADY** 17 C Dunnett 3-8-11 **J Haynes**

9-4 At Vimeiro, 11-2 Lord Of Love, 6-1 Retracement, 7-1 Almaqam, So Deuce, 8-1 English Harbour, 10-1 Legend Of Kings, Campaign Medal, others.

4.25 Handicap (£5,653: 1m) (13)
1 (6) 25-66 **MOBASHR** 17 (H,D) M Appleby 6-9-9 **T Marquand**
2 (10) 405-0 **SIAM FOX** 19 (CD) K Frost 6-9-9 **C Fallon**
3 (3) 330-6 **DOUBLE TIME** 26 (H,D) Sir M Todd 6-9-7 **O Murphy**
4 (11) /213- **PRISHA** 239 (CD) Tom Clover 4-9-6 **J Mitchell**
5 (1) 241-5 **ELLADONNA** 20 (BF,D) J Fanshawe 4-9-5 **R Coakley**
6 (12) 610- **DREAMROCKER** 199 E Walker 4-9-4 **S Osborne**
7 (8) 33521 **GREAT BLASKET** 21 (B,D) Dr R Newland & J Insole 4-9-4 **K Shoemark**
8 (4) -0162 **SHOT OF LOVE** 52 (B,H) M Appleby 4-9-4 **A Rawlinson**
9 (13) 006-5 **YANTARNI** 35 (D) I Williams 5-9-3 **R Kingscote**
10 (2) 00-26 **TARAVARA** 39 (D) S Pearce 6-9-1 **H Doyle**
11 (9) 0120- **WHERE'S FREDDY** 202 (T) S C Williams 4-8-12 **S De Sousa**
12 (5) 43000 **SHAW PARK** 49 S Dixon 5-8-10 **Elisha Whittington (3)**
13 (7) 4554 **ADELABELLA** 17 M Wigham 4-8-6 **A Keeley (3)**

5-1 Great Blasket, 11-2 Elladonna, 6-1 Prisha, 7-1 Mobashr, 8-1 Shot Of Love, 10-1 Dreamrocker, Siam Fox, Double Time.

5.00 Fillies' Handicap (£5,653: 7f) (11)
1 (11) 2636- **CONSERVATIONIST** 214 K Ryan 4-10-2 **James Doyle**
2 (3) 1012- **RAJINDRI** 221 (CD) Tom Clover 4-10-1 **O Murphy**
3 (2) 310- **QUEEN'S REIGN** 262 (D) E Walker 3-9-5 **S Osborne**
4 (10) 560-0 **BAILEYS POLKA DOT** 72 Miss A Murphy 3-9-0 **S De Sousa**
5 (1) 2221- **NIGHTEYES** 267 D O'Meara 3-9-0 **H Crouch**
6 (6) 1100- **BIGGER THAN GIGA** 230 (D) K P De Foy 3-9-0 **B Sayette**
7 (8) 241-3 **ROYAL ELYSIAN** 21 J Ferguson 3-8-12 **H Doyle**
8 (4) 21-4 **BELLA BISBEE** 28 (BF) E Dunlop 3-8-11 **T Marquand**
9 (7) 134- **SHIN JIDAI** 213 (D) R Varian 3-8-10 **J Mitchell**
10 (9) 523-3 **RATING** 14 B Meehan 3-8-8 **C Planas (3)**
11 (5) 653- **ELDERFLOWER** 132 J Chapple-Hyam 3-8-2 **Jimmy Quinn**

3-1 Shin Jidai, 5-1 Rajindri, 11-2 Nighteyes, 7-1 Queen's Reign, 8-1 Bella Bisbee, 10-1 Conservationist, Royal Elysian, Rating, others.

5.35 'Confined' Handicap (3-Y-O: £3,768: 1m) (9)
1 (7) 006- **MERRIMACK** 280 (T) S & E Crisford 9-11 **R Coakley**
2 (2) 466- **ROGUE KING** 147 James Owen 9-9 **A Keeley (3)**
3 (5) 533- **BORN A REBEL** 139 (BF) P Owens 9-9 **B Sayette**
4 (4) 52-62 **BERRY CLEVER** 17 (BF) C Dwyer 9-8 **S De Sousa**
5 (8) 600- **LIA ROSE** 213 R Guest 9-7 **C Shepherd**
6 (3) 56-61 **MAGNIFICENT MATCH** 17 (CD) R Eddery 9-6 **K Shoemark**
7 (1) 6050 **MLEIHA** 13 (P) A Watson 9-2 **H Doyle**
8 (9) 5-500 **UNFORGETTABLE FIRE** 13 (H) B Meehan 8-6 **C Planas (3)**
9 (6) 000- **ACES HIGH** 206 S & E Crisford 8-4 **R Da Silva**

5-2 Berry Clever, 4-1 Magnificent Match, 5-1 Merrimack, 6-1 Rogue King, Born A Rebel, 10-1 Aces High, 12-1 Lia Rose, 20-1 Mleiha, 25-1 Unforgettable Fire.

Punchestown - selected
Rob Wright

3.40 Slade Steel
5.25 Banbridge
6.00 Sharjah

Going: good to yielding, good in places **Racing TV**

3.40 KPMG Champion Novice Hurdle (Grade I: £75,000: 2m 1f) (9)
1 4114- **ASIAN MASTER** 49 W P Mullins 7-11-12 **Mr T Costello**
2 6405- **FASCILE MODE** 30 (C) T Mullins 6-11-12 **S W Flanagan**
3 1432- **FIREFOX** 18 (D) G Elliott 6-11-12 **J W Kennedy**
4 1235- **ILE ATLANTIQUE** 17 W P Mullins 6-11-12 **D E Mullins**
5 2130- **KING OF KINGSFIELD** 46 (D) G Elliott 6-11-12 **J Gainford**
6 1121- **MYSTICAL POWER** 18 (H,CD) W P Mullins 5-11-12 **M P Walsh**
7 1121- **SLADE STEEL** 49 (T) H De Bromhead 6-11-12 **Rachael Blackmore**
8 2110- **TULLYHILL** 49 (T,BF,C) W P Mullins 6-11-12 **P Townend**
9 2116- **FUN FUN FUN** 30 (H,D) W P Mullins 6-11-5 **B Hayes**

11-8 Slade Steel, 5-2 Mystical Power, 6-1 Tullyhill, 7-1 Firefox, 14-1 others.

5.25 William Hill Champion Chase (Grade I: £180,000: 2m) (9)
1 1141- **ASH TREE MEADOW** 59 (T,D) G Elliott 8-11-12 **S Ewing**
2 1/10- **BANBRIDGE** 47 (P,D) J P O'Brien 8-11-12 **J J Slevin**
3 1P31- **CAPTAIN GUINNESS** 48 (CD) H De Bromhead 9-11-12 **Rachael Blackmore**
4 2/3F- **DYSART DYNAMO** 125 (T) W P Mullins 8-11-12 **S O'Keeffe**
5 2203- **FIL DOR** 29 (T) G Elliott 6-11-12 **J W Kennedy**
6 /242- **GENTLEMAN DE MEE** 48 (H,T,D) W P Mullins 8-11-12 **P Townend**
7 1F1P- **SAINT SAM** 29 (H,BF) W P Mullins 7-11-12 **D E Mullins**
8 1122- **DINOBLUE** 46 (BF,CD) W P Mullins 7-11-5 **M P Walsh**
9 4330- **MASKADA** 48 (T,D) H De Bromhead 8-11-5 **D J O'Keeffe**

2-1 Dinoblue, 3-1 Captain Guinness, 4-1 Banbridge, 5-1 others.

6.00 Dooley Insurance Group Champion Novice Chase (Grade I: £75,000: 3m 1f) (8)
1 1415- **AMERICAN MIKE** 48 (T) G Elliott 7-11-10 **J W Kennedy**
2 /112- **EMBASSY GARDENS** 49 (BF,C,D) W P Mullins 8-11-10 **P Townend**
3 /312- **MONTY'S STAR** 48 (C) H De Bromhead 7-11-10 **Rachael Blackmore**
4 120P- **SALVADOR ZIGGY** 49 (C) G Elliott 8-11-10 **J Gainford**
5 4224- **SANDOR CLEGANE** 48 (T) P Nolan 7-11-10 **S O'Keeffe**
6 3401- **SHARJAH** 10 (T) W P Mullins 11-11-10 **D E Mullins**
7 1121- **SPILLANE'S TOWER** 30 (C) J J Mangan 6-11-10 **M P Walsh**
8 6/22- **THREE CARD BRAG** 121 (P,BF) G Elliott 7-11-10 **S Ewing**

15-8 Monty's Star, 5-2 Spillane's Tower, 9-2 Embassy Gardens, 8-1 others.

Yesterday's racing results

Ayr
Going: good

2.15 (5f) 1, **Zabeel Road** (J Fanning, 4-1); 2, Harswell Dandy (11-4); 3, Far Above Mary (9-1). 6 ran. ½l, 1¾l. C Johnston.

2.45 (6f) 1, **Catherine Chroi** (Mohammed Tabti, 2-1 fav); 2, Global Humor (13-2); 3, Smalleytime (15-2). 8 ran. 1¼l, 1¾l. I Jardine.

3.15 (1m 2f) 1, **Fiver Friday** (D Allan, 4-1 fav); 2, Jean Baptiste (25-1); 3, Glasses Up (28-1). 14 ran. 1¼l, 2¼l. Paul Traynor.

3.50 (7f 50yd) 1, **Cue's Beau** (O J Orr, 7-1); 2, Phoenix Fire (9-1); 3, Al Muqdad (9-1). 9 ran. Hd, ns. E A L Dunlop.

4.25 (5f) 1, **Pinpoint** (D Nolan, 15-2); 2, Showboated (5-1); 3, Zaphea (5-1). 7 ran. ¾l, 2½l. Ewan Whillans.

5.00 (1m) 1, **Old Cock** (Callum Rodriguez, 1-4 fav); 2, Racing Vicar (28-1); 3, Strike Rate (12-1). 5 ran. 4¼l, 3¼l. E Bethell.

5.35 (1m 5f 26yd) 1, **Ebony Maw** (Rowan Scott, 4-1); 2, Tafsir (2-1 fav); 3, Billy Bathgate (11-2). 7 ran. NR: The Navigator. 1¼l, 4½l. Ewan Whillans.

Placepot: £236.00.
Quadpot: £70.00.

Southwell
Going: standard

2.00 (4f 214yd) 1, **Be Here Now** (Alex Jary, 16-5); 2, Cloud King (8-11 fav); 3, Torvar (13-2). 5 ran. ¾l, 2¾l. N Tinkler.

2.30 (4f 214yd) 1, **The Man** (K Shoemark, 10-3); 2, Storm Call (17-2); 3, Rajeteriat (9-2). 6 ran. 1l, 1l. R Spencer.

3.00 (1m 4f 14yd) 1, **High Order** (K Shoemark, 2-9 fav); 2, Emaculate Soldier (5-1); 3, Mr Zippi (50-1). 6 ran. NR: Sir Geoff Hurst. 13l, 12l. J T Gosden.

3.35 (1m 4f 14yd) 1, **Red Dwarf** (S De Sousa, 11-2); 2, Smart Charger (6-4 fav); 3, Camacho Man (66-1). 13 ran. 1l, 5l. J Butler.

4.10 (1m 13yd) 1, **Specialist View** (S De Sousa, 9-4 fav); 2, Masham Moor (7-2); 3, Kodebreaker (9-2). 9 ran. NR: Eva Rosie. 3½l, 2¼. C A Dwyer.

4.40 (1m 13yd) 1, **Billy McGarry** (Jason Hart, 6-1); 2, Amaysmont (5-1); 3, Copper Mountain (3-1). 9 ran. 2¼l, 2¾l. M Herrington.

5.15 (7f 14yd) 1, **Body Parts** (Joanna Mason, 9-1); 2, Khamsin (4-1 fav); 3, Mayo County (9-2). 10 ran. 2¾l, nk. G Tutty.

5.45 (2m 102yd) 1, **Young Endless** (Hollie Doyle, 4-1); 2, Two Past Eight (5-2 fav); 3, Churchella (7-2). 7 ran. Nk, ½l. L Morgan.

Placepot: £14.80. **Quadpot: £3.60.**

Windsor
Going: soft

4.34 (6f 12yd) 1, **Hearitfortheboys** (R Kingscote, 13-2); 2, Dark Dreamer (3-1 fav); 3, Split The Profit (7-2). 8 ran. NR: Bint Havana Gold, Hot Front. Nk, 1¼. A W Carroll.

5.09 (6f 12yd) 1, **The Amazon** (N Callan, 7-2); 2, Hector (50-1); 3, Two B Tanned (100-1). 7 ran. NR: Balmoral Lady, Idle Assembly. 4l, hd. J Tate.

5.39 (1m 2f) 1, **Lyric** (R Havlin, 9-4); 2, Master Builder (17-2); 3, Loving Look (25-1). 8 ran. NR: Incan Empire. 1¾l, 1¼. J T Gosden.

6.09 (1m 2f) 1, **Fighter Command** (R Havlin, 8-11 fav); 2, Liam Swagger (6-1); 3, Dramatic Star (7-1). 9 ran. Nk, 4¾l. J T Gosden.

6.39 (1m 2f) 1, **First Officer** (Sorin Moldoveanu, 11-2); 2, Asgard's Captain (11-2); 3, Fast Steps (5-2 fav). 8 ran. NR: Enthrallment, Morcar. 1¼, 1¼. Jane Chapple-Hyam.

7.09 (1m 3f 99yd) 1, **Naasma** (Paddy Bradley, 25-1); 2, Allonsy (2-1 fav); 3, Gold Aura (15-2). 12 ran. NR: Mrembo, Shalfa. Sh hd, 1¾l. P Phelan.

7.39 (1m 31yd) 1, **Hatadora** (K Stott, 7-4 fav); 2, Calm Waters (3-1); 3, Bramble Jelly (16-1). 12 ran. NR: Meet Me In Meraki. ½l, 2½l. R Hannon.

8.09 (5f 21yd) 1, **Antiphon** (Tom Marquand, 85-40 fav); 2, Mary Of Modena (16-1); 3, Safari Dream (11-4). 6 ran. NR: Level Up, Sarah's Verse, So Smart, Sugar Hill. Nk, ¾l. M Murphy M Keady.

Placepot: £128.90.
Quadpot: £9.70.

Wolverhampton
Going: standard

5.30 (1m 4f 51yd) 1, **Judgementofsolomon** (L Morris, 7-4); 2, Cock And Bull (Evens fav); 3, Doubletalk (10-1). 4 ran. Sh hd, 4l. Sir Mark Prescott.

6.00 (5f 21yd) 1, **Pro Bono Alexander** (Wayne Hassett, 17-2); 2, Rosy Affair (15-8 fav); 3, Make Clear (16-1). 7 ran. 3¼, 1¾l. W P Browne.

6.30 (6f 20yd) 1, **Star Pupil** (George Rooke, 5-2 fav); 2, Bluey's Boy (10-1); 3, Boadicia (9-2). 8 ran. Nk, ¾l. R Hughes.

7.00 (6f 20yd) 1, **Diamond Dreamer** (David Probert, 13-2); 2, Em Jay Kay (11-2); 3, Jungle Run (4-1). 8 ran. NR: Araifjan. ¾l, ¾l. P R Chamings.

7.30 (6f 20yd) 1, **White Umbrella** (David Probert, 5-1); 2, Big Dream (5-2 fav); 3, Blue Collar Lad (4-1). 9 ran. 1¾l, 2l. C N Kellett.

8.00 (1m 5f 219yd) 1, **Lawmans Blis** (Marco Ghiani, 11-4); 2, Gastronomy (9-4); 3, Surrey Belle (2-1 fav). 4 ran. NR: Clongowes, Percy Willis. 1l, 3l. I Furtado.

8.30 (7f 36yd) 1, **Bora Bora** (L Morris, 9-1); 2, Candy Warhol (11-1); 3, Streak Lightning (85-40 fav). 8 ran. Nk, nk. J Butler.

9.00 (1m 142yd) 1, **Dagmar Run** (Georgia Dobie, 13-2); 2, Devasboy (7-2); 3, Light Up Our Stars (9-4 jt-fav). 7 ran. NR: South Dakota Sioux. ¾l, ½l. D M Simcock.

Placepot: £261.20. **Quadpot: £30.70.**

Where title race could be won and lost

Our writers look for potential banana skins in fixtures that will decide whether Arsenal or City lift the trophy

There are seven games remaining that will decide the Premier League title. Mikel Arteta's Arsenal have three to go, while Manchester City have a crucial game in hand that could take them to a fourth consecutive success. We asked Times writers who cover the clubs involved to assess the chances of them taking points off the title hopefuls…

ARSENAL'S REMAINING FIXTURES

Bournemouth (home)
Saturday, 12.30pm
Hamzah Khalique-Loonat writes: Last season this was the match that had Arsenal fans believing they might just be able to pip City to the title, as Arteta's team turned a 2-0 deficit into a 3-2 victory, courtesy of Reiss Nelson's 97th-minute winning goal.

There are a few factors to consider this time: an early kick-off will, naturally, dampen the atmosphere; some of Bournemouth's most impressive displays have been on their travels; and Andoni Iraola's side have faced the fourth-lowest xG (expected goals) from set pieces, which are a key weapon for Arsenal.

But the south coast club's high press — a mix of man-to-man and zonal styles — will give Arsenal a rare chance to face opponents who do not sit back, and they have enough physicality to win their duels and exploit it — as they did in their 4-0 win at the Vitality Stadium.

Manchester United (away)
Sunday, May 12, 4.30pm
Paul Hirst: Based on recent performances, there is little to suggest United are capable of stopping the Arsenal juggernaut. Confidence is low after narrow wins over Coventry City and Sheffield United and a 1-1 draw with Burnley. Their only home victory of note this season came in the FA Cup against Liverpool. That day Marcus Rashford, Alejandro Garnacho and Bruno Fernandes were at their best. The home crowd fed off their energy and the atmosphere at Old Trafford was one of the best in the post-Sir Alex Ferguson era. United will need the same against Arsenal, and the return of Lisandro Martínez and Luke Shaw, who are due back in training this week, would help too.

Everton (home)
Sunday, May 19, 4pm
Paul Joyce: There should be no real expectation of Everton causing an upset against Arsenal on the final day of the season. Their record away to the north London side in the Premier League era reads: P31 W2 D5 L24 GF76 GA24. Carlo Ancelotti orchestrated the most recent success there, in April 2021, with a 1-0 victory courtesy of Bernd Leno's own goal; otherwise there have been some hefty beatings. When Frank Lampard's Everton went to the Emirates Stadium on the final day of the 2021-22 campaign, having just assured their top-flight status a few days before, they were walloped 5-1. Séan Dyche did not lose in either of his past two visits with Burnley, drawing and winning, but there had been five consecutive defeats before that.

MANCHESTER CITY'S REMAINING FIXTURES

Wolverhampton Wanderers (home)
Saturday, 5.30pm
Charlotte Duncker: Earlier in the season Wolves beat City 2-1 at Molineux to really kick-start the Gary O'Neil era at the club. It ended City's perfect start to the season, thanks to a Rúben Dias own goal and a strike from Hwang Hee-chan. They successfully man-marked Erling Haaland out of the game, with the Norway striker managing only 15 touches, and O'Neil hailed it as one of the biggest results of his career as a head coach.

A host of injuries has meant Wolves have lost their impressive form in the past couple of months, but they did beat Luton Town at the weekend, and with Matheus Cunha and Hwang back from injury, there is a small possibility they can cause an upset. O'Neil has masterminded one win against the champions, but with City improving it seems unlikely they will do the double over them.

Fulham (away)
Saturday, May 11, 12.30pm
Alyson Rudd: City are the visiting team for Fulham's last home game of the season, so do not expect Marco Silva's side to suddenly become defensive or inhibited. The fans will turn up expecting to be entertained given their sense of pride in how pretty Fulham's football has been this campaign.

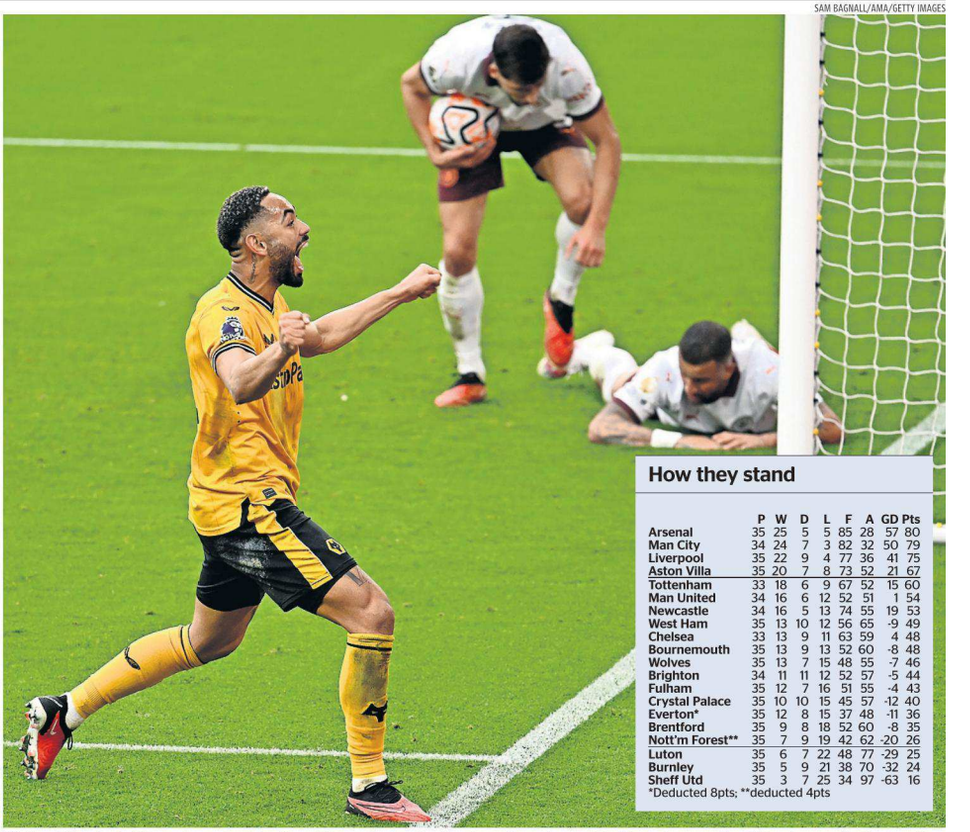
Silva promised his team would be professional in their approach to this match, but that relates to attitude rather than summoning a tactical masterclass. The Fulham defence is relatively robust and unlikely to be utterly picked apart. Now and again City stutter when a team choose not to be cowed by their evident superiority, but probably the very best Arsenal can hope for is a thrilling draw by the river.

Tottenham (away)
Tuesday, May 14, 8pm
Tom Allnutt: There will be a strange atmosphere at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium for this one. Would Spurs fans want to beat City and in effect hand Arsenal the title? And if the answer is absolutely not, how much does that affect the players?

Guardiola does not like facing Tottenham, who have an impressive record against City in recent years and who have stretched them twice already this season, in a 3-3 draw at the Etihad Stadium and a 1-0 defeat at home via a late Nathan Aké goal in the FA Cup. But Arsenal need to hope Spurs are in better form and still in contention for fourth. Otherwise motivation may be in short supply.

West Ham United (home)
Sunday, May 19, 4pm
Gary Jacob: Goals should be practically guaranteed by the combination of West Ham's porous defence and the team almost certainly having nothing to play for apart from prize money through their final league position. Lucas Paquetá will want to impress against the team he would like to join, and Jarrod Bowen and Michail Antonio are often a handful. Before talks on his future, manager David Moyes will be hoping to make a point to the club, having already orchestrated away wins against Arsenal, Tottenham and Brighton & Hove Albion this season.

SAM BAGNALL/AMA/GETTY IMAGES



Wolves' Cunha is fit again and set to face City on Saturday having played a part in the win over the title chasers in September

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Arsenal	35	25	5	5	85	28	57	80
Man City	34	24	7	3	82	32	50	79
Liverpool	35	22	9	4	77	36	41	75
Aston Villa	35	20	7	8	73	52	21	67
Tottenham	33	18	6	9	67	52	15	60
Man United	34	16	6	12	52	51	1	54
Newcastle	34	16	5	13	74	55	19	53
West Ham	35	13	10	12	56	65	-9	49
Chelsea	33	13	9	11	63	59	4	48
Bournemouth	35	13	9	13	52	60	-8	48
Wolves	35	13	7	15	48	55	-7	46
Brighton	34	11	11	12	52	57	-5	44
Fulham	35	12	7	16	51	55	-4	43
Crystal Palace	35	10	10	15	45	57	-12	40
Everton*	35	12	8	15	37	48	-11	36
Brentford	35	9	8	18	52	60	-8	35
Nott'm Forest**	35	7	9	19	42	62	-20	26
Luton	35	6	7	22	48	77	-29	25
Burnley	35	5	9	21	38	70	-32	24
Sheff Utd	35	3	7	25	34	97	-63	16

*Deducted 8pts; **deducted 4pts

Are White's set piece antics legal – and how do teams stop him?

Gary Jacob

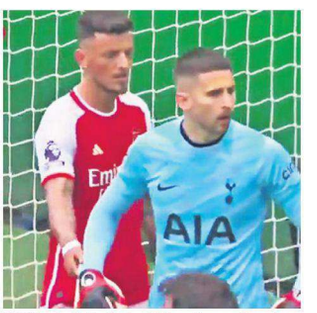
Arsenal may not win the Premier League this season but they appear to have an unassailable lead in one area: superiority from set pieces.

Two goals from corners in Sunday's 3-2 victory over Tottenham Hotspur took their total this season to 16 from corners, as many as have ever been scored by a team in one Premier League season. Their total from all set pieces, excluding penalties, is 22; the league's next most effective team, Everton, are four behind.

Who deserves the credit for Arsenal's pre-eminence at dead-ball situations? There is the obvious answer: Nicolas Jover, the 42-year-old French set piece coach who followed Mikel Arteta, the Arsenal manager, from Manchester City in 2019. But there is one player who has been fundamental to Arsenal's success and yet who doesn't have a single assist or goal from a corner.

Ben White's role is to be chief disruptor, causer of confusion and a general sly winder-upper of opponents. If Arsenal were trying to keep his stealthy antics under the radar, their cover was blown at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, where he was caught on camera attempting to undo the glove of Guglielmo Vicario before a corner, distracting the Spurs goalkeeper. When the ball was then delivered, Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg turned it into his own goal. Later in the first half White stood directly in front of Vicario, preventing him from making what might have been a routine catch so that Kai Havertz could score Arsenal's third.

Peter Walton, the former Premier League referee who is now a Times columnist, said White could have been booked for unsporting behaviour when he tried to unfasten the glove. However, since the ball was not in play at the time, the corner would still have been taken and the ensuing goal would still have been legal. "If White had actually loosened the glove and a goal was scored, then VAR could have intervened and flagged the incident to the referee," Walton said. "Perhaps, after the scrutiny, it will be something that officials are more proactively looking for."



White, left, irritated Vicario on Sunday

Players can stand where they like on the pitch, meaning White can legitimately take up a position in front of Vicario. A player commits an offence if they impede an opponent's progress, step across their path or block them. "If White moves across and impedes Vicario, it is an offence, but it is very difficult for referees to detect when they are looking at the flight of the ball, perhaps to the far post, and a player moves across the path," Walton said. "White has it down to art and it is down to the officials to detect."

White's methods began to be noticed last season. They backfired when a video review of his tug on Danny Ward, the Leicester City goalkeeper, led to Leandro Trossard's strike being disallowed in February. Two months later he wound up Illan Meslier by tapping the Leeds United goalkeeper on the arm before the ball was delivered.

In the 5-0 win against Crystal Palace in January, White stood in front of the Palace goalkeeper Dean Henderson and two slightly deeper corners were each headed in by Gabriel.

Former professionals will say there is nothing new about what White is doing. Kevin Nolan and John Terry performed similar jobs for Bolton Wanderers and Chelsea, respectively, two decades ago. As teams got wise to them, players like Gary Neville were shoehorned in front of their goalkeeper to usher the disruptors out of the way.

It is perhaps no surprise that Arsenal have profited least from White's manoeuvres against more wily teams and referees in the Champions League, where officials are often stricter. In the round-of-16 tie against Porto, Guillermo Varela used his back to lever White clear of Diogo Costa, the goalkeeper, and Porto won a number of fouls while defending set pieces.

Now it is for Premier League opponents to remember to pay close attention to White at set pieces.

Vintage Vardy display ensures Leicester go up as champions

Preston	**0**
Leicester City *Vardy 36, 52, McAteer 67*	**3**

Charlotte Duncker

If this turns out to be the end for Jamie Vardy in a Leicester City shirt then he is leaving with yet another Sky Bet Championship winners' medal, having scored another two goals that pushed them to the title.

It had to be him, didn't it? "Vardy's having a party," was the chant from the away supporters long before his first goal had gone in, and the 37-year-old wasn't the only one celebrating as Enzo Maresca's side were crowned Championship champions.

Maresca, the Leicester manager, knows where he will be next season but what about Vardy? His contract expires at the end of the campaign so this could have been his final swansong for the club he has called home since 2012.

He said before the match that he isn't ready to retire and the Leicester fans know what they want to see from the club's third-highest goalscorer of all time as they called on the board to sign him up for ten more years.

"I feel fresh. I look after myself," Vardy said. "I'm fortunate enough where I can put all the recovery stuff in my house. I'll carry on doing it. I'll look forward to next week now and see what happens."

It was a night that belonged to the veteran forward, who scored his 17th and 18th league goals of the campaign, not a bad return given he had started only 16 times because of spells out with injury. Maybe he will not have the fitness levels for Leicester's return to the top flight but it is that instinct and movement that could continue to be so important for the East Midlands club.

His first was a scuffed shot but he finished off yet another good Leicester move. Abdul Fatawu pushed down the right and played the ball to the overlapping Yunus Akgun, who cut it back for Vardy to give the visiting team the lead. It was not the cleanest of the 17 goals he had scored this season but he would not have cared.

At least his second was more emphatic. Wout Faes charged into Preston North End's penalty area, beating three players on his way, cut inside and struck a shot that came back off a post for the waiting Vardy to fire in.

"Jamie Vardy is Leicester," Maresca said. "He's going to score goals way into him being 45 years old because it's in his blood to score goals. We're very lucky he's our player."

So will Vardy be staying? And have those conversations been held?

"Not yet because the target was to finish in the right way. We have a game on Saturday and then we sit down," the Leicester manager added. "My feeling is that he is going to stay. If it was my decision he'd stay."

Given that Preston had failed to score in five of their previous six games this month, the result felt inevitable. They had nothing to play for and the tempo, intensity and quality of their display reflected that.

Even with four changes to their starting XI and a squad who had been celebrating their promotion over the weekend, with parties at Maresca's house and the club's Seagrave training base, Leicester dominated throughout.

The 5,725 Leicester fans in the Bill Shankly Kop had come armed with inflatables, beachballs and balloons to create a sea of colour and, by 10pm, they had more than promotion to celebrate as their side were confirmed as champions. With Blackburn Rovers visiting the King Power at the weekend, Maresca's side are aiming to finish on 100 points. What this squad will look like in the top flight, with the sanctions coming their way for alleged breaches of financial regulations, nobody knows.

But that is a problem for another day. As they sprayed each other with champagne and ran the length of the pitch to slide on the wet grass in front of their adoring supporters, it was a moment for celebration; Leicester are back in the Premier League again.

8
Leicester City are the first team to win the second tier eight times. They had been level with Manchester City on seven

PLUMB IMAGES/LEICESTER CITY/GETTY IMAGES

Vardy, who scored his 17th and 18th goals of the season, starts the celebrations after firing Leicester to the Championship title

How they stand

	P	W	D	L	F	A	GD	Pts
Leicester (C)	45	31	4	10	89	39	50	97
Leeds	45	27	9	9	80	41	39	90
Ipswich	44	26	12	6	88	56	32	90
S'hampton	45	25	9	11	85	62	23	84
Norwich	45	21	10	14	79	63	16	73
West Brom	45	20	12	13	67	47	20	72
Hull	45	19	13	13	68	59	9	70
Middlesbro	45	19	9	17	68	61	7	66
Coventry	44	17	13	14	68	55	13	64
Preston	45	18	9	18	56	64	-8	63
Bristol City	45	17	11	17	53	47	6	62
Cardiff	45	19	5	21	51	65	-14	62
Swansea	45	15	12	18	59	64	-5	57
Watford	45	13	17	15	60	58	2	56
Sunderland	45	16	8	21	52	52	0	56
Millwall	45	15	11	19	44	55	-11	56
QPR	45	14	11	20	45	57	-12	53
Stoke	45	14	11	20	45	60	-15	53
Blackburn	45	13	11	21	58	74	-16	50
Sheff Wed	45	14	8	23	42	68	-26	50
Plymouth	45	12	12	21	58	70	-12	48
Birmingham	45	12	11	22	49	65	-16	47
Huddersfield	45	9	18	18	48	75	-27	45
Rotherham (R)	45	4	12	29	32	87	-55	24

Liverpool expect Salah to stay put

Paul Joyce
Northern Football Correspondent

Liverpool expect Mohamed Salah to remain at the club next season as he enters the final year of his existing contract.

The Egypt international's touchline spat with Jürgen Klopp at the London Stadium on Saturday prompted new questions about Salah's future, but there has never been any suggestion he wants to quit Anfield in the summer.

Instead the intention is that Salah, who turns 32 in June, will have an important role in the club's future under Arne Slot, who is set to be officially confirmed as Klopp's successor. The new sporting director, Richard Hughes, will lead talks on a fresh deal for Salah before the forward's contract ends in the summer of 2025.

Liverpool have been willing to allow players to leave on free transfers rather than renew contracts in the recent past, albeit not with someone of Salah's stature. Trent Alexander-Arnold and Virgil van Dijk are also heading into the final 12 months of their deals.

Last summer there was interest in Salah from the Saudi Arabian side Al-Ittihad, who had a £100 million bid, plus £50 million in add-ons, rejected. While recruiting a figure as high-profile as Salah would represent a coup for the Saudi Pro League, there is little belief that the player wants to move there at this stage of his career.

Liverpool will be guaranteed a Champions League spot next season should Tottenham Hotspur fail to beat Chelsea in the Premier League on Thursday, and the chance to take on Europe's elite again will appeal to Salah. In addition, Michael Edwards, the chief executive of football at Fenway Sports Group, which owns Liverpool, is a huge advocate of Salah. Edwards persuaded Klopp to sign him in 2017 from Roma for an initial £34 million.

It has proved one of the best transfers in Liverpool's history, with Salah this season becoming the first player to score 20 goals in seven consecutive campaigns. However, his form has dipped in the second half of the campaign after two hamstring injuries.

Salah has been on the substitutes' bench in recent matches and returned to the sidelines again after last week's derby defeat by Everton. He was waiting to come on in the match against West Ham United when he took offence to a remark from Klopp and gestured repeatedly at his manager.

Klopp said after the match the issue had been dealt with, only for Salah to tell reporters: "If I speak today there will be fire." Klopp is set to face further questions on the matter before Sunday's home game against Tottenham.

Silva to leave Chelsea

Thiago Silva has confirmed he will leave Chelsea at the end of the season after 151 appearances for the club.

The 39-year-old joined from Paris Saint-Germain in 2020 and went on to become a linchpin in the heart of the defence at Stamford Bridge.

In announcing his departure, he said he hoped to return to the club "in another role" soon.

In a video posted on the club's website, Silva said: "Chelsea means a lot to me. I came here with the intention of only staying for a year and it ended up being four years.

"I hope to leave the door open so that in the near future I can return, albeit in another role here."

Gillingham sack Clemence

Gillingham have sacked their head coach Stephen Clemence after only five months in the job after their failure to push for promotion to League One this season.

The club finished the campaign 12th in League Two, six points shy of the play-off places, and a statement announcing the departures of Clemence and his assistant head coach Robbie Stockdale said that "the results have not met the expectations set by the club".

The 46-year-old Clemence, son of the former England goalkeeper Ray Clemence, was in his first head coach role at Gillingham, having been appointed in November.

Rubiales appears in court

Luis Rubiales, the disgraced former Spanish soccer federation president, will have to appear before a court in Madrid at least once a month and will need permission to leave the country, a Spanish judge said yesterday.

A Madrid court has been investigating whether Rubiales committed a crime of improper management when the federation agreed with former Barcelona player Gerard Pique's Kosmos firm to relocate the Spanish Super Cup to Saudi Arabia in a deal worth a reported €120 million (£102.4 million). Rubiales denied any wrongdoing after his testimony yesterday. He is also accused of business corruption.

Results

Cricket

IPL, match 47
Dehli Capitals v Kolkata Knight Riders
Eden Gardens (Dehli won toss): Knight Riders beat Capitals by seven wickets
DC: 153-9 (K Yadav 35 not out, R Pant 27; V Chakravarthy 3 for 16); **KKR 157-3** (P Salt 68, S Iyer 33 not out; A Patel 2 for 25);

Football

Sky Bet Championship
Preston 0 Leicester 3.
Table and report, see above

Snooker

World Snooker Championships
Second round R O'Sullivan (Eng) bt R Day (Wales) 13-7; K Wilson (Eng) bt J O'Connor (Eng) 13-6; J Higgins (Scot) bt M Allen (N Ire) 13-12; S Bingham (Eng) bt J Lisowski (Eng) 13-11.

Tennis

Mutua Madrid Open
ATP Tour: Men's third round
F Auger-Aliassime (Can) bt J Mensik (Cz) 6-1, 1-0 retired; (5) C Ruud (Nor) bt (29) C Norrie (GB) 6-2, 6-4; (3) D Medvedev (Russ) bt (25) S Korda (US) 5-7, 7-6 (7-4), 6-3; (17) A Bublik (Kaz) bt (14) B Shelton (US) 3-6, 7-6 (7-2), 6-4; R Nadal (Sp) t P Cachin (Arg) 6-1, 6-7 (5-7), 6-3; (30) J Lehecka (Cz) bt T Monteiro (Br) 6-4, 7-6 (9-7); (1) J Sinner (It) bt P Kotov (Russ) 6-2, 7-5; (16) K Khachanov (Russ) bt F Cobolli (It) 7-5, 6-4.
WTA Tour: Women's fourth round
(1) I Swiatek (Pol) bt S Sorribes Tormo (Sp) 6-1, 6-0; (11) B Haddad Maia (Br) bt (5) M Sakkari (Gr) 6-4, 6-4; (18) M Keys (US) bt (3) C Gauff (US) 7-6 (7-4), 4-6, 6-4; (8) O Jabeur (Tun) bt (9) J Ostapenko (Lat) 6-0, 6-4; M Andreeva (Russ) bt (12) J Paolini (It) 7-6 (7-2), 6-4; (14) E Rybakina (Kaz) bt S Bejlek (Cz) 6-1, 6-3; Y Putintseva (Kaz) bt D Kasatkina (Russ) 3-6, 6-2, 6-2.

Fixtures

Football

Champions League semi-final first leg
Bayern Munich v Real Madrid (8.0)
Championship
Coventry City v Ipswich Town (8.0).

Snooker

World Snooker Championships

‘Extraordinary’ Bellingham can

James Gheerbrant
Munich

So here we are then. Nine and ten months respectively after their seismic summer moves, 63 goals and 23 assists later, it’s Harry v Jude in the Champions League semi-finals. They’ve already beaten great teams, great records, great expectations, and now they’ve beaten a path to each other.

The two best English players in a generation, two ambassadors in their pomp, two stars of different auras and orbits but of equal brilliance. They chose their clubs last summer with an eye on the biggest prize of all and now they face off with a Wembley final on the line.

Though their individual accomplishments have been commensurate, Bellingham and Kane have had very different seasons. The golden boy is practically assured of a La Liga winner’s medal; the England captain has seen his club denied the Bundesliga title for the first time in 12 seasons. Real Madrid arrive at this crucial juncture in their usual state of resplendent serenity; Bayern Munich in something closer to civil war. For Bellingham, this semi-final is a gilded staircase to a beautiful temple; for Kane, it’s the last fraying rope bridge over the abyss.

Real Madrid are the favourites: a status that reflects partly their air of sovereign command in this competition, and partly the fact that Bellingham’s combination with Rodrygo, Toni Kroos and Vinícius Jr looks at this stage a more fully realised and devastating amalgam of talent than Kane’s with Leroy Sané, Serge Gnabry and Jamal Musiala. In the Champions League, Bellingham has been particularly outstanding, scoring or assisting in six of the eight games he has played this season.

“Jude has had an extraordinary development,” Thomas Tuchel, the manager who will leave Bayern at the end of the season, said. “He was fantastic here in the Bundesliga and how he [has] progressed shows the level of personality. This is only possible with a huge personality.

“Everyone who plays for Real Madrid also plays with the pressure of the shirt, the pressure to play for this club with the demands and expectations. He handles it like he has never done anything else before. He is very dangerous, very physical in his game and is an absolute key player. We try to find solutions.”

Kane missed Tottenham’s 2019 semi-final against Ajax with injury and has scored only three goals in semis or finals for club and country: two against Chelsea in the 2017 FA Cup and 2019 League Cup, and the rebound buried after his penalty miss against Denmark at the most recent European Championship. A statement performance in this tie would bury something else: the idea that he has never quite hit his highest highs on the very biggest occasions of his career.

Bayern Munich v Real Madrid
Champions League semi-final, first leg
Kick-off 8pm, Allianz Arena **TV** TNT

Bayern Munich

Real Madrid

As for Tuchel, he did his best here to shrug off an extraordinary row kicked up last week by the honorary president of Bayern Munich, Uli Hoeness, who said of the departing manager: “He doesn’t think he can improve a [Alphonso] Davies, [Aleksandar] Pavlovic or [Jamal] Musiala. If it doesn’t work, [he thinks] you should buy someone else.” Tuchel responded that he was “offended deeply as a coach” by Hoeness’s suggestion.

Putting a feather in the coach’s cap, and a spring in his step, a petition demanding that Bayern keep him in his post has garnered 18,000 signatures from fans impressed by the quarter-final win over Arsenal and dismayed by the reports that Ralf Rangnick is the No 1 candidate to replace him.

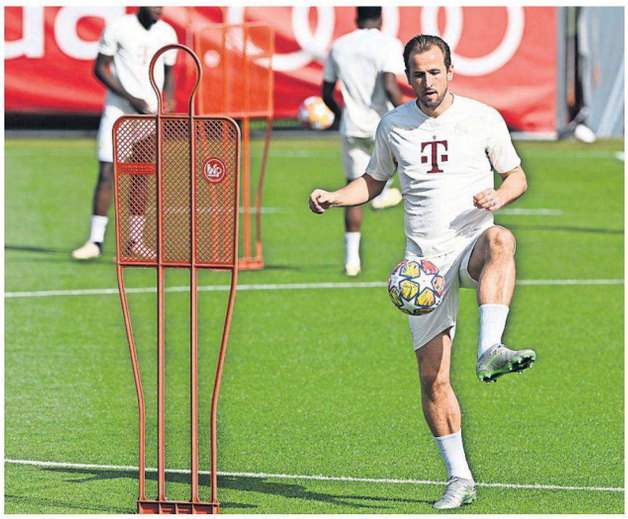
The fact that Tuchel is on the way out — petition or not, there will be no backsliding from Bayern — seems to have engendered, in everyone but Hoeness, a mood of appreciation for his particular qualities. The Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti described him as a “great coach who is spectacular at a tactical level”, one reporter began a question to him, “Mr Tuchel, you are a tactical genius …”, and another even described him as a “tactics fox”. Tuchel, trying not to look too pleased with himself, batted away the idea that this game would be a mano a mano duel of great minds between himself and Ancelotti.

“Hopefully tactics [play a part], hopefully also luck of the day but also hopefully a freedom,” Tuchel said. “The bigger the occasion, the bigger the pressure and the bigger the stress. You cannot just rely on what you know and think on tactical stuff. The tactic is just a car and the players drive the car. Players like to have a plan [but] they also like the freedom to live it because that’s the most important thing.”

Tuchel’s own freedom is slightly constrained by several injuries to key players: Matthijs de Ligt, who played against Arsenal, looks certain to miss out, while there are also doubts over Musiala, Sané, Dayot Upamecano and Konrad Laimer, who so effectively shackled Martin Odegaard and, if fit, could be detailed to do the same to Kroos.

Ancelotti, on the other hand, has virtually a full squad available. Tuchel, with the liberation of a man who knows the end is near, also indulged in a little mischief here, revealing that he has predicted that Gnabry will score in the first leg. “It will happen,” he said. “I don’t know how I know, but it will happen.”

While all is calm at Real, it’s fascinating to imagine the play of thoughts and emotions inside the heads of Bayern’s executives on the eve of the biggest game of their season. After all, if Bayern do win this tie, conquering opponents who are probably superior, the case for keeping Tuchel will only get stronger and the clamour against Rangnick louder. Germany’s most august club finds itself at a peculiar crossroads: where victory and vindication are signposts pointing in different directions.



The Champions League is Kane’s last chance of a trophy with Bayern this season

Clubs agree top-flight spending cap ‘in principle’

Martyn Ziegler Chief Sports Reporter

Premier League clubs have agreed “in principle” to a cap on spending for the first time despite opposition from the two Manchester clubs.

The “anchoring” proposal, which would restrict the top teams to spending a proportion of the amount the bottom club receive in TV and prize money on transfers, wages and agents, will now be subjected to a “legal and economic” analysis, with the aim of holding a full vote at the Premier League’s annual general meeting in June.

It is understood that 16 of the 20 clubs voted in favour, with Manchester United, Manchester City and Aston Villa voting against and Chelsea abstaining.

The Professional Footballers’ Association (PFA) has warned that it would oppose any “hard cap” on player wages but will wait to see the full details of the proposal.

A PFA spokesman said: “We will obviously wait to see further details of these specific proposals, but we have always been clear that we would oppose any measure that would place a ‘hard’ cap on player wages.

“There is an established process in place to ensure that proposals like this, which would directly impact our members, have to be properly consulted on.”

The vote was taken at a Premier League shareholders’ meeting in London.

Further discussions over details, such as the ratio of spending compared to the size of the bottom club’s Premier League earnings, will now take place as well as detailed legal analysis to ensure it is not open to challenge in court under competition law.

Club sources said the anchoring cap had been agreed in principle, but Premier League insiders said the vote was to secure approval to progress to the next stage in the process.

The Premier League has already agreed to replace its Profitability and Sustainability Rules from the 2025-26 season with a squad cost control, which will limit clubs to spending 85 per cent of their total revenue on wages, transfer payments and agents’ fees.

Anchoring would fix a ceiling on that spending and is generally being supported by those clubs who fear the growing power of the richest elite and in particular the spending power of state-owned clubs.

Clubs were assured that the cap would not cause any of them to reduce spending from their current level.

Last season, Manchester City had the biggest wage bill at £423 million and spent the most on agents at £51.5 million. City’s amortisation figure — the amount spent on transfers fees spread across the length of contracts — was £145 million, according to the most recent accounts.

Official Premier League figures for last season show that the bottom club, Southampton, were paid £104 million in TV money.

A cap of six times that figure would be £624 million, slightly more than the £619.5 million total of City’s spending, though the anchoring may be based only on player salaries and not the overall wage bill.

Sir Jim Ratcliffe’s Ineos team, which is running football operations at Manchester United, is understood to strongly oppose the cap, believing that anchoring would put English clubs at a disadvantage with the rest of Europe. The Old Trafford side’s commercial revenue is one of the largest among continental clubs.

end Kane's season

HARRY LANGER/DEFODI IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

Bayern Munich v Real Madrid
Champions League semi-final, first leg, tonight, 8pm. TV: TNT

Tuchel praised Bellingham, centre, after his superb first season with Madrid

Haaland ready to attack five finals

Paul Hirst

Erling Haaland has vowed to "attack the last five finals" of Manchester City's season after a frustrating spell on the sidelines.

Haaland could not take part in the Champions League penalty shoot-out defeat to Real Madrid after suffering a hamstring problem in normal time.

The injury ruled him out of City's Premier League match against Brighton & Hove Albion and the FA Cup semi-final win over Chelsea but he returned to action on Sunday when he came off the bench and scored his 32nd goal of the season in the 2-0 victory away to Nottingham Forest.

"I'm ready – I had a bit of a problem and it's not nice to bounce back when we went out to [Real] Madrid in the Champions League. It's been scratching inside of me to get back and now I'm back and feeling good," Haaland said when asked about his fitness for the run-in. "I'm ready to attack the last five finals."

City's win in Nottingham moved them to within one point of Premier League leaders Arsenal, who have played one more match than Pep Guardiola's side.

Having beaten Arsenal to the title last year, and done so against Liverpool in previous title races, Haaland is confident that City can do the job again.

"So many of these guys have done it before and it's about keeping the head calm and not wanting too much," Haaland said. "It's exactly like last season. This is the maybe the most exciting time to be a footballer.

"There's not many who can relate but this is why I play football – the feeling before the game, you're a bit nervous.

"This is fantastic and it's why I love football because of these feelings."

Where title race can be won, page 54

Agent cleared of threatening Granovskaia

Martyn Ziegler

The football agent Saif Rubie has been cleared of sending a threatening email to Chelsea's former transfer chief Marina Granovskaia demanding £300,000 for his cut of Kurt Zouma's transfer fee to West Ham United.

Rubie, 45, broke down in tears in court after he was cleared of sending a malicious communication to Granovskaia in 2022, when she was still at the club. He has now lodged a civil case against Granovskaia, 49, aimed at securing the money he says he is owed. He told Sky Sports News: "My life has been hell for the last two years. It's horrible being accused of something you didn't do."

In a bizarre week at Southwark crown court, one of the prosecution witnesses, Kia Joorabchian, another agent, flew to the United States on a private jet without telling police the night before he was due to give evidence.

Rubie had told the court he had been treated like the Colombian drugs baron Pablo Escobar when he was arrested and questioned on arrival at Heathrow airport on September 19, 2022, the day of Queen Elizabeth II's funeral.

"To get arrested on a plane like I am Pablo Escobar, having had 24 hours of no sleep, to have five hours in a jail cell, I feel completely violated," he said. "I was put into a police van, I had my phone taken away from me, my mum was waiting for me [at the airport] and I was looking forward to the Queen's funeral."

The court had heard that Granovskaia had told Rubie she wanted at least €30 million (£25.6 million) for Zouma and that the agent would be paid commission if he could get that fee. West Ham eventually paid €34 million in 2021, the court heard.

In his email, sent on May 22, 2022, one week before Roman Abramovich sold Chelsea, Rubie emailed Granovskaia about the £300,000, saying: "I am done trying to be nice to you."

In his evidence to court Rubie said it would be a "suicide mission" to threaten someone so close to Abramovich.

Rubie, from Fulham, west London, denied and was cleared of one charge under the Malicious Communications Act. The jury reached a unanimous verdict.

Rashford could go for big fee – but only if he asks for move

CONTINUED FROM BACK

year, a decision that came after some United fans protested against the possibility of Greenwood being brought back into the fold.

After scoring ten goals and setting up six more in 31 appearances for the Spanish side, several big clubs have shown an interest in the player, the latest of which is the Italian club Juventus, who have made Greenwood one of their summer targets.

The working assumption at United is that Greenwood will be sold as part of a vast rebuild that could include some high-profile departures. Last summer United valued the player at £30 million to £40 million, but that was partly because he had not played competitive football for 20 months.

Now he has proved that he can still play at a high level, more clubs are likely to express an interest. Greenwood has one year left on his contract at United, but the club can extend it by a further season.

It remains to be seen whether Juventus or any other suitors would be able to afford such a fee, which would then leave Ineos, United's new minority shareholders, pondering whether to bring him back to Old Trafford.

The Ineos chairman, Sir Jim Ratcliffe, would not give any definitive statement on Greenwood in February when he was asked about the player, shortly after buying 27.7 per cent of United and assuming control of football operations.

"I can talk about the principle, I'm not going to talk about Mason," Ratcliffe said. "I'm familiar with it. The principle is the important one because we will have other issues going forward. You're dealing with young people — they've not always been brought up in the best of circumstances — who are very talented, they've got lots of money and they don't always have the guidance they should have.

"We need to understand what the facts are. Then we need to make a fair decision in the light of the club's values. All I can do is talk about the principle of how we will approach it. Is he the right type of footballer? Is he a good person or not?"

José Bordalás, the Getafe head coach, has been impressed by the conduct of Greenwood, who has been verbally abused by opposition fans at times this season.

"I am sure the chants affect him," Bordalás told Marca, the Spanish newspaper. "I am against any insult, whoever the player is. The boy has had exemplary behaviour. His team-mates help him. He is calm, he is happy, he is treated very well."

Financial Fair Play rules and a failure to the qualify for the Champions League mean United's budget will be restricted this summer, so they will have to sell players to raise funds.

In addition to Greenwood, other loanees — such as Jadon Sancho, who is at Borussia Dortmund, and Donny van de Beek, who joined Eintracht Frankfurt on loan in January — can leave if the club receive good offers.

Anthony Martial, Jonny Evans, Tom Heaton and Raphaël Varane are likely to leave when their contracts expire on July 1, while Sofyan Amrabat is set to return to Fiorentina when his loan deal ends at the end of the season.

Paris Saint-Germain have previously inquired about Marcus Rashford but the 26-year-old forward, who has scored only eight goals in all competitions this season, signed a new five-year deal worth £325,000 a week in July.

The club's preference is for Rashford to stay and they want to help the academy graduate rediscover his best form. The only way that United will sell Rashford is if he pushes to leave and if he could attract a big fee.

The club will listen to offers for — among others — Harry Maguire, Aaron Wan-Bissaka, Victor Lindelof and Christian Eriksen, who all have one year left on their deals.

Antony, who cost United £85 million when they signed him from Ajax in 2022, is another player who could leave, as could Casemiro, who is a target for the Saudi Pro League.

Antony, 24, has been criticised for scoring only three goals this season, the latest of which came on Saturday in the 1-1 draw against Burnley. "The critics are going to exist and it's something that makes me want to work harder and prove myself," the Brazil winger said.

Alejandro Garnacho, Kobbie Mainoo and Rasmus Hojlund are said to be off-limits as they are viewed as key players for the club's future.

It will be decided this summer whether Erik ten Hag stays for to oversee the rebuild. The Dutchman, who has one year left on his contract, has overseen a poor season which seems destined to end with the club qualifying only for the Europa League or Europa Conference League.

Greenwood, on loan with Getafe, has scored ten goals and set up six more

McTominay: I'll be back soon

Scott McTominay has played down fears that a knee injury would rule him out of the Euros this summer (Mark Palmer writes).

The Scotland midfielder, 27, was injured in Manchester United's 1-1 draw with Burnley at Old Trafford on Saturday. Speculation was growing that McTominay would be out for three to four months, but the player took to social media to state that the injury was not as bad as feared.

Posting on Instagram, McTominay said: "I slipped & fell awkward on my knee similar to against Chelsea. Nothing serious just hyperextension but I was angry and upset that I thought it was worse than it was. Hoping to be back on the pitch very soon."

It is understood that McTominay will miss several weeks of action, but should be available in good time for the FA Cup final and Euro 2024.

Error-prone little brother who made England world class

At his peak, No 8 was global talent but low moments have hit hard, writes **John Westerby**

When Billy Vunipola was good, he really was very, very good. Good enough to be the transformative presence that powered England to the record-equalling run of 18 consecutive victories that defined the start of Eddie Jones's tenure as head coach. As a dynamic ball-carrying No 8 at the peak of his powers, irresistible in full flow, Vunipola was a reliable provider of front-foot ball from which the rest of the team profited handsomely.

When he has been bad, as has happened from time to time during his career, heartfelt contrition and a public apology have swiftly followed, most recently after his night out with his Saracens team-mates in Mallorca. At various points during his career, he has made attempts to curtail his alcohol intake, and he had been abstaining for 20 months before drinking again on the team bonding trip that followed Saracens' victory over Bath in the Gallagher Premiership on Friday.

It is not the first time that Vunipola has been drawn into trouble after going back on a commitment to refrain from drinking. In late 2018, he told The Times that he had given up alcohol because of its damaging effects during his rehabilitation from a cruel series of injuries. On that occasion, the catalyst to jump on the wagon had come after a dressing down from his older brother, Mako, along with his parents. "I had a lecture off my mum and dad and my brother, and I've finally listened to them," he said. "If you burn the candle at both ends, eventually they're going to meet. I guess I got to that point where I needed a new candle."

Born in Australia, Vunipola grew up initially in Wales, where his father, Fe'ao, had signed for Pontypool in 1998. His mother, Iesinga, is a Methodist minister. The family later moved to Bristol and, after attending The Castle School, a state secondary in nearby Thornbury, Mako won a scholarship to Millfield School and Billy followed a similar path to Harrow School. Billy married Simmone, a dietician, in 2019, and they live in St Albans with their son, Judah, 3.

After Vunipola's altercation with Spanish police early on Sunday morning, which resulted in him being stunned by a Taser, he pleaded guilty to resisting the law and wounding. He was given a four-month suspended prison sentence and ordered to pay a fine of €240 (about £205), and €500 in compensation to a police officer left with injuries.

Test stars' nights of shame

2011 England's World Cup was disrupted after a group of players including Mike Tindall, left, Chris Ashton and Dylan Hartley were pictured drunk in a nightclub that was running a "dwarf-tossing" event. In his autobiography, James Haskell wrote: "The lads had a bit too much to drink but there was not a single dwarf tossed by an England player."

2012 Danny Care is arrested for urinating in a public place, his third alcohol-related incident in three months.

2015 Manu Tuilagi is left out of the World Cup squad after being convicted of assaulting two female police officers and a taxi driver.

2017 Tuilagi and Denny Solomona are sent home by Eddie Jones after returning to the team hotel worse for wear in the early hours.

2019 Billy Vunipola and Ben Te'o apologise to team-mates after breaching team protocols by going out drinking separately after a Six Nations match against Scotland.

2019 Te'o and Mike Brown are involved in a scuffle after a night of drinking during England's training camp in Treviso. Both are later dropped from the World Cup squad.

There has always been the air of the error-prone little brother about Vunipola, 31, the charismatic, emotional counterpoint to Mako, 33, his more reserved team-mate with club and country. The sons of a former Tonga captain, together they brought a combination of power and skill to the England pack, Mako winning 79 caps as a loose-head prop, Billy 75 at the base of the scrum.

In 2019, he was forced to apologise to his England team-mates after a night of drinking alongside Ben Te'o following a Six Nations match against Scotland at Twickenham. His contrition was accepted and Jones, the England coach, did not sanction the pair further.

Billy was undoubtedly at his best during that long sequence of victories under Jones from 2016 to 2017 before an unfortunate spate of injuries intervened. His playing time was severely curtailed over a two-year period from 2017 to 2019 after he sustained fractures to both arms and required surgery on a shoulder and a knee, just at the time when he had established himself as one of the most destructive forwards in the game.

The shoulder injury cost him his place on the British & Irish Lions tour to New Zealand in 2017, having been selected by Warren Gatland, the head coach, and he was not then chosen for the Lions series in South Africa four years later.

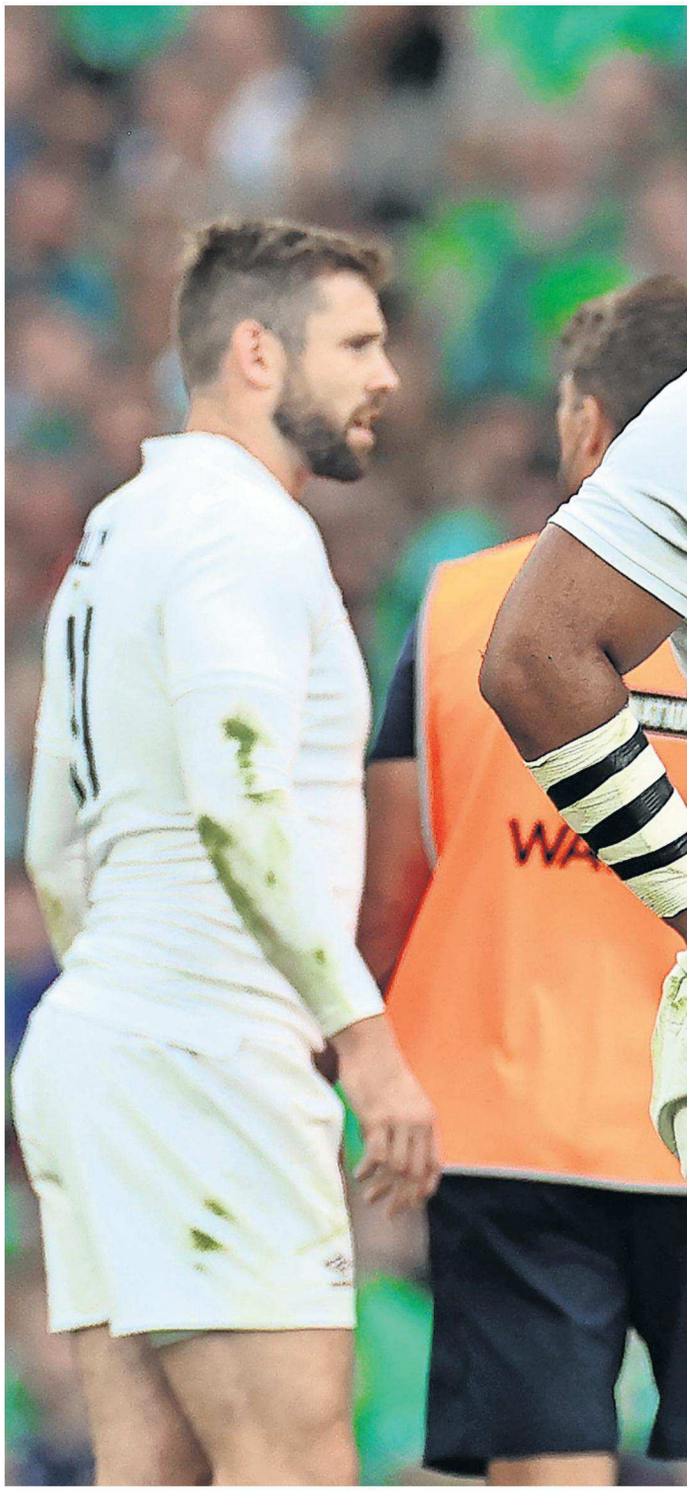
Mako, in contrast, featured on both those tours, as well as the series in Australia in 2013.

While Billy never again cut quite such a commanding figure as in those early years under Jones, he remained a potent force at international level and was a crucial figure in England's progress to the World Cup final in Japan in 2019.

More recently, those attempts to refrain from alcohol and maintain his conditioning had enabled him to play his way back into the England squad for the World Cup in France last year and to continue making his presence felt for Saracens before an expected move to Montpellier next season.

The bonding trip that Saracens embarked on to Mallorca was the sort of excursion they have regularly enjoyed over recent years to a variety of destinations, including New York, Barcelona, St Anton and Valencia. Mark McCall, the long-serving director of rugby, believes the outings help his squad to gel. "We've done these kind of trips a lot, the players look forward to them and get to spend some time together away from the club," McCall has said. "We believe that over the course of time it's a really strong way of making the relationships they have even closer and even tighter. If you get some short-term pain for long-term gain from that, then that's OK."

Neil de Kock, the club's former scrum half, explained the players' view in an interview in 2017. "We don't get everything right and sometimes these trips go wrong, certain parts of them," he said. "But they were brought about to create social capital and to bond the guys. It's not a stag do, it's not a jolly. Yes we have a couple of drinks, but we also make an effort to bond guys who wouldn't normally bond outside of work."



RFU suspension would

CONTINUED FROM BACK

Hospital at 4.30am. Vunipola was then arrested and taken to court on Sunday afternoon before being released on bail, fined and allowed to return to England.

He was on a sanctioned team weekend away with Saracens. It is understood that Vunipola had been teetotal for nearly two years before this weekend, having turned away from alcohol to improve his on-field performances.

The club's staff and players flew to Mallorca after Saracens beat Bath 15-12 on Friday in the Premiership, and Vunipola returned home with the rest of the squad yesterday. Back at Saracens he faces internal disciplinary action that could lead to a further fine or suspension. The Times understands the RFU will wait to see how Saracens intend to deal with Vunipola after their investigation into the incident before it decides how to react. The RFU has the power to ban Vunipola, which could end his season, and has stepped in to discipline players for bringing the game into disrepute in similar circumstances.

The RFU has a catch-all disrepute charge as part of its disciplinary sanctions — clause 5.12 — which gives it the power to punish "any conduct which is prejudicial to the interests of the union or the game".

It was used to punish Danny Cipriani in 2018 when he was arrested in Jersey while playing for Gloucester. Cipriani was found to have brought the game into disrepute by the RFU after he had pleaded guilty to common assault and

DAVID ROGERS/GETTY IMAGES; ASA/GC/SOLARPIX ; TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER MARC ASPLAND

Vunipola apologised "unreservedly" for what he later called an "unfortunate misunderstanding"

Police were called to the bar in Palma after Vunipola repeatedly took off his shirt and refused to leave

The No 8 shows off scars from operations on his arms — his career has been curtailed by several serious injuries

end Vunipola's career in England

resisting arrest. He had already been fined £2,000 by Jersey magistrates' court and ordered to pay £250 in compensation to a police officer, as well as a separate £2,000 by Gloucester, who also asked him to complete ten hours of community service.

The RFU said his behaviour "fell below the standard of behaviour expected of a rugby player" but did not add any extra sanction or financial penalty when it concluded a five-hour hearing.

Gloucester fined Cipriani in 2018 and gave him community service

The RFU or Saracens may take a different approach with Vunipola. He has a maximum of four matches remaining with Saracens and a minimum of two if the club do not make the Premiership play-offs in June. If either the RFU or Saracens choose to suspend him, that could spell the end of his career in England as Vunipola is leaving the club this summer to move to the Top 14 side Montpellier.

That move to France will be dependent on stringent medicals, but is not expected to fall through as a result of the drunken incident in Mallorca.

Vunipola has been disciplined for more minor incidents before. In April 2019 Vunipola was given a formal warning by the RFU, under rule 5.12, for a homophobic comment he made on social media in support of the Australia and Tonga player Israel Folau, who had stated that "hell awaits homosexuals".

That warning remained on his record for five years and it expires this month. Saracens also gave Vunipola a formal warning in 2019 for the same incident, but neither the club nor the RFU fined or suspended him from matches.

In 2020, Vunipola and four other Saracens players broke Covid lockdown restrictions by meeting for coffee in St Albans and were warned about their behaviour by the club.

News, page 5

Funding boost for clubs after £264m RFU deal

Will Kelleher
Deputy Rugby Correspondent

The RFU has bought greater control over England players as part of a new club-country deal worth £33million a year to Gallagher Premiership clubs.

The Times understands that executives have finally settled on the terms of the new Professional Game Partnership (PGP) after a "two-year odyssey" of negotiations.

The PGP will increase central funding to the ten top-flight clubs by 53 per cent, compared to the previous deal, which is set to be announced around the Premiership final in June after the legal details have been finalised.

Under the deal the ten Premiership clubs will receive a guaranteed £33 million among them from the RFU over the first four years of an eight-year agreement. That represents a significant increase on the start of the previous deal, signed in 2016, which paid the 13 clubs about £28 million.

Central funding could increase or decrease in the second half of the deal, between 2028 and 2032. It will be tied to the performance of English rugby as a whole, not just the fate of the RFU, as before.

The previous PGP was worth about £225 million but ended up being a poor deal as central funding was linked to RFU profits that were overinflated after the home World Cup in 2015 and then hit hard by the pandemic.

Increased RFU funding comes as a timely boost to the clubs, who have agreed to raise the league's salary cap from £5 million to £6.4 million next year and have signed a broadcast deal with TNT Sports for the next two years that was less lucrative than the previous one.

As has been long reported, the PGP will include a form of central contracts for up to 25 top England players. So far only Jamie George, the England captain, and Maro Itoje have agreed to sign those deals in principle.

The lack of progress has been "alarming", according to well-placed sources, and has frustrated club directors of rugby who have had to plan for next season without them.

Little headway was made during the Six Nations period and negotiations slowed last year when the England players voted to represent themselves, splitting from the Rugby Players' Association, as The Times revealed.

The players' new body, Team England Rugby, which has George, Itoje, Joe Marler, Ellis Genge and Anthony Watson as directors, must now thrash out the full terms of the contracts.

Steve Borthwick, the England head coach, will select his centrally contracted players after the summer tour to New Zealand and Japan. The RFU intends to reveal the core group, which will form the basis of Borthwick's 2027 World Cup squad, by November.

Instead of match fees, which top out at about £23,000 per man and make England players the best-paid internationals in rugby union, the special 25 will be given a guaranteed sum of £150,000-£160,000 per season.

It is hoped these central "enhanced elite player squad" contracts will halt the worrying exodus of players to France — where Owen Farrell, Kyle Sinckler, Manu Tuilagi, Jack Willis, Henry Arundell and many others will play next season.

However, there is scepticism in the game about whether the contracts will go far enough in helping clubs slash wage bills and England compete for Six Nations titles and World Cups.

Club sources have said they will still pay players their market rate, but the players will feel more secure as their England money is now guaranteed and not dependent on fitness or selection.

Despite the RFU's funding increase, which covers England player release, Borthwick will still not be able to manage his team as closely as Andy Farrell, the Ireland head coach, who is able to influence club selections.

Borthwick will make small gains, such as more aligned strength and conditioning programmes and more access to players' medical data. For example, only recently have clubs and England started to share the same GPS data provider. That alignment will save English rugby hundreds of thousands of pounds a year.

Borthwick must therefore rely on the bonds he has with the Premiership directors of rugby. He is said to have helped to rebuild those, in contrast to the "fractious" relationships his predecessor Eddie Jones left behind.

The architects of the new PGP want it to end the "transactional" relationship between club and country whereby club owners have regarded players going to England as "like the RFU borrowing their Ferrari".

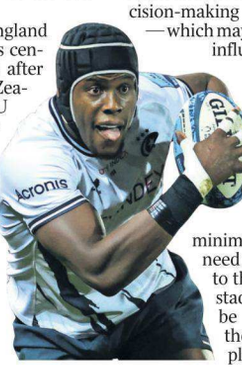
Progress on the PGP agreement has been slowed by numerous factors. It is understood there have been disagreements over medical provision and whether players would take breaks or have surgery on injuries during club or country time now that England will have more control over players' workload. England should now have the final say.

The demise of Worcester Warriors, Wasps and London Irish set the PGP deal back, but sources have said those crises allowed it to "go deeper than it originally intended".

The intention is for the Professional Game Board to become a beefed-up body that oversees decision-making related to the RFU, Premiership and England team. That will look to scrutinise Borthwick's performances as head coach and should become the main decision-making panel in English rugby — which may end the RFU Council's influence.

Politics over the future of the Championship, and arguments between the second tier, the RFU and the Premiership, have also slowed progress.

A relaxation of the minimum standards clubs need to meet to be promoted to the Premiership, such as stadium size, is expected to be announced as part of the deal, as well as new player welfare directives.



Itoje has agreed to sign a form of central contract

Sport

Ingebrigtsen charge

Father of Norwegian Olympian accused of physical abuse

Page 52

Kane v Bellingham

England's finest square up in Champions League semi to savour

Pages 56-57

MJB/GC/SOLARPIX

Vunipola arrives at court in Palma after his arrest in a bar on Sunday

'Sorry' Vunipola facing ban

RFU can step in to discipline No 8 after Mallorca conviction if Saracens process too lenient

Will Kelleher
Deputy Rugby Correspondent

Billy Vunipola is facing the end of his rugby career in England after being arrested in Mallorca on a Saracens bonding trip, having been stunned by a Taser.

Vunipola, the 31-year-old England and Saracens No 8, has paid a fine of €240 (about £205) after pleading guilty to resisting the law and wounding at an express trial in Palma. He had been arrested on suspicion of disobedience and assaulting a police officer at a nightclub early on Sunday.

He now faces the prospect of further disciplinary action from his club and the RFU, which may mean he will not play again before moving to France in the summer. Vunipola already has an RFU charge on his record, which could be taken into account in any future hearing. The police in Mallorca alleged in a statement that Vunipola pushed and slapped an officer, although the player denied there was any violence.

"I can confirm I was involved in an unfortunate misunderstanding when I was leaving a club in Mallorca on Sunday, which got out of hand," Vunipola said. He added that he was charged with resisting the law. "I will obviously co-operate with the Saracens internal process and unreservedly apologise."

He is said to have been drinking at the Epic bar in Palma at about 3am, repeatedly took off his shirt and would not leave the club when asked. Having been called to remove Vunipola, police used a stun gun on the 20st 2lb forward before taking him to Son Espases

Continued on page 58

United look to sell Greenwood

Paul Hirst

Manchester United are hoping to cash in on Mason Greenwood this summer but have not ruled out the possibility of him returning to Old Trafford next season if they do not receive a reasonable offer for the 22-year-old striker.

In 2022 Greenwood was charged with attempted rape, controlling and coercive behaviour and assault, but the Crown Prosecution Service dropped the charges in February 2023 after key witnesses withdrew their involvement and new material came to light. Greenwood denied the accusations.

After launching their own investigation into Greenwood's conduct, United said in August that they and Greenwood had "mutually agreed" that the player should "recommence his career away from Old Trafford". The club then loaned him to Getafe for a

Continued on page 57

Raine manages Hundred sales

Elizabeth Ammon, Matt Lawton

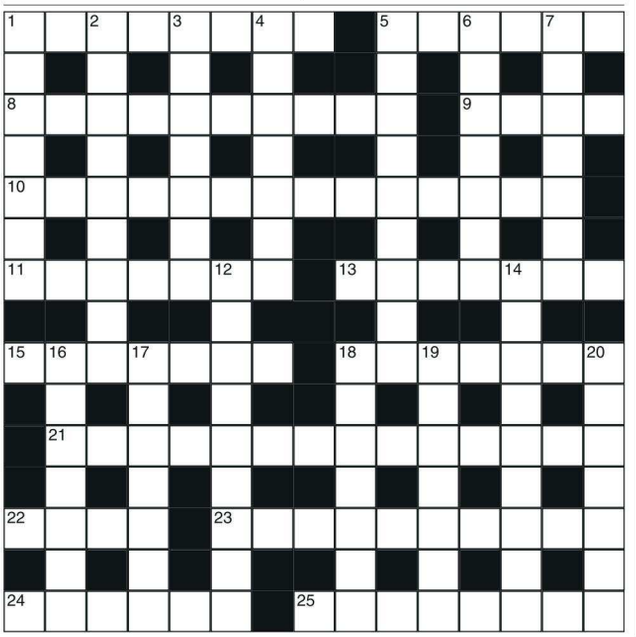
Raine Group, the American Bank that was involved in the takeovers of Chelsea and Manchester United, has been appointed by the ECB to manage the sale of the eight Hundred teams to private investors in what will be the most radical change to English cricket for generations.

Raine is the New York merchant bank that was appointed by Roman Abramovich to sell Chelsea after the Russian billionaire became the subject of government sanctions in 2022 and was then asked to lead the sale process of Manchester United by the Glazer family later that year. It brokered the deal in which Sir Jim Ratcliffe and Ineos purchased 27.7 per cent of the Old Trafford football club for £1.5billion.

After meetings between the counties

Continued on page 51

Times Crossword 28,904



ACROSS

1 Tribal conflict involving northern part of UK (8)
5 Blank-looking worker on short holiday (6)
8 South American couple bearing a lot of intense pain (10)
9 Amphibian wife found in trap (4)
10 Wise director initially hailed in new autobiographical book (5,4,5)
11 Chemically analyse it in time and degree (7)
13 It may remove dirt rapidly at first with hot water (7)
15 Aquatic bird priest caught boarding vessel (7)
18 Casual workers conserving extremely large places of worship (7)
21 Survey originally catching on in period of revival (14)
22 Feint bringing endless disgrace (4)
23 Lingering sensation provided by different star at fete (10)
24 Cross sequence of letters from tetchy bridegroom (6)
25 The French woman ultimately wielding supreme power (8)

DOWN

1 Mimic law enforcer unknown on twin-hulled vessel (7)
2 For treatment, attain old type of drug? (9)
3 State of trap set up on river to the north (7)
4 Dawn's salary hike supporting daily (7)
5 Priest originally taking grain round large chamber (9)
6 In place of wedding feast, a way to serve game (7)
7 What the unsuccessful might get currently in this place? (7)
12 Old militia do what a conductor might do (9)
14 Carelessly lose pay in Pacific island group (9)
16 Worldly Liberal wearing blue? (7)
17 Earnings right for a new resident (7)
18 Reportedly hear military engineers constructing an ancient warship (7)
19 Small bagpipe group has broken making no sound (7)
20 Italian citizen's former nurse disturbed by current directions (7)

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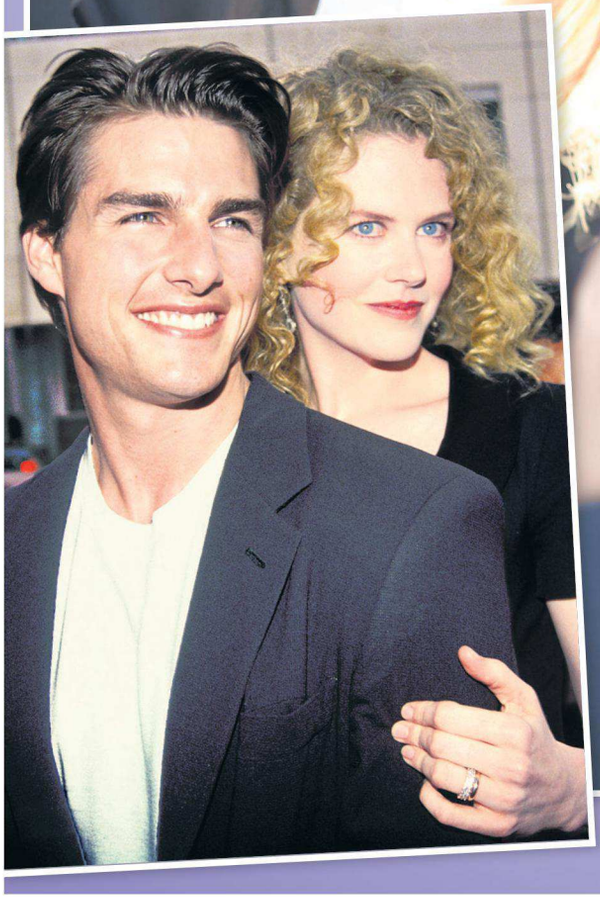
TIMES 2

April 30 | 2024

Hollywood's greatest survivor?

How Nicole Kidman has lasted 30 years in Hollywood



Above: Nicole Kidman and, left, with Tom Cruise in 1992

What I've learnt about mental health from a lifetime of treatment

Robert Crampton

I first saw a psychotherapist, then called a child guidance counsellor, 53 years ago, aged 7. I was unhappy and disruptive at school. I still was, aged 10, when I went back to the counsellor, and, aged 17, when I went back again. As a student I saw a psychiatrist. As a 40-year-old, almost 20 years ago, I started taking antidepressants, and still do. There is a long history of mental illness in my family. A great-aunt committed suicide. A great uncle was confined to an asylum for decades. My mother was a deeply troubled woman her entire life.

You do not, of course, need personal experience to empathise with the millions of Britons suffering from poor mental health, almost two million of whom languish on NHS waiting lists, while many others have withdrawn from the workforce in the hope this will help them to get better. Anyone with compassion feels their pain. Yet perhaps a fellow sufferer feels it more keenly. And perhaps also a fellow sufferer comes better equipped to offer some fraternal advice.

Which is this: if you're feeling anxious, or depressed, or unloved, just about the worst thing you can do is shut yourself away at home. That includes premature retirement and working from home, which, while preferable to being at home not working, still in my view exacerbates any tendencies towards mental ill-health. I speak from experience. Your own four walls may feel like a refuge but pretty soon they can turn into a prison. You become domestically institutionalised: bored, fearful, lonely, like all those 1950s housewives who were on Valium.

GETTY IMAGES

As for getting signed off sick, and maybe migrating to long-term disability benefit because you're not fit to work, then obviously for some deeply troubled people (and their erstwhile employers and colleagues) that is for the best. But for many others, I submit, rejecting paid employment out of the home is the opposite of a solution to their problem. The temptations of the fridge, the internet and the booze cupboard may prove too strong. Emotional and physical muscles atrophy. Paranoia and phobias fester.

If you're anxious out in the wider world, it may seem sensible to close the door, to shrink your world down as small as you can. But it isn't sensible, it's a recipe for making your anxiety worse, especially if you're young, inexperienced, still defining your identity. I'll bet there are parents all over the country urging their adolescent and young adult kids to get out more to beat the blues. Those parents are 100 per cent right.

Humans are social creatures. We need to interact with each other. Or, if your state of mind precludes conversation, we need at a minimum to be around each other. We also need (well, I do, anyway) routine, structure, exercise, a change of scene, fresh air, a sense of movement and momentum. Going out to work provides all of those, to some degree. And we need, each morning, an aim, a goal we can achieve, even if it is only getting out of bed, getting dressed, getting the bus and clocking on. Such doggedness isn't a "cure". But it's a start, a step towards life and love and happiness, not away from them.

Remember Harry Enfield's cheerful, brutally insensitive "Yorkshire therapist" character? Well, I'm not him. I'm not saying "pull yer socks up" or "stop moaning" or any of that drivel. Depending on your troubles, you might need all manner of extra help, from mere information to medicine or talking therapy. But I guarantee, when and if you get into a therapy session, absolutely no clinician or counsellor will be advising that quitting your job and staying at home all day is the way forward. For most of us it is absolutely the wrong move.

I won't pay out for my grandkids

I haven't got any grandchildren, although my children are not too far off the age at which one or both of them might rustle up a baby. If anybody has babies any more, that is, because right across the developed world many youngsters are deciding not to reproduce: too expensive; too much hassle; too much of an upheaval.

In the absence of any little descendants to spoil, it's easy to say that, unlike many grandparents, as reported yesterday, I will not in future be raiding my pension to pay fees upfront to beat the VAT an incoming Labour government has pledged to impose on private schools.

I paid for my kids to attend private school, I'm not going to do that all over again, even if I could afford to. There are some families — let's call them "rich people", for want of a better phrase — who, while often pleading (relative) poverty, somehow always manage to stump up £25,000 a year, several times over, from some quietly accumulating portfolio to fund the education of the next generation. I do not wish to join their ranks.

My wife and I weren't that enamoured of our own state education. The state schools where we live were not great 20 years ago. We didn't have expensive tastes in holidays, clothes or cars, so yeah, we bought educational privilege for our children. But I don't intend to make a habit of it. The local schools have improved hugely in the past two decades, and will improve further in the coming years while my potential grandchildren remain stubbornly unconceived. The (as yet imaginary) little 'uns will be fine.

As for childcare, however, I intend to make a big contribution. Not financially, but personally. As in: I'll do the job myself. It was the hardest work I have ever done, looking after small children, and for that reason, first time around, I didn't do it as much as I should have. If I get a second chance I will be a hands-on grandpa, just watch me. But the wallet stays shut.

Dig in! Kaleb

The Diddly Squat duo have returned for a third series — and now they've got pigs. Ben Dowell put his wellies on to meet the odd couple of the Cotswolds

During filming for the new series of *Clarkson's Farm*, Kaleb Cooper drove into work and saw Jeremy Clarkson vacuuming a blackberry bush. While the spectacle was "something I am never going to forget", the sandy-haired, cherub-faced youngster was so unimpressed that he didn't even get out of his car to ask what was happening.

These two have grown into one of television's best double acts. For the show's executive producer, Peter Fincham, there is an "element of Jeeves and Wooster" about them, a delicious odd couple relationship that is all the more gratifying because the team didn't need to cast Cooper. He was already working on Diddly Squat Farm when the show started.

Cooper is a farmer to the tips of his muddy wellies and has taught Clarkson most of the practical business of farming his 1,000-acre establishment near Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire, as well as how hard the job is and the risks farmers take for little financial reward. Cooper may have just completed a sell-out national stage tour, building on his popularity and more than two million Instagram followers. He may have been invited to No 10 to meet Rishi Sunak (more on that later), but everyone on the show — the producers, one of Cooper's "Chippy" friends I spoke to and Clarkson himself — are clear: the 25-year-old hasn't changed one iota since the show started airing in 2021.

"I think it's very easy to be grounded if you don't leave Chipping Norton," Clarkson says. His girlfriend, Lisa Hogan, who has become another star of the show, agrees. "How Kaleb comes across is exactly how he is. He is very thoughtful and kind and very bright. His use of language is also very easy on the ear. We could have had a monosyllabic tractor driver and that wouldn't have worked but we were lucky we had Kaleb."

He has written two books as well: *The World According to Kaleb* and *Britain According to Kaleb*, with a third (*Life According to Kaleb*) on the way. These ruminations are often spoken into a Dictaphone (supplied by his publishers) during the 18 hours he spends each day alone in his happy place, his tractor cab. The books now sit on the shelves that a ten-year-old Cooper and his carpenter father put up in the local bookshop. Though, of course, one of the running jokes in the show is that he has only read one other book in his life apart from his own, and that was one of Clarkson's.

There is another moment in the new series when Clarkson and Cooper (who are in competition with each other across the eight episodes) are working a field when they spy someone in the distance on another tractor drilling "his" field. He is Andy Cato of the electronic pop duo Groove Armada. Cooper was as annoyed about the intrusion as he was clear that he had no idea who or what Groove Armada is. The same probably goes for many of his near-neighbours, who include Joe Wicks, Simon Cowell, Natalie Imbruglia, David Beckham and Amanda Holden. When Cooper bumped into David Cameron (now Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton) in a local eaterie, he wasn't quite sure who he was either. Strangely Cooper is now as famous as at least a few of these people. His appeal extends across the globe — Andy Wilman, Clarkson's old *Top Gear* producer who edits the show, tells me that he rarely hears an English accent in the farm shop as tourists flock to see their agricultural idols.

Since *Clarkson's Farm* aired, Cooper told his theatre audiences, he has been offered snazzy haircuts from top-level salons, perhaps to stop the constant mickey-taking from Clarkson. But he still goes to the same local hairdresser.

Brilliant moments are not always captured by the cameras and while the team may wake up with plans, farmers and the show's fans will know that the weather often has other ideas. "Cheerful" Charlie Ireland, the farm's land agent and adviser, does pop by a couple of times a day, as he does in the series, often to pour cold water on Clarkson's latest schemes. But many of these moments are not filmed. Is that annoying?

> Farming is not effortless, the television side is a piece of cake

"Sometimes you think, 'Oh, that would be really good, that'd be funny on TV,' but actually [the cameras] are not there," Cooper says. "But you don't say these things, to make it up for the TV. I may have taken drama in school, but I got a U in it, so actually I'm not an actor."

Clarkson agrees: "It is [effortless] because I don't have to pretend to be someone else. With *The Grand Tour*, Richard Hammond isn't as stupid as he's made out. I'm not as bombastic as is made out and James May isn't quite as boring as he's made out. And so you're playing a caricature, you're playing a role, you're there to provoke and be stupid. Here, we haven't got any of that. So we're just ourselves. You get up and you just have to be yourself, which is incredibly relaxing. And in that regard it is effortless.

and Clarkson are back

ELLIS O'BRIEN/PRIME VIDEO

Farming is not effortless. Make no mistake, the television side of it is a piece of cake because I don't have to think, 'Oh I'd better say something idiotic now.'"

"You do that anyway," Cooper says.

The two bicker in exactly the same way off camera as they do on. At the press conference for the new series they quarrelled with good humour about their dogs. Cooper says Clarkson's pair of fox-red labradors (named Sansa and Arya after *Game of Thrones* characters) are "posh man's dogs" who "never do a thing he says". Clarkson maintains that Cooper just locks his dog in his tractor cab. They also bicker about the goats Clarkson keeps. Clarkson likes their eyes and thinks they do a good job mowing his grass. Cooper thinks he should breed and slaughter them in the conventional way and sell goat meat in the farm shop.

There is a similar clash of approaches over the pigs. Cooper doesn't get as emotional as Clarkson and Hogan when things go wrong (and they do go wrong with the pigs this series). When Clarkson holds aloft a newborn piglet, Cooper calls him a "proud parent", which feels part mickey-take, part genuinely warm compliment — a common theme in their complex relationship.

Clarkson is learning to be more steely and is, Cooper says, now a "good pig farmer". Is the younger man pleased that Clarkson has come on? Or is there a bit of him who would still enjoy showing him the ropes?

Jeremy Clarkson and, top, with Kaleb Cooper

"I think there's a bit of a proudness of teaching someone maybe triple my age ... to go out and do a better job ... Hopefully I've taught him a lot about it. But he's taught me so much equally about the television industry." In fact, Cooper says, he has learnt so much that he cannot watch TV now because he knows how it all works behind the scenes.

He is a voice for farmers, showing us how hard the job of people who put food on our table is, and demanding that we respect it. Cooper has arranged two bursaries of £3,000 plus a work placement for young farmers and is keen that more enter a profession where the average age is 59. When he met Sunak last May he was more interested in the PM's hair than anything, principally because he didn't expect much from him.

"Let's put it this way. If someone invited me tomorrow to go to a farm ... if I go to that farm and that farmer says to me, 'Kaleb, you know what, this week I'm gonna plough that field,' I know for a damn fact that that farmer is going to go out there and plough that field because he said he's going do it. If the prime minister or anyone from politics goes to me, 'Kaleb, I'm going to do this next week,' they're not going to do it, are they?"

While he doesn't have much faith in our legislators making life easier for hard-pressed farmers or for supermarkets to pay them more, he must be pleased that people, especially city folk, now know about farming thanks to him, I say.

"Yeah, everyone knows what a tramline is now, right? And let's face it, I always say this: it doesn't matter what phone you've got, what car you've got, what house you're living in, what matters the very most is what's coming across your plate for breakfast, lunch and dinner. And therefore that is the most important thing to me."

Cooper is open to offers of shows such as *I'm a Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here!* but thinks he probably won't have the time with all the work he has to do. Clarkson called him "easily the most entrepreneurial person I have ever met" and he is laser-focused on his ultimate goal of having a farm one day, which will have to be local, despite the "extortionate" price of land in the area.

"I want to farm here," he says. "I don't want to move away from my family and everything I know. This is where I was brought up and this is where I'm going to stay."

But the show will be with us for a while. It is hugely popular — series four is being filmed and while viewing figures aren't available, it is believed to be Prime's most popular programme in the UK by, well, a country mile.

Cooper is engaged to his partner, Taya (mother to their three-year-old son and ten-month-old daughter), but doesn't know when he will have time to walk down the aisle. He knows he will "have a great party", and isn't yet sure if Clarkson will be his best man. But one thing's for sure, Clarkson has already found his.

The new series of *Clarkson's Farm* is on Prime Video from Friday

The lowdown
Ryan Gosling

Ken is on the press circuit again.

Who?

I mean Ryan Gosling. King of Kenergy.

Oh yes. Got you. I've loved him since he was in *The Notebook*. It's just so romantic. And that kissing-in-the-rain scene!

All right, calm down. We get it. He's swoon-worthy.

Sorry. Got a bit carried away there.

Well, his new rom-com, *The Fall Guy*, with Emily Blunt, comes out this week and it seems he's been at it again…

At what? Ridiculously romantic kissing scenes?

Not quite. He's been paying tribute to his real-life wife.

How so?

He's been with the actress Eva Mendes for more than 11 years — and they are so secretive it's not confirmed that they actually are married, although Mendes sometimes refers to him as her "husband". She posted a tantalising Instagram picture in 2022 of her wrist tattoo that reads "de Gosling", or "of Gosling", in Spanish.

I can't figure out if that's cute or cringe.

They also like to dedicate awards to each other and Gosling wore a necklace with her initial on it when promoting *Barbie* on the red carpet.

That's rather sweet.

Gosling's latest love stunt was to cheekily advertise Mendes's new children's book on camera for thousands of viewers of ITV this week while chatting to *This Morning*'s Alison Hammond.

Surely not. How on earth has he managed that? A sign board can't be subtle. Don't tell me he had it tattooed on his neck or something.

Stop being dramatic. He simply wore a promo T-shirt emblazoned with its title: *Desi, Mami, and the Never-Ending Worries*, by Eva Mendes.

Ah. Clever cookie. I guess they can't technically stop him from wearing that.

Exactly. Although it's a real shame he didn't take it off.

Hannah Skelley

A tale of two families: the world

She has been honoured as one of Hollywood's lifetime achievers. The secret? Family.

By Hilary Rose

COVER: JAY L. CLENDENIN/REX SHUTTERSTOCK; BELOW: FILM MAGIC; PATRICK RIVIERE/GETTY IMAGES

If Nicole Kidman's daughters were nervous about posing on the red carpet, they didn't show it. In Los Angeles on Sunday, when Kidman was presented with a life achievement award, she had support in the form of Sunday Rose, 15, and Faith, 13, along with their father, Keith Urban, and her sister and niece. For the first Australian to be given the honour by the American Film Institute, it was a family affair — but without the children she shares with her ex-husband, Tom Cruise. Bella, 31, and Connor, 29, remained loyal to their father and the church of Scientology after their adoptive parents divorced in 2001.

Neither was there when, on Sunday, Kidman, 56, walked on stage to a standing ovation, to the soundtrack of herself singing *Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend* in *Moulin Rouge!*, and was presented with her award by Meryl Streep. From Connor there was radio silence, at least in public. Bella "liked" an image Kidman posted on Instagram of a huge screen at the award ceremony celebrating "A tribute to Nicole Kidman".

"I was born in Hawaii, I've worked all over the world, but I'm an Aussie girl," Kidman said proudly on the red carpet, "and I'm standing here, in Hollywood, going, oh my God it actually happened!"

Kidman has been famous for far longer than she hasn't been, but lives a determinedly unfamous life. "I'm deeply embedded in a family," she has said, "and in a very deep marriage. I'm parenting children. I'm a daughter. Those are the primary things." She is, she told Elle magazine recently, "kind of the opposite of Cinderella", in her eagerness to get home from the big events, take off her ballgown and curl up in her pyjamas. The attention can feel overwhelming, she says, and "I want to feel real". Most of all she wants to protect her daughters with Urban. Now precociously poised teenagers, until this event they've mostly been only glimpsed while being carried through airports by their parents. When it comes to her children Kidman has learnt, she once said, "to keep my mouth shut".

She met Urban nearly 20 years ago, at an event honouring Australians in America. She was smitten, but Urban, a superstar country music singer, didn't call her for four months. Struggling with addictions to drugs and alcohol, he wasn't in a healthy place, he later admitted, and didn't know what he would say when she picked up. She assumed he wasn't interested and he thought the same, unable to imagine, he said, what she might see in a guy like him. But when he did finally call "it was effortless".

Kidman knew he was the love of her life when he appeared on her doorstep at 5am on her 38th birthday, with a bouquet of gardenias. They married in Australia in June 2006. The greatest thing her family priest told them, she later said, was "always kiss hello, always kiss goodbye". Four months after they said "I do", Urban kissed her goodbye and checked into rehab for three months, at his wife's urging.

> "Kidman's second act is arguably more successful than her first

He has been clean ever since. The couple moved to Nashville, buying a farm just outside the city, where Urban has said he values the fact that their neighbours "are just real people, so they just accept you being neighbours". Sunday Rose was born in 2008, and Faith two years later, via a surrogate. With Kidman then in her forties, she contemplated retiring from acting altogether, believing that she could be content with her children and home life in Nashville. Her mother persuaded her otherwise, with Kidman's second act, in midlife, arguably even more successful than her first.

"She's brilliant at the dark underbelly behind the gloss," says one film critic. "But then she's been brilliant in almost everything. Although don't mention *Far and Away*. Or *Aquaman*." She has won Baftas, Golden Globes, Emmys and Screen Actors Guild awards. One of her earliest was in 1990 for *Bangkok Hilton*; one of her latest was at the Golden Globes two years ago, for her portrayal of Lucille Ball in *Being the Ricardos*. And she hit the jackpot in 2003 with *The Hours*, when playing Virginia Woolf won her the Oscar. At an age when some actresses complained that their careers dried up, Kidman's took off. She combined blockbusters with indie films and high-end TV, the latter much to her surprise.

"I never would have thought television would be an avenue for growth for me," she said recently. From *The Undoing* with Hugh Grant to *Nine Perfect Strangers*, and from *Expats* to *Big Little Lies*, television, she has found, "gives you a much stronger connection with an audience, because you're in their houses".

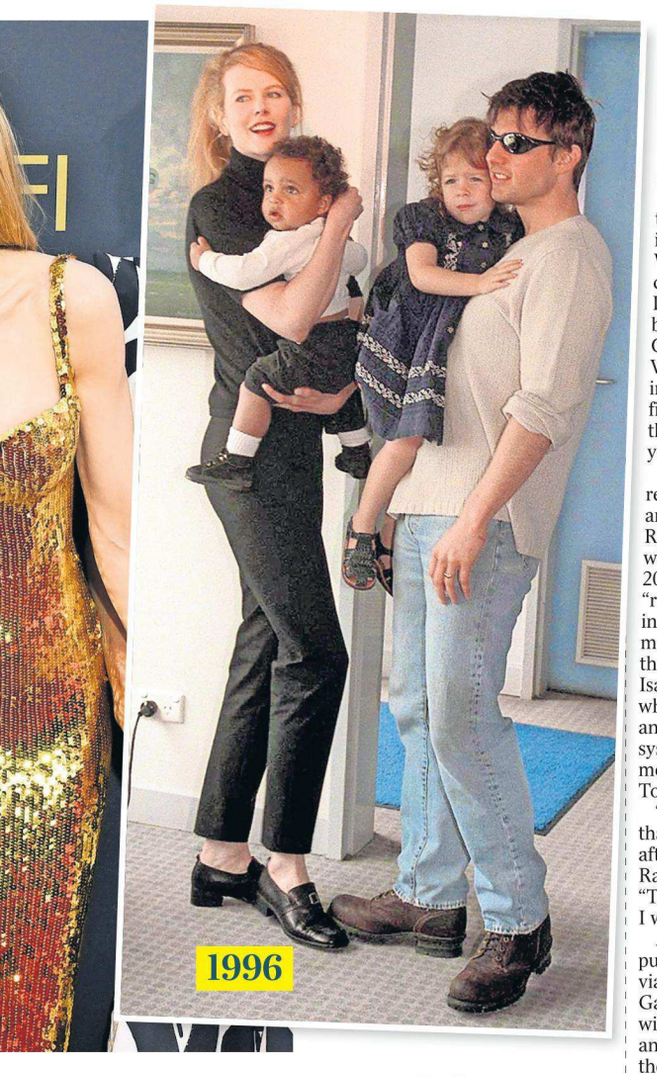
Above: Nicole Kidman with Keith Urban, Sunday Rose Kidman-Urban, Faith Margaret Kidman-Urban and her niece Sybella Hawley. Top right: Kidman with Tom Cruise and their children, Connor and Bella

Kidman was born in 1967 in Hawaii, where her father was studying biochemistry. When she was three the family, including her younger sister, Antonia, moved back home to Sydney, where her father practised as a psychologist. She was still at high school when her gangly 5ft 11in frame was noticed by a fledgling director called Jane Campion, who was casting her graduation film. Kidman didn't get that part, but she did get the acting bug, to the concern of her parents.

"I knew I wasn't going to go to college," she says, "and I was a nightmare to my parents. I lied to them. There was a time when my mother said, 'I can't live in the same house.'" So she left home and travelled round Europe, returning to Australia occasionally to try to make it as an actress. Aged 20, she was cast in a film alongside Sam Neill and Billy Zane. *Dead Calm*, a taut 1989 thriller about a grieving couple isolated on a yacht, was her ticket out, from Sydney to Hollywood. "You'll never have a career," she was told when she got there. "You're too tall."

Tom Cruise thought otherwise. *Days of Thunder* was a feeble film starring him as the improbably named Cole Trickle and Kidman as a neurosurgeon. Divorced from his first wife, there were rumours of a new

# of Nicole Kidman



relationship and possible marriage with Kidman, who was 22. "I don't want to think about marrying anyone yet," she said. "I'm too young. I've always wanted to be an actress and my work is very important to me."

They got married in Telluride, Colorado, the year after, on Christmas Eve, when she was 23 and he was 28. Back home in Sydney, the bride's uncle Barry described it as "the showbusiness secret of the year. Even my wife and I didn't know about it. I knew they were very fond of each other, but we had no hint that a wedding was in the air." The at first happy couple starred in several films together, including *Far and Away* and *Eyes Wide Shut*. For a while it seemed possible that her acting talent would be completely overshadowed by the hoopla surrounding her marriage. "It was the Tom Cruise show," says one film critic, "and for a while her acting was one of the least interesting things about her."

She had starred in films before she became Mrs Tom Cruise, but she still had to audition for them after. She tried out unsuccessfully for *Ghost*, *Thelma and Louise*, *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Sleepless in Seattle*. *Billy Bathgate*, in which she was cast opposite Dustin Hoffman, was a flop. But then Meg Ryan turned down the part of a murderous TV weather girl in *To Die For*, and Kidman stepped up. The 1995 film was a critical hit, won her a Golden Globe and propelled her into the big league, starring alongside George Clooney in *The Peacemaker* and Sandra Bullock in *Practical Magic*.

By 1998 she was box-office gold in the West End too. Her performance in *The Blue Room* at the Donmar Warehouse was described by one critic as "pure theatrical Viagra". Demand for tickets was so great it brought comparisons with Laurence Olivier's run as Othello at the Old Vic. She and Cruise spent years living in London while Stanley Kubrick filmed them in *Eyes Wide Shut*, but the marriage broke up in 2001 after 11 years, shortly after it was released.

The split was in part said to be a result of his devotion to Scientology and her aversion to it. Marty Rathbun, a senior Scientology figure who defected from the church in 2004, said that the couple's staff were "reporting every single detail going on in the house during the entire marriage with Nicole", allegations the church denies. Connor and Isabella went to live with their father, where they were home schooled and, according to Rathbun, systematically turned against their mother by another Scientologist, Tommy Davis.

"He told them over and over again that their mother was a sociopath and after a while they believed him," Rathbun told the Hollywood Reporter. "They had daily sessions with Tommy. I was there. I saw it."

At the time these allegations were published in 2012, Davis denied them via the Church of Scientology's lawyer Gary Soter. "Marty Rathbun never witnessed conversations between me and Isabella and Connor Cruise about their mother because no such conversations ever occurred. I have never spoken with Isabella or Connor about their mother and never would as it is none of my business," the statement said.

When Cruise's third wife, Katie Holmes, filed for divorce years later, she demanded sole custody of their daughter, Suri. Karen de la Carriere, another former high-ranking Scientologist who defected, said that in doing so, "she's making it very clear she's not going to let what happened with Nicole Kidman happen to her". Holmes recently celebrated her daughter's 18th birthday with her. Suri is thought not to have seen her father for a decade.

"I'm in the midst of it," Kidman says now, "a woman in her fifties with a whole lot of things circling."

She still lives in Nashville with her husband and two daughters, a housewife/mother/film star. Cruise, meanwhile, has successfully reinvented himself less as an advocate of a dubious church and more as an honorary Brit. He was at Victoria Beckham's birthday party last week, gallantly helping up a photographer who had fallen over, and no doubt he'll be at Wimbledon in due course. As for Kidman, she goes home and puts her jimjams on. She doesn't talk about retirement any more.

> "I'm in the midst of it,' she says, 'a woman in her fifties with a whole lot of things circling'

'Tipping culture has taken hold of Paris — and I'm partly to blame'

by Tony Turnbull

If you've been waging a one-man campaign against the tyranny of tipping culture, valiantly braving the frosty stares and curled lips of waiting staff as you fail to leave them a little something for their troubles, then your world has just got that little bit smaller. France is no longer the safe space it once was.

A compulsory service charge is a legal requirement in French bars and restaurants and its price is already factored into the menu prices, so there has been no real expectation of a tip beyond perhaps a few coins from your change. It is one of the joys of eating in France that the bill directly corresponds to what you have ordered.

Now, however, diners are increasingly being encouraged to leave a tip on top, especially with the advent of card readers that suggest a discretionary "pourboire" of anything from 10 to 20 per cent. "I've been shocked in the past when I've seen waiters asking foreigners for tips. They were just taking advantage of them because they didn't know that service is included here," one Parisian complained. "That's bad enough but it's scandalous that they're doing it to us too."

For how long will French diners fight back before they succumb to the laws of globalisation and social conformity, that is the question. How long before tipping culture becomes as ingrained as it is in America?

Because none of us is immune and I suppose I, as a middle-ranking tipper, have been quietly spoiling it for the French for years — and I can't even use ignorance as an excuse. I already knew about "service compris" when I saw a French friend leave a couple of euros after a very expensive meal in a two-Michelin-starred restaurant. It just felt so ... insulting. Better to leave nothing, I thought, than to offend them with a 0.5 per cent tip.

But I couldn't leave nothing, could I? Social conditioning told me it's not done. So when his back was turned I slipped an extra 20 euros under the bill. Still well below 10 per cent but at least I felt better about myself. And so, slowly, with every subsequent visit to France, I contributed to the erosion of certainty until tipping has now become the same grey area that it is in this country. Do I? Don't I? And if so, how much?

I think most people would accept the principle that if you've been well looked after, it's nice to show a little appreciation. If you are at one of those increasingly rare restaurants in the UK that doesn't automatically add a charge, I think 10 per cent or so is a gracious amount.

If you are at a restaurant that includes an optional service charge, things are rather muddier. I know you won't want to hear this but an optional service charge on the bill is not the same as a tip — it is an accountant's sleight of hand to keep costs down. The restaurant avoids paying additional national insurance and other employer costs on the "optional" element, which means they can pass on a larger percentage to their staff,

> "I have been quietly spoiling it for the French for years

which means they can pay them a lower base salary and therefore charge less on the menu. The "optional service" system only works if everyone plays along. If everyone refused to pay it, prices would have to go up, as they would if service was already included in the menu prices. Everyone except the taxman wins.

True, some restaurateurs have abused this, which is why in July the catchily named Employment (Allocation of Tips) Act 2023 comes into force to strengthen the employees' rights. It means that 100 per cent of the service charge will have to go to employees (it can at present be used to cover card transactions and other admin fees) and it will have to be distributed "fairly". Also, crucially, it will no longer be possible for employers to reduce their staff's hourly rate in exchange for a share of tips.

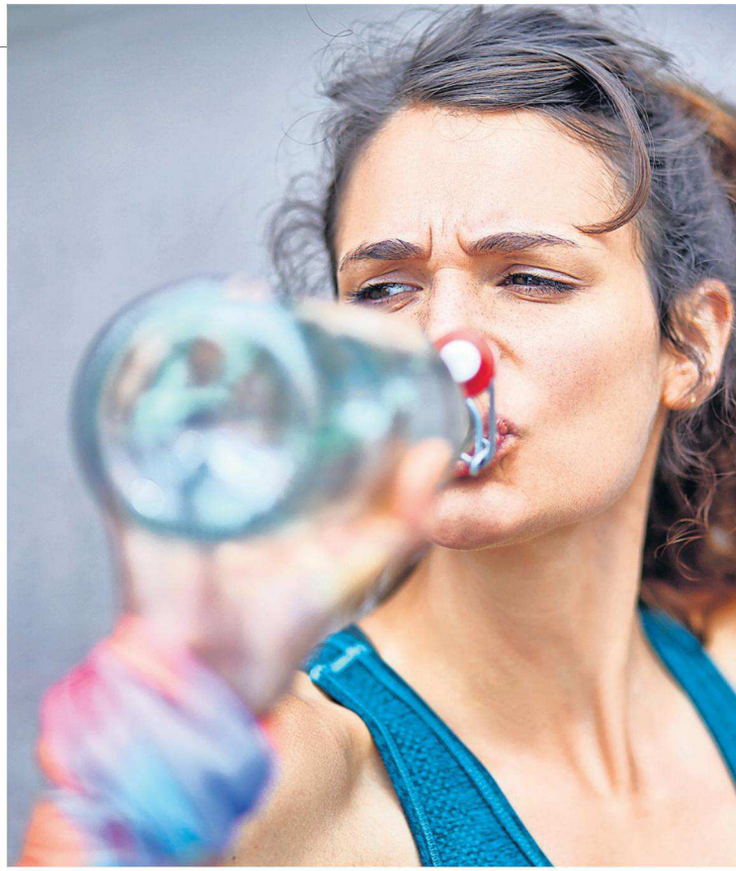
Which means that come July, we will be in the same position as the French. A fairly distributed service charge will be included, even if it is mysteriously called "optional" on your bill. You should pay that without complaint, and if you've really enjoyed yourself add a few pounds as a thank you.

Or if you really want to avoid tipping: go to Japan, and see how much money that saves you.

health

The latest health kick is drinking salt water — but should you do it?

It's trending on TikTok, but is there any scientific support for the daily morning ritual, asks Peta Bee



The consumer group Which? is publishing a new study tomorrow concerning trends gaining traction on social media that promote products that are largely a waste of money, including vitamin shots and detox teas. It doesn't, however, look into the efficacy of the latest liquid health kick that's trending on TikTok: sipping salty water each morning on an empty stomach (no retching please).

As unappetising as it sounds, proponents of adding a tiny pinch (one 16th of a teaspoon is said to be enough) of salt to a glass of water and drinking it first thing in place of your morning coffee claim that it is not only a route to optimal hydration but a means to supreme inner cleansing, improved digestion and better mental clarity. Which may explain why health-focused posts featuring tips on adding salt to drinks have attracted millions of views on TikTok. Salty water has also been billed as a potential "answer to uncomfortable bloating and water retention" by Glamour magazine, while British Vogue recently revealed that the supermodel Elle Macpherson leaves a glass of water laced with a pinch of pink Himalayan salt by her bed so that she can drink it as soon as she wakes.

Unsurprisingly, there has been a 248 per cent increase over the past four months in online searches for "electrolytes". These mineral salts are essential for a body to function healthily, and include among others the sodium and chloride in regular salt. Little wonder products claiming to restore the balance of body salts are flying off shelves.

A month's supply of Ancient and Brave's True Hydration powder, a cocktail of "natural electrolytes" including magnesium, potassium and chromium and Himalayan salt designed to be mixed with water, costs £32 (ancientandbrave.earth). Cellular Hydration, an electrolyte-containing powder from Artah (£32; artah.co), claims to be "great for energy, focus, mood". This month saw the launch of a "premium" canned salt water drink, Cadence, that contains sodium chloride, potassium and magnesium and costs an eye-watering £49.99 for 24 250ml cans (usecadence.com). According to the manufacturers its long list of benefits include "reducing physical fatigue and boosting energy".

> It's estimated that adults need up to 4g of salt a day to function well

It's an unlikely trend but one that presents a concerning conundrum given that we are consistently reminded by health chiefs to cut down on salt while the World Health Organisation warns that too much of it in the diet is associated with high blood pressure, increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease, gastric cancer, osteoporosis and kidney disease.

Some salt is essential for health, though, and it's estimated that most adults need up to four grams each day to function well. "Sodium chloride is utilised by every cell in the body and it is vital for biological processes such as fluid nerve impulse regulation, as well as for healthy muscles including those in the heart," says the registered nutritionist Rhiannon Lambert. But with the health risks that come from getting too much, we should be limiting our intake to less than six grams or one daily teaspoon.

According to the National Diet and Nutrition Survey, most of us routinely get too much, with the average adult's intake at 7.8g each day, significantly above this upper threshold. So, does it seem conceivable that we should be consuming more sodium, even if it is a daily sprinkle dissolved in water?

"For the average person getting more salt in the diet is not something they should be targeting," says Dr Lewis James, a reader in human nutrition who specialises in hydration research at Loughborough University. "They have more than enough in their diets anyway." But are there health

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A large pinch of salt provides about 291mg of sodium

benefits to sipping salt occasionally? Here we ask the experts:

What are electrolytes and why do we need them?

Electrolytes are "electrically charged" mineral salts that are present in the body's fluids — the blood and urine, for example — and play an important role in the functioning of nerves, muscles, brain and heart as well as in fluid balance. They include sodium and chloride — the two components of salt — magnesium, potassium, phosphorus and calcium.

"In the body the main electrolytes responsible for hydration-related issues are sodium and chloride, which help to retain water in the blood and all fluid outside of the cells," James says. "This is why saline, or salt water, is used in IV drips at hospitals for people who are dehydrated." Potassium is the main electrolyte inside the cells. "Over a long period of time the total amount of potassium and sodium available will regulate the water balance of our body," James adds. "But potassium has very little effect on hydration."

Will drinking salt water first thing hydrate you better?

Probably, James says, although that does not mean we should all be doing it. "There is some evidence that if you drink water containing salt in the morning you retain slightly more — 100-200ml — of the fluid in the body," he says. "But you get the same effect if you drink milk instead of plain water."

He says the salt water practice is "probably not relevant to the average person going about their daily life" and only if you are an endurance athlete, have a heavy manual job or do a lot of high-intensity gym workouts that make you sweat a lot is salty water likely to be helpful.

"These highly active people have big fluxes in hydration that the average person doesn't and at certain times of the day consuming salt in drinks might be beneficial," James says. "In general our bodies are really good at controlling fluid levels and we mostly drink enough to maintain health perfectly well without the need for salt water."

If you do want to try it, then a small glass in the morning when you wake up dehydrated "is probably the best time". For optimal hydration and digestion, proponents suggest drinking salt water on an empty stomach, but James says he is unaware of any scientific evidence to support this.

> Eat a varied diet and you will get plenty of mineral salts from food

How much salt should be added to water?

This is where you need to be savvy. While salt water influencers might encourage sipping it throughout the day in addition to a morning salt shot, if you add too much salt you can quickly exceed healthy intakes before you even consider the salt in food that has been consumed.

If you are tempted to try it, stick to one 16th of a teaspoon — the tip of the spoon — in water. Even one eighth of a teaspoon — a large pinch — could provide 291mg of sodium, and eight glasses of water containing that much salt alone would exceed the maximum healthy intake of 6g, which, incidentally, is an upper limit and not a target. Once a day is enough.

Will salt water help to cleanse your digestive system?

One of the claims of the salt water brigade is that the daily habit relieves bloating and aids digestion. James says not. "Your kidneys and liver do a great job of removing any toxins from your body and flushing them out through urine or processing and eliminating them. Drinking salty water doesn't make the process more efficient."

Is pink Himalayan salt the best type to add to water?

Followers of the salt water trend suggest that pink Himalayan salt is the best to be adding to your glass because it contains the highest amounts of electrolytes and is purportedly one of the purest salts around.

"Salt crystals and flakes or coarse ground rock salt are refined less than table salt so can contain marginally more minerals," Lambert says. "However, there are no health benefits to choosing these luxury salts."

The British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) says there is no evidence that expensive pink Himalayan, rock or sea salts are any better for us than cheap table salt and that, chemically, all salts are similar, each containing up to 98 per cent sodium chloride. According to the BNF, any extra minerals in fashionable salts "are present in such tiny amounts anyway, they are unlikely to provide any significant health benefits". If you want to try salt water, save your money and use the cheap stuff.

Is salt water good for sore throats?

Gargling with — but not swallowing — salt water is an at-home remedy that has been used for centuries. The NHS recommends dissolving half a teaspoon of salt in a glass of warm water (which helps the salt to dissolve), gargling the solution for a few minutes before spitting it out to reduce swelling and pain of a sore throat.

There are other potential benefits. A study in the Journal of Indian Society of Pedodontics and Preventative Dentistry showed that a daily salt water rinse helped to reduce plaque, reducing the risk of dental disease when combined with brushing and flossing.

Where else can we get electrolytes?

Eat a varied diet and you will get plenty of mineral salts from food. Bananas, beet greens, salmon, avocados and potatoes all contain potassium, while spinach, pumpkin seeds, brown rice and almonds provide magnesium. Sodium is not difficult to obtain in the diet but pickles and cheese are among the healthier foods to contain it. Milk is a particularly good electrolyte source and perfect for a recovery drink after exercise.

"Milk contains potassium, protein and about the same amount of salt as a sports drink," James says. "It also contains carbohydrate in the form of lactose or milk sugars and we have shown all of these combined to be particularly powerful for hydration."

If you don't eat dairy, then soya milk is an option. "Soya milk has a hydration effect comparable to cow's milk," James says. "It contains slightly less salt, but more potassium to replace sweat losses and a reasonable amount of protein that seems to help hydration in the same way."

Why do we need to replace salts if we do a lot of exercise?

When we sweat the main minerals we lose are sodium and chloride. "People can lose 1-3g of salt per litre of sweat," James says. "And very heavy sweaters can lose up to as much as 3-4 litres of sweat an hour."

Marathon runners, triathletes and participants in hardcore fitness competitions such as CrossFit and Hyrox will therefore benefit from consuming salt-enhanced fluids before, during and after exercise. "With big sweat losses there's a higher risk of dehydration in these sorts of high-intensity activities lasting longer than about 90 minutes," says the registered nutritionist Anita Bean, author of *The Complete Guide to Sports Nutrition* (Bloomsbury).

"Sodium is added to many commercial sports drinks because studies have shown it increases the urge to drink and improves palatability as well as promoting fluid retention in the body." Too much plain water can backfire in endurance events. "It effectively dilutes the sodium in your body, reducing thirst sensations before you are fully hydrated and can ultimately lead to a condition called hyponatraemia, or water toxicity, which is dangerous," Bean says.

"Adding very small amounts — 0.23-0.69g per litre — of salt when sweat losses are high is beneficial, but if you are exercising for less than 90 minutes, adding sodium won't help your performance."

Replacing other electrolytes, such as potassium, during exercise is unnecessary "unless sweat losses are high and prolonged for over two hours", Bean says. "You will replace all electrolytes by eating and drinking healthily in the hours after exercise."

Ask the experts

How can I treat sore eyes?

Dr Daniela Oehring, associate professor in optometry at the University of Plymouth

Eye discomfort can be caused by dryness or irritation. These symptoms can be acute or develop over time. Dry eye syndrome and blepharitis (chronic eyelid inflammation) are common problems. Environmental irritants, allergies and eye diseases like ocular rosacea and photokeratitis can also cause discomfort.

Allergens, chemicals and low-humidity environments can exacerbate symptoms, and systemic issues such as Sjögren's syndrome, which is a condition that affects parts of the body that produce fluid, like tears, can contribute. Effective relief can include eyelid cleaning, lubricating eye drops and compresses. Improving your hydration, nutrition and reducing your screen time can also be beneficial.

Eye soreness may be accompanied by dryness, itching, redness, discharge and light sensitivity, which can be severe. Seek medical help immediately for this. Remedies range from antihistamines to antibacterials and pain relief. See an optician regularly, use appropriate eyewear and reduce your exposure to allergens by washing

your hands before touching your eyes. Maintain strict hygiene with contact lenses and avoid eye rubbing, which can cause irritation and spread germs. Do not share make-up, eye drops or towels. Doing so can spread infection, leading to conditions like pinkeye (conjunctivitis).

Professor Alex Day, consultant ophthalmic surgeon at Moorfields Private Eye Hospital

Burning or stinging eyes can be caused by ocular surface dryness associated with blepharitis, contact lens wear, or even allergic conjunctivitis and hay fever. If you are experiencing repeated irritation it is worth seeing an optometrist. In cases of allergy, topical antihistamine eye drops may be recommended. Irritants such as dust, smoke or chemicals can also cause stinging. Flushing your eyes with clean water can alleviate the problem. It is not uncommon for contact lens wearers to experience stinging eyes, particularly at the end of a long day. If so, see your optician as other lens options may be available. If you spend a lot of time looking at screens, remember to blink frequently.

Elisabeth Perlman

health

The DJ who defied the stigma of a

From Dancing on Ice to marathon runs, the former Radio 1 star Adele Roberts is happy to put her stoma bag on show. It helps others, she tells Anna Maxted

There's a line in *Personal Best* — the exuberant memoir of the former Radio 1 DJ Adele Roberts — that I have to read twice. "Having cancer snapped me into the present," she writes. "It was like a curse had been lifted." When we meet in a north London café and I repeat it to her, she exclaims warmly, "I love that. That almost gives me goosebumps, hearing it back."

Some might feel "a curse has been set" by a cancer diagnosis, she concedes. But Roberts felt "liberated". She links it to old buried griefs. Facing the spectre of death, then having surgery to remove the tumour in her bowel and have a stoma fitted, "was the last bit of me holding on to that grief. I was able to let go.

"I'm trying to think why," she adds, frowning. "Yeah, I think I'd been so scared of living. I'd been keeping myself small for so long." It reminded her tomorrow isn't promised. "I'd woken up finally."

Now fully alert, and viewing life through a lens of gratitude, Roberts, 45, is an unstoppable force. *Dancing on Ice* fans will know that 18 months after completing chemotherapy for stage 2 cancer, she was skating across our screens like an elfin goddess, all fiery grace — her stoma bag peeping out of her glittery waistband.

"I wouldn't have done *Dancing on Ice* without a stoma," she says firmly. "I'm not a dancer. I'm not a performer. I don't do make-up and pretty things." Roberts's sole mission was visibility. "To have an ostomy, show what's possible, help kids, open the conversation, lessen the stigma."

Nine months earlier, she had run the 2023 London Marathon in 3 hours, 30 minutes and 22 seconds, setting a Guinness World Record as fastest female with an ileostomy. "I've never run a marathon so present and so determined," she says. Receiving her medal, she paid tribute to Deborah James, who was diagnosed with stage 4 bowel cancer in 2016 at the age of 35 and died in 2022.

Roberts said James was "in her heart" during the run. For much of her training, the soles of her feet were burnt raw by her oral chemotherapy. "It ravaged me," she says. Her skin was so hypersensitive that her partner of 20 years, the actress Kate Holderness, had to pop the painkillers out of their blister packs for her. "Some nights I'd lie there and cry," Roberts says, "but then I just had to hope that I could go to sleep and start again in the morning. I used to treat every single day as a mini-lifetime. Get to the end of the day, try and sleep, go again."

Glancing at her CV, you wouldn't think she had been sleepwalking. The eldest of six, Roberts grew up on Liverpool council estates, but won a

scholarship to the selective private girls' school, Merchant Taylors'. (Her mother tutored her in between working at Kwik Save.) Before Roberts quit her pharmacology degree at Leeds University to be a PA for her uncle, she secured her own show on Leeds Student Radio. From her paper round to collecting glasses at a friend's nightclub, to frying at McDonald's, she grafted. She DJ'd at weekends and in 2012, after a decade of rejections, was asked to host a show on Radio 1Xtra.

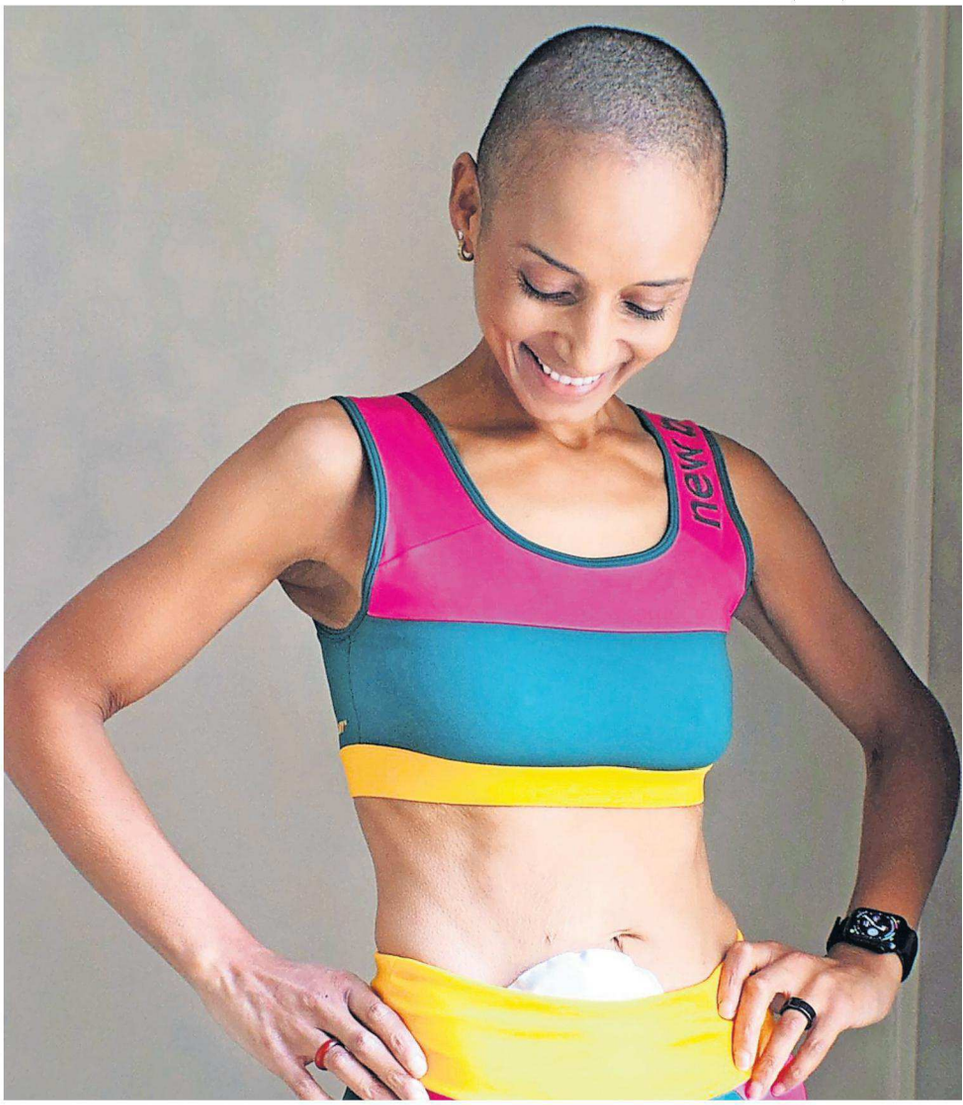
From there to Radio 1. And yet she claims there were "many years of half-arsing it". She bursts out laughing (a frequent occurrence). Speaking to Roberts is rewarding as she's forthright and reflective. "Maybe I've got that first-child syndrome, where you try and please your mum and dad," she says. "Because they were working class, I feel like I only valued jobs where you had to work really hard."

Her father is a builder and her mother — who died in January after a long, debilitating illness — did shifts in bakeries and supermarkets. "And so the more success I got with music — which truly made me happy — I felt like I was doing less and less work and I felt like more of a failure."

Roberts comes over as a squabble between self-belief and self-doubt. "Absolutely," she says. "I'm my own worst enemy in a lot of ways." She connects it to her parents. "They gave everything they had to us as children, and as I grew up, I saw looking after yourself ... as vanity." It took her a while to realise it's not. "You've got to be able to have pride to be able to feel good inside. It's not even about success, it's about inner success."

Yet in adolescence, she felt "like a toad". Why so mean to herself? "Because we moved around a lot, I

ADELE ROBERTS/INSTAGRAM; GETTY IMAGES



Adele Roberts

> Looking back now, I was really, really ill

Personal Best by Adele Roberts (Catalyst £22). To order a copy go to timesbookshop.co.uk or call 020 3176 2935. Free UK standard P&P on online orders over £25. Special discount available for Times+ members

didn't fit in. I was always new." Her voice wobbles. "Sorry if I get upset. It's only because — I think this a lot, but don't ever get to speak to anyone, so thank you for letting me — also, being the only gay person in my family, as much as my family embraced me, you just know there's something different about you."

For years, she didn't like living in her own body, she says now. Role models for her were rare, "and so I always felt odd. I always felt odd and I always felt wrong." She's abruptly tearful, and Holderness, sitting at the end of our table, silently passes her a tissue. "Thanks, babe," Roberts says.

It's why she's keen to be centre stage, even though it's not her. ("I've been hiding away on radio because I can't be seen and it's very comfortable.") She wants to help people who feel this way, "especially people with stomas. I totally understand how they feel. I felt that way for most of my life."

I mention a childhood anecdote in *Personal Best*. A neighbour throws a brick, it hits her on the head. She's told not to cry. (She'd forgotten this until she shaved her head weeks into chemo — she shows me the scar.) Roberts never saw her parents cry, she says, "and so I think I used to see crying as weakness and something you mustn't do. I don't remember crying until I met Kate, really. She's made me soft!"

Roberts's cancer was diagnosed in October 2021, mid-pandemic. She was just 42. Less than two years earlier she had been on *I'm a Celebrity*. She had groped in boxes of hand-sized spiders and eaten camel's anus to win team meals — but her complexion was grey. She was constantly cold, and sleeping. Holderness, watching from home, was so worried, she rang the producer, Roberts says, "Looking back now, I was really, really ill. My body was succumbing to the cancer."

The tumour, it transpired, had been growing for a decade. Her symptoms? "Bloated tummy, lack of appetite, lethargy — a massive one, if you're tired all the time and don't know why — and a change in bowel habits."

The latter only emerged in the year of diagnosis. "At first it was noticing mucus when I went to the toilet, then it was blood. It wasn't loads of blood — it was slight little dots. That became more and more consistent." She didn't want to call the GP, but she knew, "this isn't right for me".

stoma

Bowel cancer recently overtook lung cancer to become the third most common cancer in the UK. Although over-50s account for more than nine in ten cases, the disease is increasingly being diagnosed in younger people — when it is more likely to be aggressive and deadly.

Roberts has a way with words, in person and on the page. She calls her tumour "Umbriel" (a moon orbiting Uranus). It's inside her rectum, and if she pushes, she can almost expel it, a "bloody mass of malignant tissue", like the Demogorgon from *Stranger Things*. She names the "two inches of pink small intestine" poking out of her torso into the stoma bag "Audrey", after the plant in *Little Shop of Horrors*. It's a brilliant, visceral insight into living with a stoma. Audrey is prone to wriggling off her bag, causing havoc. "She's quite something, isn't she?" Roberts says, beaming. "I really do believe the gut reaction's real. So if I get very nervous or very excited or anxious, that's when my stoma plays up. It's almost like Audrey's helping me deal with my feelings."

Consequently, at 3am on marathon day, put up by sponsors in a smart hotel with Holderness, Roberts gets "the tickle" — the sign her bag's coming loose. *Exorcist*-style, Audrey sprays the oats and mash Roberts has consumed for fuel around the "fancy bathroom". Shower blockage, flooding and frantic naked mopping ensues. Roberts falls into bed at six. "It kind of took the pressure off. I thought, 'The worst has already happened.'"

She's in disbelief that she's an author. She didn't have books at home. "We had comics because that's what my dad liked to read. *The Beano* and *The Dandy*." But at Merchant Taylors' "they'd let us read *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*" and last year she took the 52 Book Reading Challenge, tackling Marcus Aurelius, Dan Brown, Oprah Winfrey and Victor Frankl, among others.

One can be cynical about celebrity tweeness (obligatory worship of the NHS, etc) but Roberts is not that. She's the genuine article, although she says, "I never feel like people will like me. I always feel I have to win people over. But maybe that's my problem. I shouldn't always think it's going to be a struggle and I have to fight." She insists I write about her "mistakes".

All I can dig up is Roberts, aged about 23, squabbling with Jade Goody on *Big Brother 3*. On this first foray into reality TV, she's manic, tightly wound, hardly a villain. (And yet, I sense she still feels bad — Goody, who died of cervical cancer in 2009, gets two generous mentions in her book.)

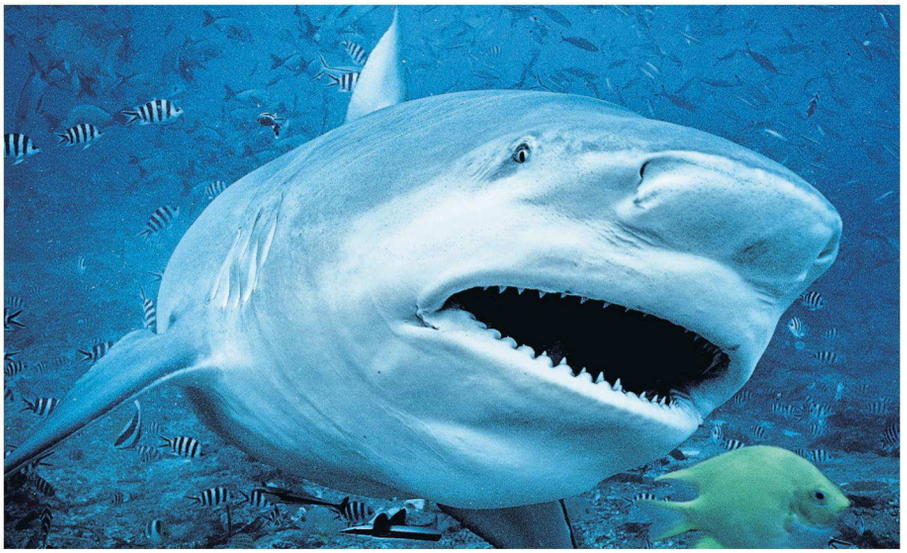
"I used to be very different, very miserable. But growing up on council estates, you fight fire with fire," she says. "If somebody was negative or aggressive to me I'd just meet them with the same emotion. They were just easy go-to emotions for me. I'd just get angry. I just buried my feelings. I either felt grumpy, angry, or numb.

"And I've learnt now that I'm older, you don't have to do that. You don't have to fight. You can be a kind person and be kind to yourself." Indeed. It's rare to meet someone so filled with light.

Is it still safe to go in the water? The truth about shark attacks

An expert on the apex predator tells Damian Whitworth how big a threat they really are

ALAMY



A bull shark attacked Peter Smith, below, in Tobago

An attack by a shark off the Caribbean island of Tobago has left a British holidaymaker in a critical condition. Peter Smith, 64, suffered wounds to his left hand and arm, left thigh and stomach after bites from a bull shark while swimming. It was hoped that the wounds to his leg would not require an amputation.

The attack evokes memories of some even more serious shark attacks in recent years. Two years ago Simon Nellist, a 35-year-old British man, was the victim of Sydney's first fatal shark attack in 60 years. In 2016 Doreen Collyer, 60, a British lecturer was killed in an attack while diving off a reef in Western Australia.

The fatalities and serious injuries inevitably raise questions about shark attack trends. Are we seeing more attacks than before? And as climate change alters the world's oceans, is it pushing sharks into more interactions with humans, with disastrous results?

Oliver Shipley is a British shark expert and professor at the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences at Stony Brook University in New York. "My thoughts go out to families of all those who go through this because it can be extremely nasty and obviously in some cases, unfortunately, ends in mortality," he says. "And I don't want to underplay the severity of an incident when it does happen."

But he is keen to make one thing very clear from the start of our conversation: "These things are still extremely unlikely to happen to the average beachgoer."

How rare are such attacks? Last year the International Shark Attack File, collated by the Florida Museum of Natural History, recorded 69 "unprovoked" shark bites on humans and 22 "provoked" attacks bites. An unprovoked bite would have come as a complete surprise to the bitten person, while those who provoked the animal, by harassing or trying to catch or feed it, may have had less cause to be outraged. Spearfishermen appear to be particularly provocative.

Last year there were ten unprovoked fatalities worldwide. Three of them were surfers in Australia. The global average over the past five years is six deaths a year, but there have been spikes in previous years. Experts caution that when the margins between death and survival can be very fine, there will be years with sudden upticks.

In the decade 2010-2019 there were 799 unprovoked attacks, up from 661 the previous decade and 500 the decade before that, but the collators say the data should be treated carefully because scientific and media coverage of attacks has increased.

While sharks that bite humans may be hungry they are not looking for a human lunch. "It's mistaken identity a lot of the time," Shipley says. "A lot of species will do what is called an exploratory bite. They'll go in and interact, and realise straight away that is not their natural diet and they'll swim off. They're not attracted to humans."

So as the seas warm are sharks on the move and coming into contact with new human populations?

"There are all these theories flying around about climate change and animals moving further north and animals living closer to shore, and therefore interacting with human beachgoers," Shipley says. "Climate change is starting to impact where we find species and in some cases where we no longer find them. [But] there's very poor empirical support for that necessarily increasing the likelihood of an interaction with a human.

"I don't think we can blame climate change for what might have happened in Tobago. Climate change and coastal development and fragmentation of habitats are displacing animals. So it's probably intuitive to think that they may be displaced and show up in other areas. I don't think there's necessarily any evidence to suggest that that's going to bring animals closer to shore."

Trying to understand what might be causing a human interaction is incredibly complex, he says, and often the lack of long-term data makes scientists uncertain about what is happening. The International Shark Attack File highlights that the human population is growing along with our interest in aquatic recreation. "We have to remember that there are many more people using the ocean," Shipley says. "If you count how many human-shark interactions occur in a year and divide that by the number of people that actually utilise the water, you're in the 0.0000I per cent where there's an interaction, let alone a fatal one."

> "Climate change is starting to impact where we find species

Meanwhile, sharks, which were around for hundreds of millions of years before we started splashing about in the shallows, have been depleted since the advent of industrial fishing. In the past half-century some species have been reduced by 99 per cent, Shipley says. Data about the regeneration of certain populations is still tentative.

The seas in northern latitudes that include New York and his native UK "are changing really, really quickly, warming faster than other parts of the ocean. We really do need to get a better handle on how climate change, especially warming, is going to impact the distribution and the survival of a lot of these animals."

So will we see more sharks, and potentially those like the bull, the great white and tiger shark, which are involved in most attacks, in Blighty? "I don't think anybody in Britain needs to be concerned about that," he says. "I do occasionally see basking sharks being misidentified as white sharks and people freaking out because of it. But basking sharks eat plankton, so there are no concerns there."

If you are going into the water in an area where there has been an attack you may now have some reassurance from drones or even helicopters patrolling the skies along with lifeguards with binoculars. And you can take further precautions. Watch out for a wind blowing towards shore, which pushes prey closer, where there will be high wave action and cloudy water. Vigilance might be needed too at dusk and dawn. "Consider avoiding the crepuscular period where the activity of some of these species is thought to increase and be the key foraging period," Shipley says.

Your weekday brain boost

More puzzles Pages 14-16

Every day, Monday to Thursday, a page of extra puzzles to give your brain an extended workout

Samurai medium

Fill each grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length.

			4	6				3
8		4		9				
			7		2			9
		7	8	4	5			
	6	2						4
	4					9	7	
	5		1	3				6
		3		5				
7			9					

	4				8		6	
				3	9		5	8
	8						3	4
			2			5		
				9				3
			6	1			7	2
3							4	6
	6			4				7
		9	7			1		

		3
	1	4
6	8	

	1	6
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		9						7
2				7				
4	6				9			
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6				8				
		2			4			
7	4						2	
3	2		8	9				
	9		7				8	

5						9		
	8							
4								
			9	6	8	4		
8			7		1			
				5		1		7
7				8	6			

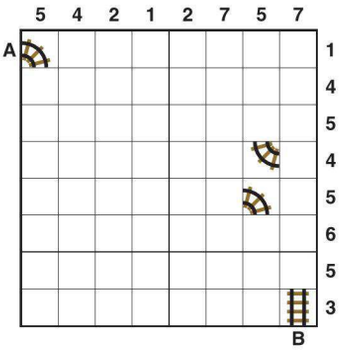
Solve Times puzzles interactively with same-day solutions at thetimes.co.uk

Sudoku fiendish

							2	
				2				9
		2	7		3			4
		5			6			
	2				4	3	9	
		3	5	8		4	1	
				1	7	5		
8				4	5		3	
	3	6						

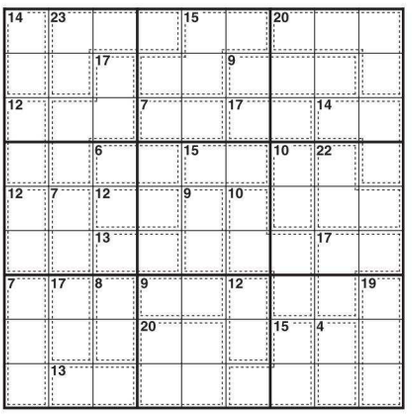
Train Tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.



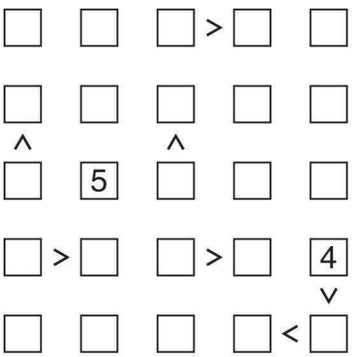
Killer tricky

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

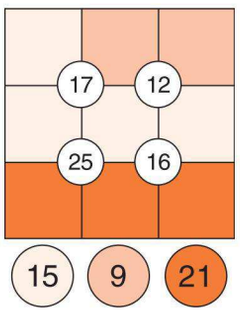


Futoshiki

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.



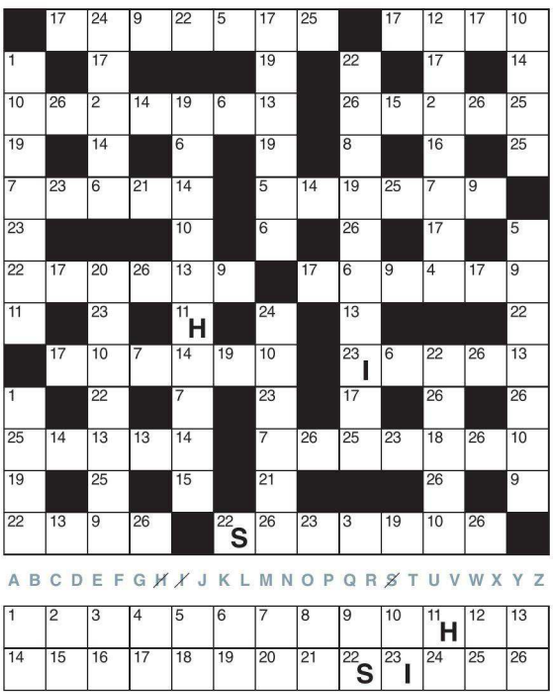
Suko



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Codeword

Every letter in the crossword-style grid, right, is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded.



Mini Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x2 box contains the digits 1 to 6

	1			5	
5	6			2	4
	5			3	
	4	2	5	6	
	3	5	2	4	

Solutions in tomorrow's Times2

Yesterday's solutions

SAMURAI

3	6	2	5	9	1	8	7	4
7	5	1	2	8	4	6	3	9
4	8	9	6	3	7	1	5	2
5	9	4	7	6	8	3	2	1
1	2	8	4	5	3	7	9	6
6	7	3	1	2	9	4	8	5
8	4	5	9	7	6	2	1	3
2	3	6	8	1	5	9	4	7
9	1	7	3	4	2	5	6	8

6	5	3	2	7	1	9	8	4
1	8	9	4	6	3	7	2	5
4	2	7	9	5	8	6	3	1
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8	7	6	5	1	4	2	9	3
7	4	8	3	2	6	5	1	9
5	6	1	8	9	7	3	4	2
9	3	2	1	4	5	8	6	7

9	5	6	6	9	2	1	7	4
4	3	5	2	6	8	1	7	9
7	8	1	5	9	3	6	2	4

8	1	2	6	7	4	3	5	9
6	5	9	1	2	3	8	7	4
7	4	3	9	8	5	1	2	6
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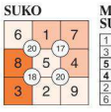
4	8	1	5	6	9	7	3	2
2	9	7	3	1	8	6	4	5

6	1	9	4	2	7	8	3	5
8	3	5	9	6	1	2	4	7
2	5	4	8	3	6	9	7	1
9	7	1	2	4	5	6	8	3
3	4	6	7	1	9	5	2	8
7	8	2	5	9	4	3	1	6
4	9	3	6	8	2	7	5	1
5	2	7	1	6	3	4	9	8
1	6	8	3	7	5	2	4	9

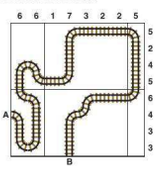
SUKO



MINI SUDOKU

1	2	6	3	4	5
3	5	4	2	1	6
5	6	1	4	2	3
4	3	2	5	6	1
2	1	5	6	3	4
6	4	3	1	5	2

TRAIN TRACKS



FUTOSHIKI

3	5	2 >	1	4
1	4 >	3	2 <	5
5	2	4 >	3	1
4	3	1	5	2
2	1	5	4	3

SUDOKU

6	9	3	5	4	7	8	1	2
4	1	8	6	2	3	5	7	9
5	2	7	8	1	9	6	3	4
8	3	6	2	9	1	4	5	7
9	7	1	4	5	6	3	2	8
2	5	4	7	3	8	1	9	6
7	8	9	1	6	5	2	4	3
1	6	2	3	7	4	9	8	5
3	4	5	9	8	2	7	6	1

KILLER

9	5	2	3	8	6	4	1	7
1	4	6	5	9	7	3	8	2
3	8	7	4	2	1	6	9	5
7	2	9	1	4	3	5	6	8
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6	3	5	9	7	8	1	2	4
8	7	1	2	3	4	9	5	6
5	6	4	8	1	9	2	7	3
2	9	3	7	6	5	8	4	1

CODEWORD

Recalling reality TV's cruellest 'practical joke'

Carol Midgley TV review

Miriam: Death of a Reality Star
Channel 4
★★★★☆

Jamie Cooks Spring
Channel 4
★★★☆☆

Miriam: Death of a Reality Star was shocking to watch which, I suppose, is encouraging: it shows that things have changed a lot in 20 years. "The past is a foreign country," goes the saying, but the recent past can feel pretty strange too.

That in 2003 a TV reality show could be formatted in which six "red-blooded" young males vied for the affections of a beautiful young woman (Miriam Rivera), and that the big reveal at the end was "she has a cock!", is astounding. Roll up — penis as punchline! Trans woman as bait. Bosses apparently saw nothing wrong with placing Miriam and a group of men in a game of deceit. There were seemingly no red flags regarding a duty of care, psychological damage, the matter of consent. A psychiatrist called it "cruelty TV".

"I don't feel I was cruel in making it, I feel I was incredibly naive," said Remy Blumenfeld, executive producer of the show made by Brighter Pictures and broadcast on Sky One. But wasn't there also cynicism at work, the desire to produce edgy, "water-cooler" TV?

It must have been lonely for Miriam, keeping that secret in the villa as the boys fell for her, kissing her, two of them becoming quite besotted, not knowing if her ultimate "prize" would be rejection. Which it was. The men took it badly, throwing things around the villa and later trying to take an injunction out to stop the film being broadcast (it was aired in 2004). Tragically, Miriam was found dead in 2019. The police recorded it as a suicide but others believed it was murder.

Yes, she had agreed to be in the show, playing along, but it was as if she was a character in a board game rather than a human being with feelings. The men must have felt like the butt of a televised "practical joke".

LIPSTICK SYNDICATION

Miriam Rivera, who was at the heart of the Sky show, died in 2019

The TV company may have wanted to believe that this was a social experiment, a lesson in getting to the person first, not judging someone by their genitals. But it was really a countdown to the money shot, when we would see the men's expressions of shock in a denouement designed, as was written at the time, to "elicit horror". The only positive is that it would never be commissioned today.

"Springtime is here!" said a bouncy Jamie Oliver in **Jamie Cooks Spring**. Could have fooled me, mate. Where I live it's bloody freezing. But the ever-optimistic Oliver does carry you along, here enthusing over what is a much underrated vegetable-but-also-a-fruit. Namely rhubarb. He was so excited, he almost ran out of adjectives. Rhubarb is "unusual, delicious, juicy, tangy, electric, vibrant," he said. Maybe he'd been bingeing a thesaurus, because he described chard as having an "iron-y grunt about it". Not irony, FYI, but the quality of being iron-rich.

Still, I do find him one of the more watchable TV chefs and I liked that this was about using in-season produce such as spinach, basil, celery. He said that his nan used to tell him to dip raw rhubarb in sugar, a sort of sherbet dip. Mine just used to buy me a quarter of cream soda "kaylie" from the corner shop. If you don't know what "kaylie" is, congratulations — you're young.

Radio choice
Ben Dowell

Screenshot
Radio 4, 11am

Today's theme is fashion, with Mark Kermode talking to the director Kevin Macdonald, *above*, about his new documentary, *High & Low: John Galliano*. The pair discuss how designers are portrayed in movies such as *The Devil Wears Prada* and *Phantom Thread*, and examine the way fashion in film can affect real-world trends. The fashion historian and broadcaster Amber Butchart talks to Kermode's co-presenter, Ellen E Jones, about the close relationship between couture and cinema, the influence of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, and how some of the earliest films were essentially fashion advertisements.

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Times Radio
Digital, web, smart speaker, app
5.00am Rosie Wright with Early Breakfast **6.00** Aasmah Mir and Stig Abell with Times Radio Breakfast **10.00** Matt Chorley **1.00pm** Ed Vaizey **3.00** Jane Garvey and Fi Glover. Live discussion **5.00** John Pienaar with Times Radio Drive. In-depth discussion **7.00** Pienaar and Friends. Informed debate with leading figures **8.00** The Evening Edition with Kait Borsay **10.00** Carole Walker **1.00am** The Story **1.30** Highlights from Matt Chorley **2.00** The Best of Times Radio

Radio 2
FM: 88-90.2 MHz
6.30am The Gaby Roslin Breakfast Show. Rebel Wilson joins the host to talk about her new book **9.30** Vernon Kay. Shaznay Lewis chooses her Tracks of My Years **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** Scott Mills **4.00** Sara Cox **6.30** Sara Cox's Half Wower **7.00** Jo Whiley's Shiny Happy Playlist **7.30** Jo Whiley **9.00** The Jazz Show with Jamie Cullum **10.00** Trevor Nelson's Magnificent 7 **10.30** Trevor Nelson's Rhythm Nation **12.00** OJ Borg **3.00am** The Folk Show with Mark Radcliffe (r) **4.00** Owain Wyn Evans

Radio 3
FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz
6.30am Breakfast
Petroc Trelawny presents Radio 3's classical breakfast show. Including **7.00**, **8.00** News. **7.30**, **8.30** News headlines
9.30 Essential Classics
Georgia Mann presents music and features
1.00pm Classical Live
The Luxembourg Philharmonic play Mozart's Symphony No.40 and the Van Kuijk Quartet performs Mendelssohn's 6th String Quartet. Presented by Tom McKinney. Anatol Lyadov (*Baba-Yaga*); Clara Schumann (*6 Songs*, Op.13); Samuel Wesley (Sinfonia obbligato); Eric Coates (*The Dam Busters March*); Caroline Shaw (*And the swallow*); Bach (Chaconne — Partita No.2 in D minor, BWV.1004); Carl Nielsen (*Oriental Festival March, Aladdin*, Op.34, encore); Luigi Boccherini (Quintet No.4 in D major, G.449, Fandango); Scriabin (Symphony No.4, Op.54 *"The Poem of Ecstasy"*); Louis Vierne (*Tantum ergo*); Mendelssohn (String Quartet No.6 in F minor, Op.80); Mozart (Symphony No.40 in G minor, K.550); Nadia Boulanger (Three Pieces for piano — encore); Francsisco Tarrega (*Requerdos de la Alhambra*); and Abel Selaocoe (*Qhawe*)
4.00 Composer of the Week: Debussy (1862-1918)
Donald Macleod finds Debussy adopting a bohemian lifestyle in the French capital, frequenting Parisian cafes and mixing with some of the city's most controversial artists. Debussy (*Danse bohémienne; Deux Arabesques; Rodrigue et Chimene*, excerpt — arr Smith and orch Denisov; *La damoiselle élue — Chorus: La damoiselle élue s'appuyait; Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*; and *Proses Lyriques — III. De fleurs*)
5.00 In Tune
7.00 Classical Mixtape
A selection of classical favourites mixed with jazz, folk and music from around the world
7.30 Radio 3 in Concert
The jazz pianist Fergus McCreadie and his trio join the Manchester Collective for a genre-busting concert, breaking down boundaries between jazz, folk and classical. Fergus McCreadie (*Stony Gate*); Donald Grant (*Thoir thusa nuas an rionnag sin — Bring you down that star*, WP; *Slow Tune and Valse; NZ 2004*; and Prelude); Gyorgy Kurtág (II, VIII, IX, XI and XV from *Officium breve in memoriam Andreae Szervánszky*); Fergus McCreadie (*Nearness of You*); Christian Mason (*Muttos* from *Sardinian Songbook*); Michael Rooney (*Eileen's Lament*); Junior Crehan (*Luachrachan's Jig*); Christian Mason (*Eki Attar* from *Tuvan Songbook*); Haydn (Adagio from String Quartet Op 54 No 2); Anna Meredith, arr Richard Jones (*Honeyed Words*); and Fergus McCreadie (*Seasons Change; Snowcaps* and *The Unfurrowed Field*)
9.45 The Essay: Letters to a Young Composer
Five leading composers write a letter to a young composer — real or imagined. These personal essays reflect the realities of life as a leading composer
10.00 Night Tracks
Sara Mohr-Pietsch presents an adventurous soundtrack for late-night listening
11.30 'Round Midnight
The British saxophonist Soweto Kinch presents the best in jazz and is joined by the pianist Robert Mitchell. He will be selecting music from living legends, unsung heroes and artists he thinks deserve recognition and respect — giving them their Flowers. Plus, Soweto celebrates International Jazz Day
12.30am Through the Night (r)

Radio 4
FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz LW: 198kHz MW: 720 kHz
5.30am News Briefing
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today
With Mishal Hussain and Nick Robinson
9.00 The Long View
Exploring topical issues through history
9.30 Inside Health
Quest to demystify health issues (5/6)
10.00 Woman's Hour
Magazine show offering a female perspective
11.00 Screenshot
The rich history of style and the moving image. ***See Radio Choice*** (4/7) (r)
11.45 Book of the Week: Alien Earths
By Lisa Kaltenegger. The author explains how Earth's ancient past can be explored through the star studded skies. Read by Pippa Nixon and abridged by Katrin Williams (2/5)
12.04pm Call You and Yours
1.00 The World at One
1.45 About the Boys
Teenage boys from across the UK talk frankly about their lives online (2/5)
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: Song of the Reed — Eel
By Steve Waters. Occasional drama set on wetlands nature reserve in Norfolk. Ian has gone to work for neighbouring landowner Theo. Stars Mark Rylance (3/4) (r)
3.00 Short Cuts
Short documentaries and adventures in sound with a piano at their heart (1/6)
3.30 Beyond Belief
What a new Hindu temple reveals about religion and politics in India (5/7)
4.00 Split Ends
Kitty Perrin explores the love affair at the heart of post-punk band The Fall (3/3)
4.30 When It Hits the Fan
The world of crisis management (1/12)
5.00 PM
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Thanks a Lot, Milton Jones!
Milton pulls at a zip that has not been opened for 60 years (3/6)
7.00 The Archers
Jim makes a surprising offer
7.15 Front Row
Arts programme
8.00 File on 4
Issues of major concern (2/4)
8.40 In Touch
News for people who are blind or partially sighted, presented by Peter White
9.00 Crossing Continents
New financial restrictions in Kosovo (5/8)
9.30 Three Million
Aman who records the testimonies of victims and survivors of the Bengal Famine (5/5) (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
With James Coomarasamy
10.45 Book at Bedtime: You Are Here
By David Nicholls. Marnie and Michael decide to spend three days walking in the Lake District. Read by Sally Phillips (2/10)
11.00 Uncanny USA
Danny Robins turns his supernatural gaze to the other side of the Atlantic (1/10)
11.30 Today in Parliament
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Book of the Week: Alien Earths (2/5) (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra
Digital only
8.00am The Wilsons Save the World **8.30** Nancy — The Story of Lady Astor **8.45** Girls of Riyadh **9.00** Yesterday in Parliament **9.30** Britain at Sea **9.45** Daily Service **10.00** A Good Read **10.30** Country Down Under **11.00** A Charles Paris Mystery: A Doubtful Death **11.30** The Railway Children **12.00** Semi Circles **12.30pm** The Goon Show **1.00** The Wilsons Save the World **1.30** Nancy — The Story of Lady Astor **1.45** Girls of Riyadh **2.00** Hidden Treasures **2.30** The Change **3.00** Sons and Lovers **4.00** A Good Read **4.30** Country Down Under **5.00** A Charles Paris Mystery: A Doubtful Death **5.30** The Railway Children **6.00** Semi Circles **6.30** The Goon Show **7.00** The Wilsons Save the World. Max and Mike broach the sensitive subject of sex with their daughters. Last in the series **7.30** Nancy — The Story of Lady Astor. Written by Adrian Fort, abridged by Alison Joseph **7.45** Girls of Riyadh. Gamrah embarks on married life a long way from home **8.00** Hidden Treasures. From London's Syon House **8.30** The Change. Comedy by Jan Etherington and Gavin Petrie. Last in the series **9.00** Sons and Lovers. BY DH Lawrence. Dramatised by Michael Butt **10.00** Comedy Club: Thanks a Lot, Milton Jones! Milton returns with a plot involving a furry George Clooney **10.30** Bridget Christie Minds the Gap. The presenter investigates the best sexism in the world **11.00** At Home with the Snails. There are fears that Alex's snails are taking over the village. Last in the series **11.30** For One Horrible Moment. A girl causes excitement and self-loathing **11.45** Hearing with Hegley. Comic verse with John Hegley. Originally broadcast in 1998

Radio 5 Live
MW: 693, 909
5.00am Wake Up to Money **6.00** Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Naga Munchetty **1.00pm** Nihal Arthanayake **4.00** 5 Live Drive **7.00** 5 Live Sport **7.30** 5 Live Sport **8.00** 5 Live Sport. Kelly Cates hosts **10.30** Gordon Smart **1.00am** Johnny I'Anson

talkSPORT
MW: 1053, 1089 kHz
5.00am Early Breakfast **6.00** talkSPORT Breakfast with Jeff Stelling **10.00** Jim White and Simon Jordan **1.00pm** Hawksbee and Jacobs **4.00** Drive with Andy Goldstein and Darren Bent **7.00** Kick Off: Bayern Munich v Real Madrid (Kick-off **8.00**). Commentary on the UEFA Champions League semi-final first-leg match from Allianz Arena **10.00** Sports Bar **12.00** Extra Time

Talk
Digital only
5.00am James Max **6.30** Mike Graham **10.00** Julia Hartley Brewer. The latest developments **1.00pm** Ian Collins. Hard-hitting monologues and debates **4.00** Jeremy Kyle **7.00** Kevin O'Sullivan **10.00** Petrie Hosken **1.00am** Paul Ross

6 Music
Digital only
5.00am Emily Pilbeam **7.30** Lauren Laverne **10.30** Mary Anne Hobbs **1.00pm** Chris Hawkins **4.00** Huw Stephens **7.00** New Music Fix Daily. With a session by Milo Korbenski **9.00** Riley & Coe **11.00** Peel Acres. Tom Ravenscroft is joined by Kieran Hebden **12.00** 6 Music's Indie Forever. A playlist selected by Lily Fontaine of English Teacher **1.00am** Shake, Rattle and Roll (r) **3.00** 6 Music Live Hour **4.00** 6 Music Playlist

Virgin Radio
Digital only
6.30am The Chris Evans Breakfast Show with webuyanycar **10.00** The Ryan Tubridy Show **1.00pm** Jayne Middlemiss **4.00** Ricky Wilson **7.00** Bam **10.00** Olivia Jones **1.00am** Sean Goldsmith **4.00** Steve Denyer

Classic FM
FM: 100-102 MHz
6.30am Classic FM Breakfast with Dan Walker **9.00** The Classic FM Hall of Fame Hour with Dan Walker **10.00** Alexander Armstrong **1.00pm** Lucy Coward **4.00** Margherita Taylor **7.00** Relaxing Evenings. Zeb Soanes presents **10.00** Calm Classics. Katie Breathwick presents **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00** Early Breakfast

television & radio

Viewing Guide
Ben Dowell

Stalking: State of Fear
ITV1, 9pm

Top pick

This disturbing documentary opens with a 999 call. A dog walker in Duckmanton, Derbyshire, has found a bag with weapons in it — knives, an axe, a hammer — and a sinister message reading, "Don't lie!" The film then segues into another distressing image: a grieving family addressing the press. They are the loved ones of Gracie Spinks, a bright and vibrant 23-year-old murdered in June 2021 by her stalker, Michael Sellers, who then killed himself. Gracie had reported her stalker to the police, with the family believing the bag of weapons should have prompted more robust action that could have averted the tragedy. This film follows her case and those of many others who do not believe police are doing enough to prevent stalking, which recent statistics show has affected nearly two million British women, with only 5 per cent of cases leading to a conviction. Other stories include that of a doctor called Marie who lost her hair during her stalking ordeal, in which a tracking device was placed on her car. Her stalker did face charges but for a lesser offence than she wanted. Marie wants changes to the law, which she says is not fit for purpose. The film also follows efforts by Gracie's loved ones to get something done. This includes better training for police officers and the hiring of designated stalking co-ordinators. Without meaningful change, campaigners say, there will only be more deaths.

Fiasco
Netflix

A French comedy following a hapless director called Raphaël (Pierre Niney), whose directorial debut becomes a disaster when a member of the team tries to sabotage his film. It's an enjoyable caper that shows once again how sharp our friends across the Channel can be when they go behind the cameras and delve into the viscera of movie-making. However, this lacks the subtle refinement of *Dix Pour Cent* (*Call My Agent!*) and is much broader and sillier. When a director shouts "cut" in this world, there's a good chance it means a stuntwoman's leg has been cut off.

BBC1

Early

6.00am Breakfast **9.30** Morning Live **10.45** Big Little Crimes. A police officer's instinct leads to armed robbers being caught in the act (r) **11.15** Homes Under the Hammer. Properties in Hampshire, Aberdeenshire and Nottingham **12.15pm** Bargain Hunt. Eric Knowles presents from Norfolk's largest antique centre in King's Lynn (r) (AD) **1.00** BBC News at One; Weather **1.30** BBC Regional News; Weather **1.45** Doctors. The partners have a crisis meeting (AD) **2.15** Money for Nothing. An audio engineer tries to turn a kitchen cabinet into a speaker **3.00** Escape to the Country. Having put their Portugal home on the market, two house hunters enlist Jules Hudson's help in finding a new home in the Wye Valley (r) **3.45** Garden Rescue. Charlie Dimmock and Lee Burkhill are tasked with creating a relaxed, free-flowing garden with a seating area and a way to attract wildlife **4.30** Bridge of Lies. Family members compete for cash by crossing a bridge of stepping stones across the studio floor. Quiz show hosted by Ross Kemp (r) **5.15** Pointless. Quiz hosted by Alexander Armstrong **6.00** BBC News at Six; Weather **6.30** BBC Regional News; Weather **6.55** Party Election Broadcast. By the Conservative Party (r)

7PM

7.00 The One Show Presented by Lauren Laverne and Jermaine Jenas

7.30 EastEnders Billy refuses to speak to his dad but after some encouragement from Honey, the pair have a frank conversation about his childhood (AD)

8PM

8.00 Interior Design Masters with Alan Carr: The Final In the grand final, the contestants redesign holiday lodges in the grounds of Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire. *See Viewing Guide.* Last in the series (AD)

9PM

9.00 MasterChef Ten past contestants return for a second chance to battle for the title in Comeback Week. The pressure is on as John Torode and Gregg Wallace want to see how far they have come by way of their two best plates before they are challenged with some classic dishes (AD)

10PM

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather

10.40 Ibiza: Secrets of the Party Island Police explain how they are trying to keep up with the excessive drug use on the island and Zara McDermott meets the supplier who feeds into the dark economy (3/4) (r) (AD)

11PM

11.25 Ibiza: Secrets of the Party Island Zara McDermott joins the Spanish Civil Guard as they tackle organised crime and drug trafficking and meets the top lawyer for defending drug traffickers. Last in the series (r) (AD)

Late

12.10am Pointless Celebrities Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present as more famous faces take part in the general-knowledge quiz. Competing for the trophy are Gavin Ramjaun, Sally Magnusson, Pete Wicks, Vicky Pattison, Jay Rayner, Thomasina Miers, Remel London and London Hughes (r) **1.05-6.00** BBC News

BBC2

6.30am Bargain Hunt. Two teams pitch up at the Detling Showground in Kent (r) **7.15** Garden Rescue. Charlie Dimmock and Chris Hull are in Port Sunlight, where they turn a duo's cottage garden into a Balinese paradise (r) **8.00** Sign Zone: MasterChef. A dish featuring butternut squash is once of the challenges facing the contenders (r) (AD, SL) **9.00** BBC News **10.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. Rishi Persad presents coverage of the morning session on day 11 from the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, as two quarter-finals get under way. With commentary and analysis from Steve Davis, Ken Doherty, Stephen Hendry, Shaun Murphy, John Parrott, Joe Perry, Dennis Taylor, John Virgo and Rob Walker **12.15pm** Politics Live. The latest stories from Westminster and beyond **1.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. Hazel Irvine presents coverage of the afternoon session on day 11 from the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, as two quarter-finals get under way **6.00** Richard Osman's House of Games. Previous winners Sunetra Sarker, Laura Whitmore, Tim Key and Jamie Laing compete (r) **6.30** Great Coastal Railway Journeys. Michael Portillo travels from Woodbridge to Southwold (AD)

7PM

7.00 Live Snooker: The World Championship Seema Jaswal presents coverage of the evening session on day 11 from the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, as two quarter-finals continue. Coverage continues on BBC4

8PM

8.00 Saving Lives at Sea RNLI crews race to the rescue of a female casualty with a spinal injury, a capsized dinghy with three people in the water, and seven missing kayakers (8/10) (AD)

9PM

9.00 QI XL Sandi Toksvig finds out about Ulex and other uncommon U words with panellists Bridget Christie, Rosie Jones, Cariad Lloyd and Alan Davies

9.45 Louis Theroux Interviews — Katherine Ryan Louis meets the comedian, actor and writer, Katherine Ryan, for a frank and honest conversation about her career, relationships and the changing shape of her family (5/6) (r) (AD)

10PM

10.30 Newsnight Headline analysis with Victoria Derbyshire

11PM

11.15 Snooker: World Championship Highlights Seema Jaswal presents action from day 11 at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, featuring matches from the quarter-final stage

Late

12.05am Snooker: World Championship Extra Extended highlights of quarter-final matches from day 11 at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield **2.05** Sign Zone: Interior Design Masters with Alan Carr. The semi-finalists transform dressing rooms at Wembley Arena (r) (AD, SL) **3.05-4.05** Pompeii: The New Dig (r) (AD, SL)

ITV1

6.00am Good Morning Britain. A lively mix of news and current affairs **9.00** Lorraine. Chat show presented by Lorraine Kelly, with interviews, entertainment news, cooking tips, fashion features and musical guests **10.00** This Morning. A mix of chat, lifestyle features, advice and competitions. Including Local Weather **12.30pm** Loose Women. Featuring showbiz interviews and topical debate from a female perspective **1.30** ITV News; Weather **1.55** Regional News; Weather **2.00** Riddiculous. Quiz hosted by Ranvir Singh in which contestants take on Riddlemaster Henry Lewis. They try to answer general knowledge questions and confusing conundrums, with only one team making it through to the final with a chance to win a cash prize (r) **3.00** Winning Combination. Omid Djalili hosts the quiz (r) **4.00** Tipping Point. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r) **5.00** The Chase. Bradley Walsh presents as contestants work as a team to take on one of the Chasers and secure a cash prize (r) **6.00** Regional News; Weather **6.25** Party Election Broadcast. By the Labour Party (r) **6.30** ITV News; Weather

7PM

7.30 Emmerdale Manpreet has messed up, and Chas is struggling over how her body has changed. Meanwhile, Nicola has a new distraction (AD)

8PM

8.00 For the Love of Dogs with Alison Hammond Alison helps an ill pug on his road to recovery (3/6) (AD)

8.30 Changing Ends Alan joins the school drama club but Christine becomes concerned when he comes home from school with a black eye (3/6) (AD)

9PM

9.00 Stalking: State of Fear Sharing the stories of women who live in fear of men stalking them. With intimate access to victims and the family of Gracie Spinks, who was murdered after police failed to take action against someone they could have known was a serial killer. *See Viewing Guide* (AD)

10PM

10.00 ITV News at Ten

10.30 Regional News

10.45 On Assignment Reporter James Mates meets Russian opposition activists in Lithuania and Antoine Allen investigates the EU's small boats immigration crisis

11PM

11.15 Instagram's Worst Con Artist Documentary examining the rise to fame of the influencer Belle Gibson, a single mother allegedly diagnosed with brain cancer (1/2) (r) (AD)

Late

12.10am Shop on TV 3.00 Chris Kamara: Lost for Words. The presenter and former footballer Chris Kamara tries to gain further insight into his being diagnosed with apraxia of speech (r) (AD, SL) **3.50** Unwind with ITV **5.05-6.00** Celebrity Wheel of Fortune. With AJ Odudu, Gok Wan and Charlotte Church (r) (AD, SL)

Channel 4

6.10am Countdown (r) **6.50** 3rd Rock from the Sun (r) (AD) **8.05** Everybody Loves Raymond (r) (AD) **9.30** Frasier (r) (AD) **11.00** Work on the Wild Side. A vet has to dehorn a mother rhino and its calf (r) (AD) **12.00** Channel 4 News Summary **12.05pm** Sun, Sea and Selling Houses. A retired NHS worker from Swansea seeks the perfect pad in Alicante (r) **1.05** Find It, Fix It, Flog It. Henry Cole rescues a safe from the scrapheap (r) **2.10** Countdown. John Virgo is in Dictionary Corner **3.00** A Place in the Sun. After holidaying in northwest France many times, a pair seek help in finding a forever home in Mayenne **4.00** Narrow Escapes. Emma tackles The Anderton Boat Lift and Paul and Chris serve pizzas at a festival (AD) **5.00** Château DIY. Angela and Steve decide to install a bathroom in the bedroom, leading to further problems (r) (AD) **6.00** Four in a Bed. The second visit of the week is at The Kings Arms in Bude, Cornwall where guests are particularly picky about their cleanliness standards **6.30** The Simpsons. Another trio of Hallowe'en stories, including Maggie becoming possessed by an ancient demon and Lisa discovering a creepily perfect version of her family in an alternate universe (r) (AD)

7PM

7.00 Channel 4 News

8PM

8.00 Aldi's Next Big Thing It's a battle of six nations at HQ, with products including a Filipino ketchup made from bananas; some Nigerian puff puff and a soul food "love dust". Representing Turkey is a DIY kebab marinade and from Jamaica comes a jackfruit mutton ready meal (5/6) (AD)

9PM

9.00 Miriam: Death of a Reality Star Miriam's Mexican family tell the story of her troubled childhood before she transitioned. Featuring an interview with her father, who carried out an exorcism on the reality star (2/3) (AD)

10PM

10.00 Night Coppers A routine vehicle stop turns into a high-speed chase for two officers and an officer contends with a drunken reveller who has broken a security guard's finger. Two officers try to arrest a woman for stalking but are met with fierce resistance. Last in the series (AD)

11PM

11.05 Sky Coppers The hunt is on for a man who has assaulted an officer and dragged them along with his car before escaping. A sergeant and a PC search for a motorbike thief hiding in a wood in the dead of night (2/6) (r) (AD)

Late

12.05am Murder Case: The Digital Detectives Police investigate the murder of a 13-year-old boy (3/3) (r) (AD, SL) **1.05** Taskmaster (r) (AD, SL) **2.00** Late Night Lycett (r) **2.55** Couples Come Dine with Me (r) (SL) **3.50** Grand Designs Australia (r) (AD) **4.50** Location, Location, Location (r) **5.45-6.10** The Perfect Pitch (r)

Channel 5

6.00am Milkshake! **9.15** Jeremy Vine. The broadcaster and Storm Huntley discuss the latest news **11.15** Storm Huntley. Storm carries on the discussion and takes your calls to discuss the biggest stories of the day **12.45pm** Friends. The guys enjoy a ride in a police car (r) (AD) **1.10** Friends. Phoebe learns Gary plans to ask her to move in with him (r) (AD) **1.40** 5 News at Lunchtime **1.45** Home and Away. Mackenzie chases Alf, hoping to discover if he spotted her with Levi. Bree showers Remi with love, grateful he gave up his bike (r) **2.15 FILM: A Husband's Revenge (PG, TVM, 2023)** A man's love for his wife becomes an obsession. When he finds out that she's had an affair, a fight that results in tragedy ensues. Thriller starring Sarah Cleveland **4.00** Bargain-Loving Brits in the Sun. A furniture store owner faces her biggest job of the year, a client who wants her to furnish their villa. To add to the pressure, she has left her dad in charge at the store **5.00** 5 News at 5 **6.00** Police Interceptors. A suspected drink-driver resists arrest and receives a face full of incapacitating PAVA spray, while an uninsured motorist tries to pass himself off as his 52-year-old father (r) **6.55** 5 News Update

7PM

7.00 The River Trent: Britain's Great Rivers Once an important trade route, the River Trent's history is linked to many local industries and the creation of a major canal system through the Midlands (3/6) (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8PM

8.00 The Yorkshire Vet Peter Wright rushes to help a three-hour-old donkey, whose life is in danger because it can't feed from its mother. Julian Norton meets a therapy sheep with an ear problem, and a French bulldog requires a complex spinal surgery. Plus, a charity cricket match takes place

9PM

9.00 Michael Palin in Nigeria Michael heads to the city of Benin, where he learns about the 1897 Raid on Benin, viewing a commemorative statue and visiting Igun Street to see statues being made. While sailing on the River Ethiope, he meets Nigerian filmmaker Chuko Esiri. *See Viewing Guide* (3/3)

10PM

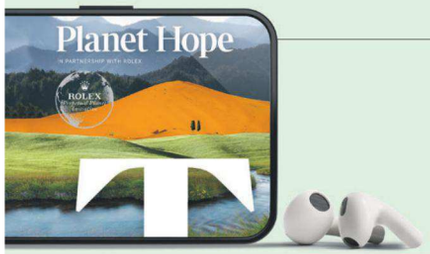
10.00 Stalked: The Killing of Molly McLaren The stories of women killed by their ex-partners. The first edition follows the case of 23-year-old university student Molly McLaren, who was stalked for weeks by ex-boyfriend Joshua Stimpson before he stabbed her 75 times in broad daylight (1/3) (r)

11PM

11.05 Skin A&E The dermatologists return, as Dr Dev Shah attempts to "shell out" a giant lipoma and Dr Emma McMullen tackles a pair of cysts (1/12) (r)

Late

12.05am A&E After Dark (r) **1.00** PlayOJO Live Casino Show **3.00** Cats Make You Laugh Out Loud **3.25** The Funny Thing About Holidays (r) (SL) **4.15** Great Artists (r) (SL) **4.40** House Busters (r) (SL) **5.05** House Doctor (r) (SL) **5.30** Entertainment News on 5 **5.40** Fireman Sam (r) (SL) **5.50-6.00** Pip and Posy (r) (SL)



Planet Hope: A podcast with

In our second series of *Planet Hope*, in partnership with Rolex, environment editor Adam Vaughan meets the explorers, scientists and entrepreneurs from around the world to find solutions to protect our planet.

television & radio

Interior Design Masters with Alan Carr
BBC1, 8pm

The ten hopefuls are now two. And while fans of the flamboyant Ben might have thought he was a surefire finalist, he has to watch from the sidelines as Matt and Roisin battle it out for this year's crown. Both finalists have shown how they can adapt and improve their styles and are very much the fastest learners. Their task tonight involves holiday lets in the grounds of one of the greatest properties in the land: Blenheim Palace. So that's bedrooms, kitchens and living rooms. It's a nailbiter.

Hitler's Power
PBS America, 8.40pm

"How could an absolute nobody rise to becoming a dictator in such a short time?" is one of the questions often asked about Adolf Hitler. It's also the central thrust of this three-part documentary that takes a closer look at the relationship between the man and the German people. With newly discovered photos, archive footage, documents, personal testimonies and interviews, it aims to show why Germans supported the Führer despite his atrocious crimes. More urgently, it asks why that support lasted, even when the war was clearly lost.

Michael Palin in Nigeria
Channel 5, 9pm

Michael Palin continues to show us how the TV travel game should be done with the third and final instalment of his mammoth trek across Nigeria. He opens the episode with a journey south to the historic city of Benin, taking a diversion through an area that is well known for bandit attacks. Our man has not been afraid of confronting the thorny issues that are part of the experience of this land, whether it is the controversy around the disputed Benin bronzes or, in later sequences, the country's palm oil industry.

Film An Affair to Remember
Film4, 12.35pm

Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr play a pair engaged to other people, who meet on an ocean voyage and fall in love. To test whether the affair has staying power, they agree to meet in six months at the top of the Empire State Building. (U, 1957)

Sky Max

6.00am NCIS: Los Angeles (r) **7.00** DC's Legends of Tomorrow (r) (AD) **8.00** Supergirl (r) **9.00** Stargate Atlantis (r) **11.00** NCIS: Los Angeles (r) **12.00** Supergirl (r) **1.00pm** MacGyver (r) **3.00** Hawaii Five-0 (r) **4.00** S.W.A.T (r) (AD) **5.00** DC's Legends of Tomorrow (r) (AD) **6.00** Stargate Atlantis (r) **7.00** Stargate Atlantis. Jennifer Keller develops a mystery alien virus (r) **8.00** Hold the Front Page. The comedians Nish Kumar and Josh Widdicombe work for the County Press on the Isle of Wight (r) (AD) **9.00** A League of Their Own Road Trip: Southeast Asia. With Patrice Evra, Maisie Adam and Mo Gilligan (r) (AD) **10.00** Peacemaker. Murn recruits Vigilante after a somewhat successful mission (r) (AD) **11.00** Resident Alien (r) (AD) **12.00** S.W.A.T (r) (AD) **1.00am** Brit Cops: Law & Disorder (r) (AD) **2.00** Hold the Front Page (r) (AD) **3.00** Hawaii Five-0 (r) **4.00** S.W.A.T (r) (AD) **5.00** Highway Patrol (r)

Sky Atlantic

6.00am Fish Town (r) **7.55** True Blood (r) **10.05** Billions (r) (AD) **12.15pm** Game of Thrones (r) (AD) **1.20** Ray Donovan (r) (AD) **3.30** True Blood (r) **5.40** Billions (r) (AD) **7.50** Game of Thrones. Dontos spirits Sansa out of King's Landing, Tywin has an offer for Oberyn Martell, while Jon proposes a bold plan after the wildlings send a chilling message (r) (AD) **9.00** The White Lotus. Tanya and Portia spend a day with charming British expat Quentin and his nephew Jack. Harper is blindsided by shocking evidence from Ethan's night out (4/7) (r) (AD) **10.10** The Regime. Zubak uncovers Keplinger's location, while Elena and Nicholas leave the palace to meet factory workers (4/6) (r) (AD) **11.15** Perry Mason. Paul enlists Clara to infiltrate a wealthy white suburb (7/8) (r) (AD) **12.15am** The Newsroom. Harrowing details of Maggie's trip to Uganda are revealed (r) **1.20** The Outsider. Ralph contacts PI Holly Gibney (r) (AD) **2.25** Game of Thrones (r) (AD) **3.35** In Treatment (r) **4.05** Fish Town (r)

Sky Documentaries

6.00am One Shot: The Football Factory (r) (AD) **7.00** Discovering: Bill Murray (r) (AD) **8.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **8.55** The Last Movie Stars (r) (AD) **10.00** 100 Foot Wave (r) (AD) **11.00** Rolling Stone: Stories from the Edge (r) (AD) **12.00** Six by Sondheim (r) **1.45pm** My Icon: Nasser Hussain (r) (AD) **2.00** Very Ralph (r) (AD) **4.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **5.00** Discovering: Bill Murray (r) (AD) **5.55** The Last Movie Stars (r) (AD) **7.00** 100 Foot Wave (2/6) (r) (AD) **8.00** Rolling Stone: Stories from the Edge. Exploring the unique relationship between John Lennon and the magazine (2/6) (r) (AD) **9.00 FILM: Tina (15, 2021)** A celebration of the singer Tina Turner's life and career (AD) **11.15 FILM: Gascoigne (15, 2015)** Documentary about Paul Gascoigne **1.00am** Liverpool Narcos (r) **2.00** Brandy Hellville & the Cult of Fast Fashion (AD) **3.50** Unbreakable: The Steve Zakuani Story (r) **5.00** Discovering: Bill Murray (r) (AD)

Sky Arts

6.00am Cirque du Soleil: Kurios — Cabinet of Curiosities **8.00** The Joy of Painting **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering: Robert De Niro (AD) **12.00** The Joy of Painting **1.00pm** Tales of the Unexpected **2.00** Portrait Artist of the Year: The Exhibition (AD) **3.00** Boswell & Johnson's Scottish Road Trip **4.00** Discovering: Alain Delon (AD) **5.00** Tales of the Unexpected **6.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **7.00** Grand Ole Opry. Featuring performances from Luke Bryan and Darius Rucker **8.00** The Art of the Garden. Jo Thompson's design for RHS Garden Rosemoor in Devon **9.00** Johnson & Knopfler's Music Legends. Tom Jones shares captivating stories from his career **10.00 FILM: Dean Martin — King of Cool (PG, 2021)** A profile of the singer and actor **12.10am** Art's Wildest Movement: Mannerism. The latter stages of mannerism **1.10** Lily and Lolly: The Forgotten Yeats Sisters (AD) **2.40** Will's Book **4.00** Master of Photography (AD)

Sky Main Event

6.00am Sky Sports News **7.00** Good Morning Sports Fans **10.00** Live Tennis: The Mutua Madrid Open. Coverage of day eight of the WTA 1000 and ATP 1000 event, a clay-court tournament at La Caja Magica in Madrid, Spain, featuring matches from the quarter-finals of the women's draw and the fourth round of the men's draw **3.00pm** Live Indian Premier League: Lucknow Super Giants v Mumbai Indians. Coverage of the T20 match from Bharat Ratna Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana Cricket Stadium **7.00** Sky Sports News **7.30** Live EFL: Coventry City v Ipswich Town (Kick-off **8.00**). Coverage of the Championship match from Coventry Building Society Arena, as the visitors look for three more vital points in their fight for an automatic promotion place **10.30** Back Pages Tonight. A look at the sports headlines in tomorrow's newspapers **11.00** Sky Sports News **11.30** Back Pages Tonight **12.00-6.00** Sky Sports News

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BBC3

7.00pm Top Gear. Chris Harris and Matt LeBlanc compete in a race across the Arabian peninsula, pitting a Bugatti Chiron against an assortment of other ways of travelling **8.00** Gavin & Stacey. The newlyweds argue while on a night out at the bowling alley (AD) **8.30** Gavin & Stacey. Bryn tries to organise a surprise for Gwen's birthday (AD) **9.00** Dinosaur. Nina promises to keep the events of the hen do a secret (AD) **9.30** Dinosaur. The wedding is left in jeopardy as the truth comes out. Last in the series (AD) **10.00** The Young Offenders. Jock gets caught up in a row with a local tearaway that ends in a challenge to a boxing match (AD) **10.30** The Young Offenders. Conor and Jock decide it's time to move to Spain (AD) **11.05** Gavin & Stacey. The newlyweds argue while on a night out at the bowling alley (AD) **11.35** Gavin & Stacey. Bryn tries to organise a surprise for Gwen's birthday (AD) **12.05am** Dinosaur. Double bill (AD) **1.00** Ellie & Natasia **1.20** Glow Up: Britain's Next Make-Up Star (AD) **2.20** The Young Offenders (AD) **3.25-3.50** Dinosaur (AD, SL)

BBC4

7.00pm Great Australian Railway Journeys. Michael Portillo travels along the eastern coast of Australia from the coal mines of Newcastle, New South Wales, to Queensland's modern state capital, Brisbane. Last in the series (AD) **8.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. Seema Jaswal presents further coverage of the evening session on day 11 from the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, as two quarter-finals continue. With reports by Abigail Davies **10.00** The Fifteen Billion Pound Railway. Part two of two. Drama unfolds after news that the Elizabeth Line has been delayed, and will cost hundreds of millions more pounds than planned. Last in the series (AD) **11.00** Chasing the Moon. The development of the US's Gemini programme, which sent astronauts into Earth orbit to practice critical manoeuvres for the eventual trip to the Moon **11.50** Chasing the Moon. A look at the Apollo 8 mission, when the crew became the first people to orbit the Moon and captured images that gave an entirely new perspective of the Earth **12.40am** Civilisation **2.20-3.20** Great Australian Railway Journeys (AD)

Talking Pictures

6.00am What's On TPTV with Noel **6.10 FILM: Escape Route (PG, 1952)** (b/w) **7.45** Look at Life **8.00** Sherlock Holmes (b/w) **8.35 FILM: Allan Quatermain and the Lost City of Gold (PG, 1986) 10.40 FILM: Mark of the Phoenix (U, 1959)** (b/w) **11.55 FILM: Next To No Time (PG, 1958) 1.45pm FILM: Race for the Yankee Zephyr (PG, 1981)** Action adventure **4.00 FILM: They Made Me a Fugitive (PG, 1947)** Thriller with Trevor Howard (b/w) **5.55** The Beverly Hillbillies (b/w) **6.30** Scotland Yard **7.05** Dangerous Knowledge (3/6) **7.35** Dangerous Assignment (b/w) **8.05** Manhunt **9.05** Maigret **10.55** Cellar Club with Caroline Munro **11.00 FILM: The Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires (15, 1974)** Kung-fu horror with Peter Cushing **12.45am** Cellar Club with Caroline Munro **12.50 FILM: Candyman — Farewell to the Flesh (18, 1995) 2.45** Cellar Club with Caroline Munro **2.50 FILM: Fort Algiers (PG, 1953)** (b/w) **4.25 FILM: Second Best Bed (PG, 1938)** (b/w)

Film4

11.00am Decision at Sundown (U, 1957) Western starring Randolph Scott **12.35pm An Affair to Remember (U, 1957)** Romantic drama with Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr. *See Viewing Guide* (AD) **2.50 3:10 to Yuma (PG, 1957)** Western starring Glenn Ford and Van Heflin (b/w) (AD) **4.40 The Running Man (PG, 1963)** Drama starring Laurence Harvey and Alan Bates (AD) **6.45 Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle (12, 2017)** Four teenagers get transformed into explorers in a video game. Action comedy with Dwayne Johnson and Karen Gillan (AD) **9.00 Jumanji: The Next Level (12, 2019)** Players of the rebooted Jumanji return and attempt to rescue one of their own. Fantasy adventure sequel starring Dwayne Johnson, Karen Gillan and Kevin Hart (AD) **11.25 Air Force One (15, 1997)** The American president takes on Russian terrorists who have hijacked his plane and are threatening his family. Action thriller with Harrison Ford, Gary Oldman and Glenn Close (AD) **1.50am-3.55 Happening (15, 2021)** Drama starring Anamaria Vartolomei

More4

8.55am Food Unwrapped (AD) **9.30** A Place in the Sun **10.25** A New Life in the Sun **11.25** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **12.30pm** Come Dine with Me (AD) **3.10** Four in a Bed **5.50** The Secret Life of the Zoo. Featuring a giant anteater (AD) **6.55** Car SOS. A classic 1960s car (AD) **7.55** Grand Designs. A design engineer and a service designer take on the London property market, as they build their own home on a small 38-square-metre plot (9/10) (AD) **9.00** 24 Hours in A&E. A man faces potentially life-changing injuries and extensive surgery after colliding with a car on his motorbike, while a 54-year-old will need a pacemaker fitted (AD) **10.00** Super Surgeons: A Chance at Life. Professor Vin Paleri must establish if a patient with a tumour in his tongue is viable for a complex surgery using tissue from his leg to reconstruct his throat (2/3) (AD) **11.05** 24 Hours in A&E. A woman is rushed to A&E with signs of a stroke (AD) **12.10am** Emergency Helicopter Medics. A man has a wound in his back (AD) **1.15** Super Surgeons: A Chance at Life (AD) **2.15** 24 Hours in A&E (AD) **3.20-3.50** Food Unwrapped (AD)

ITV2

6.00am CITV **9.00** World's Funniest Videos **9.30** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **10.00** Veronica Mars **11.00** Dawson's Creek **12.00** Secret Crush (SL) **1.00pm** Dress to Impress **2.00** Family Fortunes **3.00** Veronica Mars **4.00** Dawson's Creek **5.00** Dress to Impress. A receptionist from Hertfordshire **6.00** Catchphrase Celebrity Special (AD) **7.00** Family Fortunes. Gino D'Acampo hosts **8.00** Bob's Burgers. The restaurateur befriends his favourite baseball player (AD) **8.30** Bob's Burgers. Bob and Linda are forced to rescue the kids from an abandoned factory (AD) **9.00** Hell's Kitchen. An intense BBQ challenge is judged by pitmaster Aaron Franklin **10.00** Plebs. The boys bump into an old schoolmate, who is now a lawyer (AD) **10.30** Plebs. Marcus and Stylax try to stop Cynthia and Metalla being deported (AD) **11.00** Family Guy. Chris is expelled (AD) **11.30** Family Guy. Peter injures his hand (AD) **12.00** American Dad! (AD) **12.55am** Bob's Burgers (AD) **1.55** Apocalypse Wow **2.50** Unwind with ITV **5.30** Teleshopping

ITV3

6.00am Classic Emmerdale **7.00** Classic Coronation Street **8.05** Wild at Heart (AD) **10.15** The Royal (AD) **11.20** Heartbeat (AD) **1.30pm** Classic Emmerdale **2.35** Classic Coronation Street **3.45** Agatha Christie's Poirot (AD) **5.55** Heartbeat (AD) **8.00** Midsomer Murders. A wine launch ends in disaster when guests sampling the vintage start to collapse, and Barnaby must investigate a possible connection to a hit-and-run (AD) **10.00** DCI Banks. Part one of two. Cabbot investigates the murder of a woman found dead on the moors, while Banks is called in when the body of a teenage girl is discovered in a storage room down an alleyway (3/6) (AD) **11.00** DCI Banks. Part two of two. The team find themselves investigating the murder of one of their own and Cabbot is convinced there is a link with the death of Lucy Payne (4/6) (AD) **11.50** Wild at Heart. Rowan hides a guilty secret about the botched operation (8/10) (AD) **12.45am** Wild at Heart (AD) **1.35** Upstairs, Downstairs **2.35** Heartbeat (AD) **4.15** The Royal (AD) **5.05** Unwind with ITV **5.30** Teleshopping

ITV4

6.00am Minder (AD, SL) **7.00** The Sweeney (SL) **8.05** Robin of Sherwood **9.15** Magnum, PI **10.20** Kojak **11.20** Monster Carp **12.25pm** Robin of Sherwood **1.35** Magnum, PI (AD) **2.40** Kojak **3.40** Minder (AD) **4.50** The Sweeney **6.00** Monster Carp. Visiting Italy **7.00** Monster Carp. Ali Hamidi, Tom Dove and Neil Spooner go on a Croatian adventure **8.00 FILM: Smokey and the Bandit (PG, 1977)** A truck driver is chased across America by a pompous sheriff while delivering a consignment of beer to a party. Comedy starring Burt Reynolds, Jackie Gleason, Sally Field, Mike Henry and Jerry Reed (AD) **10.00** All Elite Wrestling: Collision. Hard-hitting action from AEW's newest show, featuring stars including FTR, The House of Black, Thunder Rosa, Miro, and more **12.05am** All Elite Wrestling: Rampage. Hard-hitting, high-flying wrestling action **1.10** Auto Mundial. News and reviews **1.40** Motorsport Mundial **2.05** Monster Carp (SL) **3.50** Minder (AD, SL) **4.45** The Protectors (SL) **5.10** Unwind with ITV **5.30** Teleshopping

Drama

6.00am Teleshopping **7.10** All Creatures Great and Small **8.00** Doctors **9.20** Classic Holby City **10.40** Casualty **11.40** The Bill **12.40pm** Classic EastEnders **2.00** Pie in the Sky **3.00** Lovejoy **4.10** All Creatures Great and Small **5.20** Birds of a Feather. Tracey incarcerates herself **6.00** Keeping Up Appearances **6.40** Last of the Summer Wine (AD) **7.20** Last of the Summer Wine. Compo and Clegg suspect Foggy is lying, so use a technique from their schooldays to get to the truth (AD) **8.00** Dalziel & Pascoe. Convicted murderer Charlie Walker escapes, and the next morning a barmaid is discovered dead — leaving the duo to figure out whether she was killed by him. Tim Healy and Lynda Bellingham guest (3/4) (AD) **10.00** New Tricks. Sandra discovers her father committed suicide while under investigation for corruption, and begins to doubt everything she took for granted (8/8) (AD) **11.20** Soldier, Soldier. Military drama series starring Robson Green and Jerome Flynn (1/7) **12.30am** Lovejoy **1.40** When the Boat Comes In **2.50** Classic Holby City (SL) **4.00** Teleshopping

Yesterday

6.10am Monster Ships **7.10** Guitar Heroes at the BBC **8.00** Abandoned Engineering (AD) **10.00** WW2 — Frontlines (AD) **11.00** Secret Nazi Bases **12.00** Great British Railway Journeys **1.00pm** Antiques Roadshow **2.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **4.00** WW2 — Frontlines (AD) **5.00** Secret Nazi Bases **6.00** Antiques Roadshow. From Lytham Hall **7.00** Secrets of the London Underground. Tim Dunn and Siddy Holloway explore the brand new Elizabeth Line (7/10) (AD) **8.00** Simon Reeve's South America. The adventurer sets off on a journey through the continent, beginning in the north-east **9.00** Bangers & Cash. Dave's drawn to a Fiat Uno 45 in "1970s beige, a well-known manufacturer's colour", with 36,000 miles on the clock (AD) **10.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics. The team snap up a saggy 1970s Saab 96 (AD) **11.00** Abandoned Engineering. A compound repurposed by a brutal regime (10/11) (AD) **12.00** Great British Railway Journeys **1.00am** Monster Ships **2.00** Chris Tarrant: Extreme Railways (AD) **3.00** Teleshopping

Variations

BBC1 London
As BBC1 except: 6.55pm-7.00 Party Election Broadcast. By the Labour Party (r)

BBC1 Scotland
As BBC1 except: 7.00pm-7.30 River City. Kim's health takes a turn for the worse (r) (AD)

BBC1 Wales
As BBC1 except: 9.00pm-10.00 Tree on a Hill. Last in the series **10.40** Slammed: The Eighties (r) **11.40** Ibiza: Secrets of the Party Island (r) (AD) **12.25am** Ibiza: Secrets of the Party Island (r) (AD) **1.10-6.00** BBC News

BBC2 Wales
As BBC2 except: 9.00pm MasterChef. Ten familiar faces return (r) (AD) **10.00-10.30** QI (r) **11.15** First Minister's Questions **12.15am-2.05** Snooker: World Championship Extra

ITV1 Anglia/Border/Central/Granada/Meridian/Tyne Tees/West/Westcountry/Yorkshire
As ITV1 except: 6.20pm-6.30 Party Election Broadcast. By the Conservative Party

ITV1 London
As ITV1 except: 6.25pm-6.30 Party Election Broadcast. By the Labour Party (r)

STV
As ITV1 except: 10.30pm STV News **10.40** Scotland Tonight. Current affairs show **11.05** On Assignment **11.40** Instagram's Worst Con Artist. Documentary (1/2) (r) (AD) **12.30am-3.00** Shop on TV **3.50-5.05** Night Vision

UTV
As ITV1 except: 8.00pm-8.30 Keepers of the Lough **10.45** Eamonn Mallie: Face to Face With **11.15** On Assignment **11.45-12.10am** For the Love of Dogs with Alison Hammond (AD)

BBC Scotland
7.00pm This Farming Life (r) **8.00** Paramedics on Scene (r) (AD) **9.00** The Nine **10.00** The Hunt for the World's End Killers (r) **11.00-12.00** Pictures from Ukraine (r) (AD)

BBC Alba
6.00am Alba Today **5.00pm** AH-AH/No-No (r) **5.10** Abadas (r) **5.25** Oscar & Ealasaid (r) **5.40** Peataichean/Pets (r) **5.45** Ainmhidhean CBeebies (r) **5.50** 'S E Iasg a Th'Annam (I'm a Fish) (r) **5.55** Stòiridh (r) **6.00** An Saoghal Droil aig Pol Ploc/The Rubbish World of Dave Spud **6.10** Geamaichean Gorach (r) **6.15** An Teaghlach Rioghail an Ath-dhoras (The Royals Next Door) (r) **6.40** Triuir aig Tri (r) **7.00** An Lot (The Croft) (r) **7.30** SpeakGaelic (r) **8.00** An Là (News) **8.30** Rum Gu Rum, Le Erica (r) **9.00** Failte gu Alba (r) **10.00** Trusadh — Beatha sa Bhan (r) **11.00** Machair (r) **11.25** Fraochy Bay (r) **11.30** Alleluia! (Spiritual Music & Verse) (r) **12.00-6.00am** Alba Today

S4C
6.00am Cyw: Blociau Rhif (r) **6.05** Guto Gwningen (r) **6.20** Gwdihw (r) **6.35** Sam Tan (r) **6.45** Byd Tad-Cu (r) **7.00** Y Tralalas **7.05** Twt (r) **7.20** Ein Byd Bach **7.30** Sion y Chef (r) **7.45** Ne-wff-ion (r) **8.00** Bing (r) **8.10** Tomos a'i Ffrindiau (r) **8.20** Jen a Jim a'r Cywiadur (r) **8.35** Ben a Mali a'u Byd Bach O Hud (r) **8.45** Cacamwnci (r) **9.00** Shwshaswyn (r) **9.10** Abadas (r) **9.25** Sblij a Sbloj (r) **9.35** Blero yn Mynd i Ocido (r) **9.45** Dal Dy Ddannedd (r) **10.00** Blociau Rhif (r) **10.05** Guto Gwningen (r) **10.20** Gwdihw (r) **10.35** Sam Tan (r) **10.45** Byd Tad-Cu (r) **11.00** Y Tralalas (r) **11.05** Twt (r) **11.20** Ein Byd Bach (r) **11.30** Sion y Chef (r) **11.45** Ne-wff-ion (r) **12.00** News; Weather **12.05pm** Bwrdd i Dri (r) **12.30** Heno (r) **1.00** Guinness World Records Cymru 2024 (r) **2.00** News; Weather **2.05** Prynhawn Da **3.00** News; Weather **3.05** Ty am Ddim (r) **4.00** Awr Fawr: Nos Da Cyw (r) **4.05** Pentre Papur Pop (r) **4.20** Anifeiliaid Bach y Byd (r) **4.30** Pablo (r) **4.45** Awyr Iach (r) **5.00** Stwnsh: Cath-Od (r) **5.10** Wariars (r) **5.20** Arthur a Chriw y Ford Gron (r) **5.35** Rhyfeddodau Chwilengoch a Cath Ddu **5.55** Larfa (r) **6.00** Cegin Bryn (r) **6.30** Rafio+. The Croatia Rally (r) **6.57** News **7.00** Heno **7.30** News **8.00** Pobol y Cwm (AD) **8.25** Rownd a Rownd (AD) **8.55** News; Weather **9.00** Ar Brawf (AD) **10.00** Heliwr **11.15-11.50** Bethesda: Pobol y Chwarel (r) (AD)

MindGames

Tetonor Easy No 461

390	41	280	51
38	270	18	230
65	43	330	37
33	286	35	306

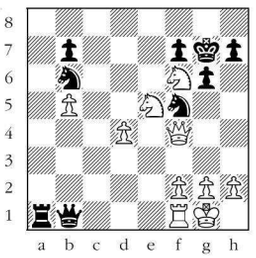
5		10		11	13	13	15	17	18		26	28	30		

When complete, the strip below the grid can be split into eight pairs of numbers. Adding the numbers in a pair gives one of the 16 numbers in the grid. Multiplying them gives a different number in the grid. For example, a 4 and 6 in the strip could be paired to make 10 (4+6) and 24 (4x6) in the grid. Enter each sum below the corresponding number in the grid. The blanks in the strip must be deduced, bearing in mind the numbers are listed in ascending order.

The next Tetonor puzzle will appear on Thursday

For more puzzles, including Mini Sudoku, extra Codeword, Train Tracks and Futoshiki go to page 10

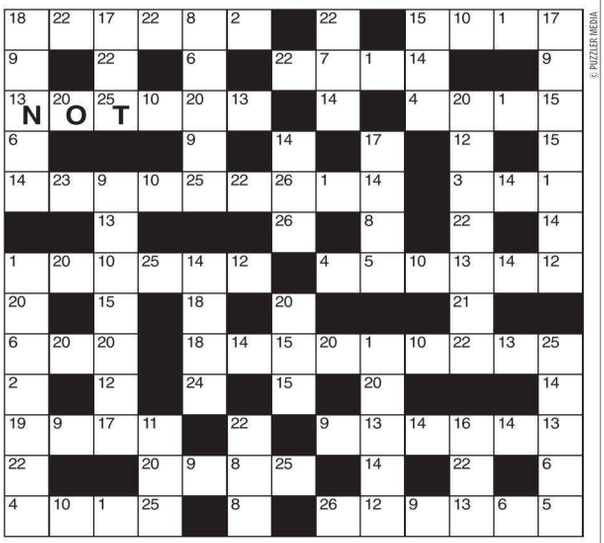
Winning Move



White to play.
This position is from Secheres-Lupulescu, Bucharest 2024.

This is a tricky position. Black has powerful threats along the back rank and 1 Rxb1 obviously fails to 1 ... Rxb1+ and mate next move. As the black queen cannot be captured White would like to protect the f1-rook but this does not seem possible. Nevertheless, White can maintain the balance with a clever sequence. Can you find it?

Codeword No 5202



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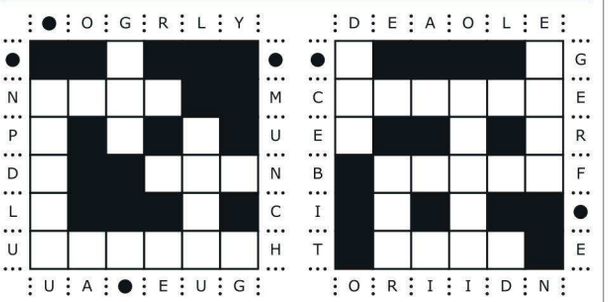
A B C D E F G H I J K L M ~~N~~ ~~O~~ P Q R S ~~T~~ U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13 N
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 O	21	22	23	24	25 T	26

Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

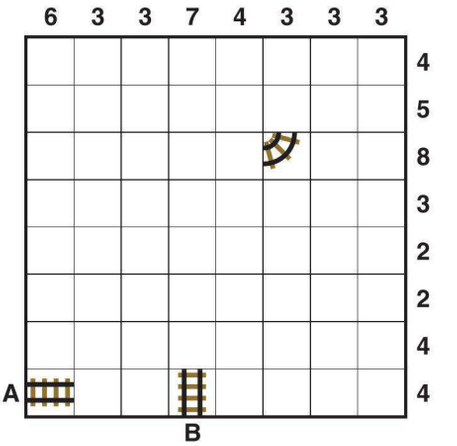
Cluelines **Stuck on Codeword?** To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

Lexica Easy No 7381 Hard No 7382



Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

Train Tracks No 2232



Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Quintagram®

Solve all five **cryptic** clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Ruin siege weapon after retreating (3)

— — —

2 Style of new dome (4)

— — — —

3 Sailor with paddle finally found on the ship (6)

— — — — — —

4 Caught docile or wild animal (9)

— — — — — — — — —

5 A hypocritical talk about nobleman's book-keeper (10)

— — — — — — — — — —

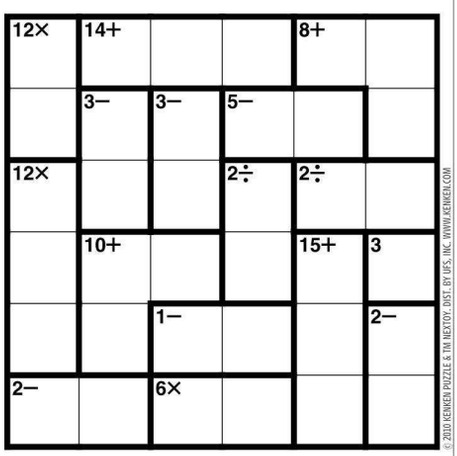
A	A	A	A	A	B	C	C
C	C	D	D	D	E	E	I
L	M	M	N	N	O	O	O
O	O	R	R	R	T	T	U

Challenge your mind with these fiendish word and number puzzles

thetimes.co.uk/bookshop

What are your favourite puzzles in MindGames?
Email: puzzles@thetimes.co.uk

KenKen Medium No 6194



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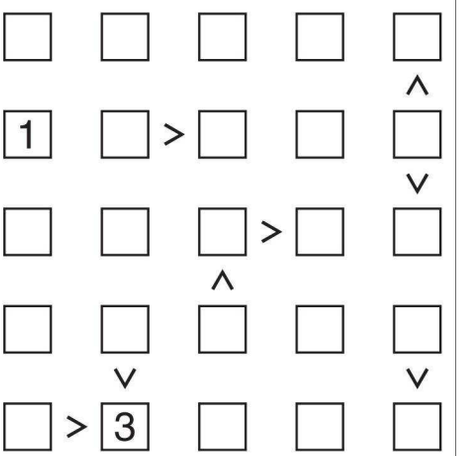
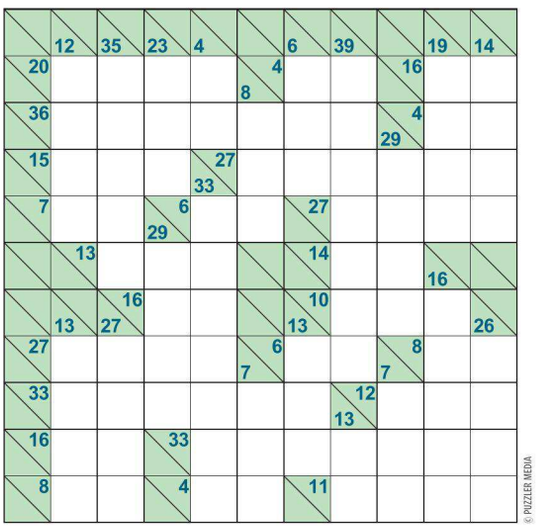
All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

Futoshiki No 4742



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 3701



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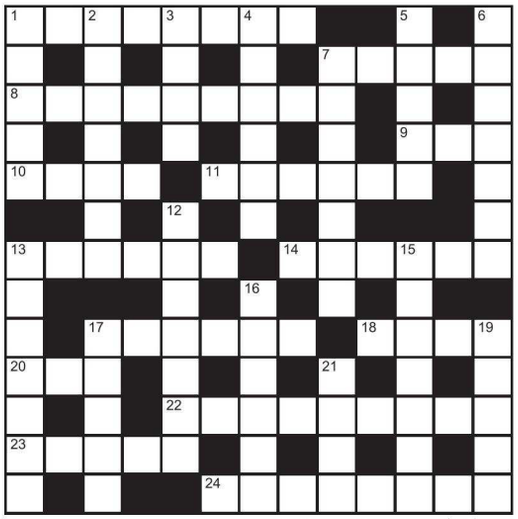
Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

MindGames

times2 Crossword No 9518



Across

1 Children's leisure period (8)
7 Fierce fire (5)
8 White ornamental variety of gypsum (9)
9 Everyone (3)
10 Thin, svelte (4)
11 Accident-prone (6)
13 Marzipan ingredient (6)
14 Brave, spirited (6)
17 Shoe without laces (4-2)
18 Applaud (4)
20 Variety, kind (3)
22 In another place (9)
23 Dainty in appearance (5)
24 Drifting microorganisms (8)

Down

1 Mountain summits (5)
2 Reversion to ancestral traits (7)
3 Urban rail vehicle (4)
4 Courage, resolve (6)
5 SE Asian language (5)
6 Earth science (7)
7 Blackberry bush (7)
12 Animate (7)
13 Deposit of rock holding usable water (7)
15 Accumulate (items in a set) (7)
16 Titbit (6)
17 Small boat (5)
19 Maintain feathers (5)
21 Long-necked bird (4)

Solution to Crossword 9517

T	E	A	M	U	P		S	U	P	E	R	B
	M		O		A		A		R		E	
H	E	W	N		T	A	N	D	O	O	R	I
	R		E		R		D		T		U	
E	G	O	T	R	I	P		B	E	I	N	G
	E				C		E		I			
	D	I	S	C	I	P	L	I	N	E	D	
			C		A		L				R	
P	A	R	R	Y		L	I	O	N	C	U	B
	U		E		S		P		Y		M	
I	N	T	E	R	N	E	T		L	A	M	E
	T		C		O		I		O		E	
E	S	C	H	E	W		C	A	N	A	R	D

Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Bridge Andrew Robson

A reader recently asked me to explain the Morton's Fork coup "in your usual eloquent style". Flattery gets you everywhere.

Actually, I always feel that I'm in a bit of a quandary when talking about Morton's Fork. Do I refer back to Cardinal John Morton, the tax-collector, who used the following logic: if they are living frugally, they are stashing away money; while if they are living lavishly, they have money to spare? If I do, many readers will groan, "Oh, not again, what a column-inch filler", while others will be genuinely interested, having not yet met the wily 15th-century prelate. Yet if I don't, some readers will wonder what on earth I'm on about (... again ...).

See what I did there? I am in a Morton's Fork. Damned if I do, damned if I don't.

On our featured fork from rubber bridge*, West led ♦K v 6♥. Plan the play.

Ruff the diamond lead (as you don't know what to discard from hand), cash the ace-king of hearts and (drumroll ...) lead the two of spades (key play). This puts West (with whom you place the ace of spades for his take-out double) in a lose-lose dilemma, a Morton's Fork.

If West rises with the ace, you have two spade tricks and can subsequently discard two clubs on the queen of spades and the ace of diamonds. If West plays low, you win the queen, promptly discard your king of spades on the ace of diamonds and concede merely to the king of clubs. Slam made.

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Neither

Rubber

North: ♠Q53 ♥J32 ♦A765 ♣J94

West: ♠A1084 ♥- ♦KQJ3 ♣K10853

East: ♠J976 ♥97 ♦109842 ♣76

South: ♠K2 ♥AKQ108654 ♦- ♣AQ2

S	W	N	E
2♣(1)	Pass	2♦(2)	Pass
2♥	Dbl(3)	3♥(4)	Pass
6♥(5)	End		

(1) Strongest bid in bridge — any hand with 23+ points, or an upgrade for shape.
(2) Negative or waiting.
(3) Take-out.
(4) Stronger than 4♥ (fast arrival)
(5) Ace-asking won't really help — with a void.

Contract: 6♥ Opening Lead: ♦K

In fact, you can succeed if you win the first trick with the ace of diamonds. Discard a club from hand, cross to the ace-king of hearts and lead up the two of spades. West has to play low (or you have 12 winners) but you now run all your eight hearts.

On the last heart, West must discard from ♠A, ♦Q and ♣K10, your last three cards being ♠K and ♣AQ. West has to keep the ace of spades and the club guard, so away goes his queen of diamonds. You now exit with your king of spades to West's ace and await his club return from ♣K10 round to your ♣AQ. Slam made.

*Bridge writers' code for, "I constructed the deal to make the point." andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

Brain Trainer

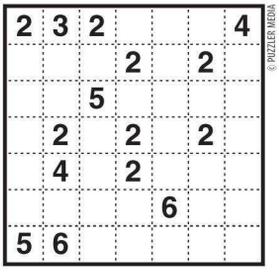
EASY	14	x 3	+ 12	50% OF IT	+ 6	÷ 3	+ 17	3/4 OF IT	− 4	x 4	ANSWER
MEDIUM	35	+ 79	x 3	1/2 OF IT	x 3	− 98	60% OF IT	+ 71	90% OF IT	− 94	ANSWER
HARDER	129	x 7	+ 885	+1/4 OF IT	+ 744	x 2	5/6 OF IT	40% OF IT	− 778	x 5	ANSWER

Polygon

From these letters, make words of **three** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.
How you rate 14 words, average; 19, good; 24, very good; 30, excellent

Yesterday's answers
cha, chant, chat, halt, hat, haul, haunt, hula, hunt, hut, lah, latch, lath, launch, lunch, natch, nautch, nth, nuchal, tach, than, uhlan, **unlatch**

Cell Blocks No 5085



Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

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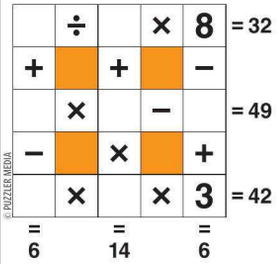
Set Square No 3704



Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

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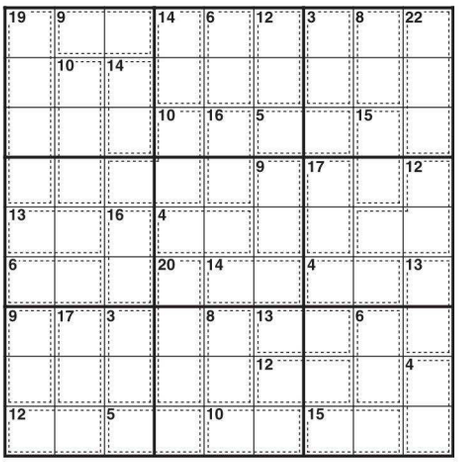
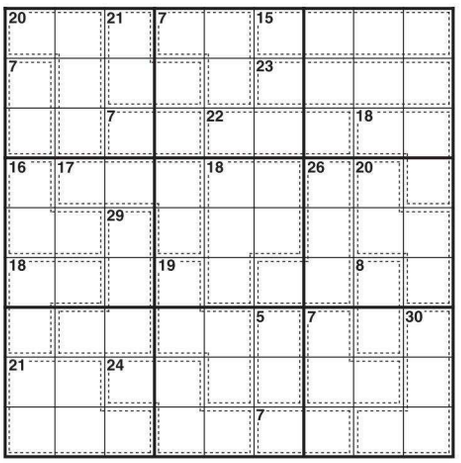
Please note, BODMAS does not apply

Killer Moderate No 9442



Killer Tough No 9443



As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Solutions

Quick Cryptic 2662

C	J	C	I		P	U	T	
H	E	A	T	H	E	N		R
U	S		I		T	E	B	U
T	O	P	I	C		A	I	M
Z	E				C		I	N
P	I	R	O	U	E	T	T	E
A			N			R		A
H	A	M		S	U	R	R	E
		Y		E		A		R
C	U	R	T	A	I	N		P
R		I		L		K	A	W
A	G	A	V	E		L	A	N
G		D		D		E	E	R

Codeword 5201

	E	D	I	T	O	R	O	A
A		I		R		E	X	A
M	U	F	T	I		W	H	I
I		F		C		O	D	S
T	R	U	C	K	E	R		I
Y		S				K		S
	F	E	T	C	H		F	E
G				O		I		
L	U	P	I	N		S	Q	U
O		I		J		L		N
B	R	A	V	U	R	A		T
E		N		R		N		I
	O	O	Z	E		D	I	S

Kakuro 3700

8	7	9		2	4	1		9
1	2	8	9	6	5	3		8
3	1	6	2	4			9	7
9	5		1	3		8	3	9
		5	9	8	7	6	1	4
7	4	1	3	8	6	9		
9	8	6		7	9		9	5
	9	7			5	6	8	1
2	1		8	7	4	2	6	3
1	3		4	2	1		9	8

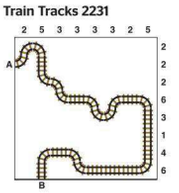
Sudoku 14,871

7	2	9	1	4	5	3	8	6
6	3	1	7	8	2	4	5	9
4	5	8	3	6	9	1	2	7
3	7	6	4	2	1	8	9	5
8	1	5	9	7	6	2	4	3
2	9	4	8	5	3	6	7	1
1	4	3	5	9	8	7	6	2
5	8	2	6	3	7	9	1	4
9	6	7	2	1	4	5	3	8

GK Crossword 231

F	L	A	U	T	I	S	T		P	R	A	W	N	S
I		Z		H		A		S		E		H		T
L	O	U	S	E		M	A	T	T	P	R	I	O	R
L		R		F		O		Y		U		T		A
M	E	E	R	A	S	Y	A	L		B	R	E	N	T
O				M		E		E		I		R		A
R	I	F	K	I	N	D		S	A	I	G	O	N	
E		R		S				C		S		P		
	F	I	S	H	E	S		P	L	A	C	E	B	O
M		C		E		L		A		N			L	
E	L	A	N	D		A	U	T	O	P	I	S	T	A
R		S		R		L		E		A		I		R
C	A	S	T	O	R	O	I	L		R	O	M	E	O
I		E		A		M		L		T		B		I
A	G	E	N	D	A		M	A	R	Y	R	A	N	D

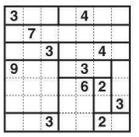
Train Tracks 2231



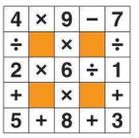
Sudoku 14,872

2	6	4	7	8	3	5	1	9
9	1	8	5	2	6	3	4	7
5	3	7	1	9	4	6	8	2
6	8	3	2	1	5	7	9	4
4	7	9	6	3	8	1	2	5
1	5	2	9	4	7	8	6	3
3	9	6	8	5	2	4	7	1
8	4	1	3	7	9	2	5	6
7	2	5	4	6	1	9	3	8

Cell Blocks 5084



Set Square 3703

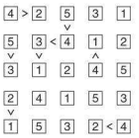


Lexica 7379

Sudoku 14,873

5	6	4	8	7	3	2	9	1
1	3	7	4	9	2	6	5	8
2	9	8	1	6	5	4	3	7
7	8	1	3	2	9	5	6	4
3	5	2	6	4	1	7	8	9
9	4	6	7	5	8	1	3	2
4	2	9	5	3	6	8	1	7
6	1	3	2	8	7	9	4	5
8	7	5	9	1	4	3	2	6

Futoshiki 4741



KenKen 6193

Lexica 7380

Killer 9440

6	3	7	2	9	1	8	4	5
1	8	4	7	5	3	9	6	2
2	5	9	6	8	4	3	7	1
3	9	8	1	4	5	7	2	6
4	2	5	8	7	6	1	9	3
7	6	1	3	2	9	4	5	8
5	7	2	9	1	8	6	3	4
9	1	3	4	6	2	5	8	7
8	4	6	5	3	7	2	1	9

Killer 9441

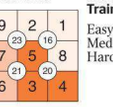
3	7	4	9	6	5	2	1	8
9	5	1	4	2	8	7	6	3
6	2	8	3	7	1	9	4	5
7	4	2	5	9	6	8	3	1
5	3	9	1	8	4	6	2	7
1	8	6	7	3	2	5	9	4
2	9	3	8	4	7	1	5	6
4	1	7	6	5	9	3	8	2
8	6	5	2	1	3	4	7	9

Today's solutions

Concise Quintagram
1 Pomp
2 Labour
3 Chowder
4 Collier
5 Pugilist

Cryptic Quintagram
1 Mar
2 Mode
3 Aboard
4 Crocodile
5 Accountant

Suko 4103



Brain Trainer
Easy 68
Medium 194
Harder 6,040

Word watch
Ustulation (c) The act of burning or roasting (*OED*)
Platband (c) A border of flowers in a garden (*Collins*)
Shamble (c) A butcher's market stall (*Chambers*)

Chess — Winning Move
1 Nh5+! saves the day. If 1 ... gxh5 then 2 Qg5+ Kf8 3 Qd8+ Kg7 4 Qg5+ leads to a perpetual check draw. After the alternative 1 ... Kf8 White can regroup with 2 Ng3! protecting the rook on f1 and preventing 2 ... Nxg3 due to 3 Qxf7 mate. After 2 Ng3 Black's best is 2 ... Qb2, when the position is complicated but equal

Quiz
1 Tiananmen Square massacre **2** New York City **3** London **4** *Sense and Sensibility* **5** Henry VII **6** Bread **7** Taylor Swift **8** Boris Karloff **9** Newport **10** *The School for Scandal* **11** Shropshire **12** Dadabhai Naoroji **13** Dollo's law, formulated in about 1890 by Louis Dollo **14** Salim Sdiri **15** Bangladesh, it is in Bagerhat

THE TIMES

30.04.24

MindGames

For extra puzzles See page 10

Word watch
David Parfitt

Ustulation
a An instance of breaking out in spots
b The picking of hops
c The act of burning

Platband
a A series of flat-topped hills
b A troupe of marching musicians
c A border of flowers in a garden

Shamble
a A strong metal chain
b A dense thorny thicket
c A butcher's market stall

Answers on page 15

Sudoku

Mild No 14,874

								1
		9	2	6				
7						5	2	3
	1	3		5		7		4
					9			
	7	8		4		6		5
8						1	3	7
		5	1	7				
								9

Difficult No 14,875

6					4			3
		4					7	
	1			2				
			3			2		9
		7			9	1		6
3				5			4	8
			7	1			8	
	7				5	9		
5			9	3	8			

Super fiendish No 14,876

					9	3		
			4	8	7			
								8
							7	2
1	8			9			4	
2		9					1	
7	6		8					
3	4	2		5				
	9	8	7	3				

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz
Olav Bjortomt

1 Which 1989 event is also known in China as the "June Fourth Incident"?

2 During the 1990s tech explosion, which US city's Flatiron district transformed into "Silicon Alley"?

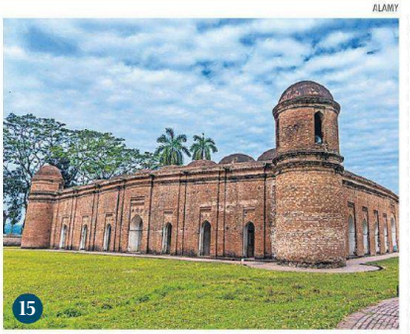
3 In 1865, the Salvation Army began on the streets of which city?

4 Which 1811 novel by Jane Austen grew from a sketch entitled *Elinor and Marianne*?

5 The Stafford and Lovell rebellion (1486) was a Yorkist uprising against which king?

6 Damper is a traditional Australian form of which staple food?

ALAMY



15

7 *The Tortured Poets Department* (2024) is the 11th studio album by which US pop superstar?

8 Which horror-movie icon played the title role in the TV show *Colonel March of Scotland Yard* (1954-55)?

9 Named after a Chartist leader, John Frost Square is in the centre of which Welsh city?

10 Sir Benjamin Backbite and Mrs Candour are characters in which play by Richard Brinsley Sheridan?

11 What is the largest county in England without a coastline?

12 In 1892, which Liberal candidate for Central Finsbury won his seat with a majority of five votes?

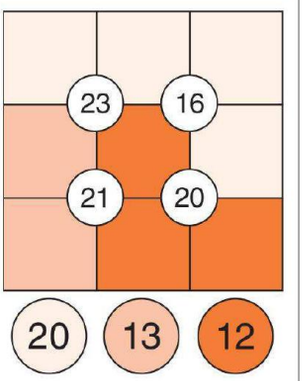
13 Formulated by a French-born Belgian palaeontologist, which law states that evolution is not reversible?

14 Which French long jumper was hit by a javelin thrown by Tero Pitkamaki in Rome in 2007?

15 The Sixty Dome Mosque is in which southeast Asian country?

Answers on page 15

Suko
No 4103



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

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The Times Quick Cryptic
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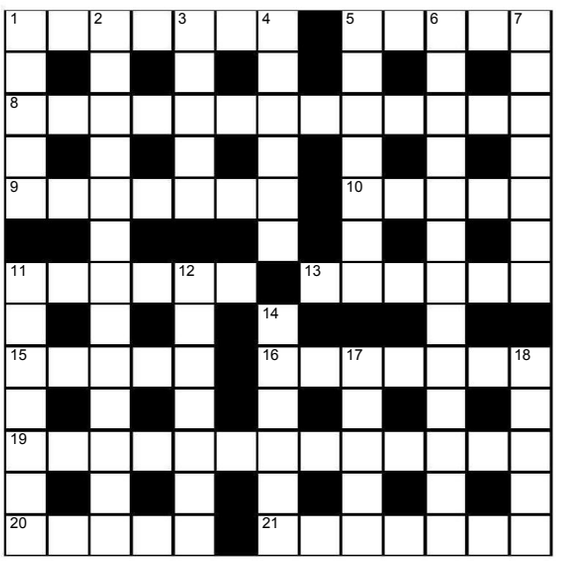

Across
1 He-cat, eh? Possibly (7)
5 Type of book work embraced by young boxer? (3-2)
8 Home game in Congo university takes cunning so as to stand out? (13)
9 Type of sugar in cola set to change (7)
10 Brick for building half done in Lincoln? (5)
11 Red-faced state is never-ending (6)
13 Hate side losing openers before cricket match (6)
15 What's initially curtailing run after muscle pain? (5)
16 Praise article by Conservative right (7)
19 Team spilling the beans is hilarious (4-9)
20 Area yielded a variety of succulent (5)
21 Other ranks trapped by river in spate (7)

Down
1 Unwell after cold hotel — could be this (5)
2 Book making new use of cyclopean idea? (13)
3 Dance from part of east Angola (5)
4 Queen perhaps ordered throne (6)
5 Blasphemous university academic article on ecstasy (7)
6 After classical show musical mostly returns, just having left theatre (4-9)
7 Reward any temp might work for? (7)
11 Garden plant type of yucca hospital regularly wanted (7)
12 Deadlock that is broken by politician: fool! (7)
14 Whisky adulterated by the French? With this one may get hammered (6)
17 Provide food consumed in common room initially (5)
18 Power oared boat using mass for energy (5)

Yesterday's solution on page 15

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AI FOR BUSINESS

05 WHAT UK BUSINESSES SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE EU'S AI ACT
08 CAN AI BE TRAINED ON ITS OWN RESPONSES?
10 WHY INVESTORS WANT MORE AI DISCLOSURES

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Everybody's ready for AI except your data.
informatica.com/ai

AI FOR BUSINESS

Distributed in
THE TIMES

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LEADERSHIP

Is this the right moment to appoint a chief AI officer?

The rapid advance of generative AI has been bewildering. No wonder many business leaders are considering whether they'd benefit from the guidance of a strategic-level expert in the field

Cath Everett

In March, the White House announced that all federal agencies in the US would have to appoint a chief AI officer to strengthen their governance in respect of the technology. The mandate is expected to create about 100 such CAIOs by the end of May.

Should other enterprises follow suit? "It depends" is the answer that most experts will give.

One of them is Michael Queenan, founder and CEO of Nephos Technologies, a consultancy specialising in data services integrations. He notes that many S&P 250 companies are hiring, or talking about hiring, an AI chief of some description. But he compares this to an "emperor's new clothes" scenario, suggesting that firms are "often not giving enough thought" to why they really need one.

Their reasoning may be no more complex than "they don't want to be seen as the company that doesn't have one, lest they're asked why not at the next shareholder meeting or on CNN and their share price falls", Queenan explains.

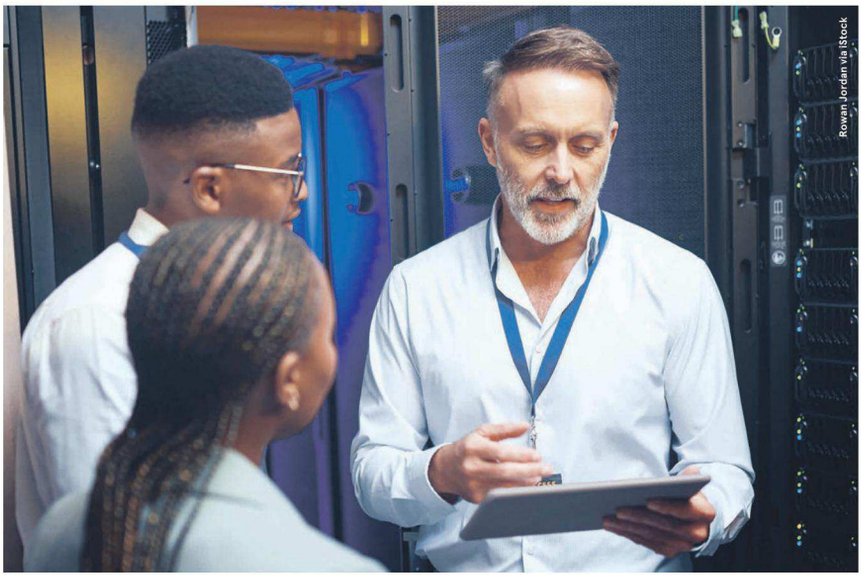
The decision whether to hire an AI supremo or not should be based on how central the technology already is to the business. That's the view of Brian Peterson, co-founder and CTO of Dialpad, the creator of an AI-based customer intelligence platform.

"If AI is a big element of your business or you're building it into your product set, having a CAIO would provide focus. But, if it just seems cool and could be part of your future but you're not sure how yet, appointing one might not be right for you," he says, suggesting that it would make more sense in the latter scenario to hire a consultant first to assess the technology's potential value to the firm.

In any case, CAIOs are a scarce and costly commodity, reports Waseem Ali, CEO of Rockborne, a recruitment consultancy specialising in the data and AI sector.

"We're not seeing many on the market," he says, noting that they're mostly working in "sectors such as fintech and healthtech. Ecommerce companies and some insurance firms that are algorithmically driven have been hiring them too."

Ali also points to the Future of Work Report published by LinkedIn in November 2023. This indicated that the number of employers creating the less senior role of head of AI had more than tripled in five years.


Rowan Jordan via iStock

He has observed "more chief data officers than anyone else absorbing the AI remit to become chief data and AI officers, while some organisations are simply turning their CDOs into CAIOs. You don't see this conversion happen as much with CIOs or CTOs unless they have a data remit."

The absorption of roles makes sense to Queenan, who says: "Companies should absolutely get across AI, but most large ones already have the data science people and processes in place to do that. AI is an app that sits on top of your data, which means it's just another data product. So, if you already have a team creating such things, this is simply adding another string to their bow."

He believes that having "a head of AI who reports to the CIO or CTO is more than sufficient in most cases. In five years' time, there could be a real need for a powerful job title such as CAIO, but it's too early for it now."

Queenan's view is that organisations generally need more time to work out how to "do AI better" and decide whether they will benefit most from developing their own tech or buying off-the-shelf products. Most firms already seeking to hire a CAIO are "putting the cart too far in front of the horse", he argues.

Peterson agrees that granting an AI specialist a seat at the top table now would probably be overkill in most organisations.

"It depends on what expertise there already is on the board and what value a CAIO could bring," he says. "But, if you're not a tech company and AI isn't core to your business, it probably isn't necessary."

This view is borne out in the wider recruitment market – Ali has seen few C-level appointments for AI experts to date, although he reports that firms are getting more interested in finding non-executive directors with AI knowledge.

Anyone seeking to become an AI chief must demonstrate a range of top-level skills, including strategic thinking and effective communication, according to Ali. A CAIO will be able to manage the board's expectations about what the technology can and cannot do and explain likely outcomes in a language that its members can relate to. This includes expressing where AI tools could add value by reducing costs, for instance.

Equally important is the ability to track, understand and explain the evolving governance issues surrounding GenAI, including the ethical, reputational and regulatory risks it poses.

A final consideration, if your company is set on hiring an AI chief, is to "put your money where your mouth is" and equip the successful candidate adequately, Peterson argues.

"You can't just hire a CIAO, give them that big title with lots of expectations and leave them to it," he warns. "You need to support them by putting money, resources and prioritisation behind it. Otherwise, you'll be setting them up to fail."

21% of large and medium-sized companies are actively seeking a chief AI officer

11% have already hired an AI chief to support their use of generative AI

Foundry, 2023

Using human intelligence to mitigate artificial intelligence risks

AI is transforming how organisations operate, but significant data protection challenges must be overcome

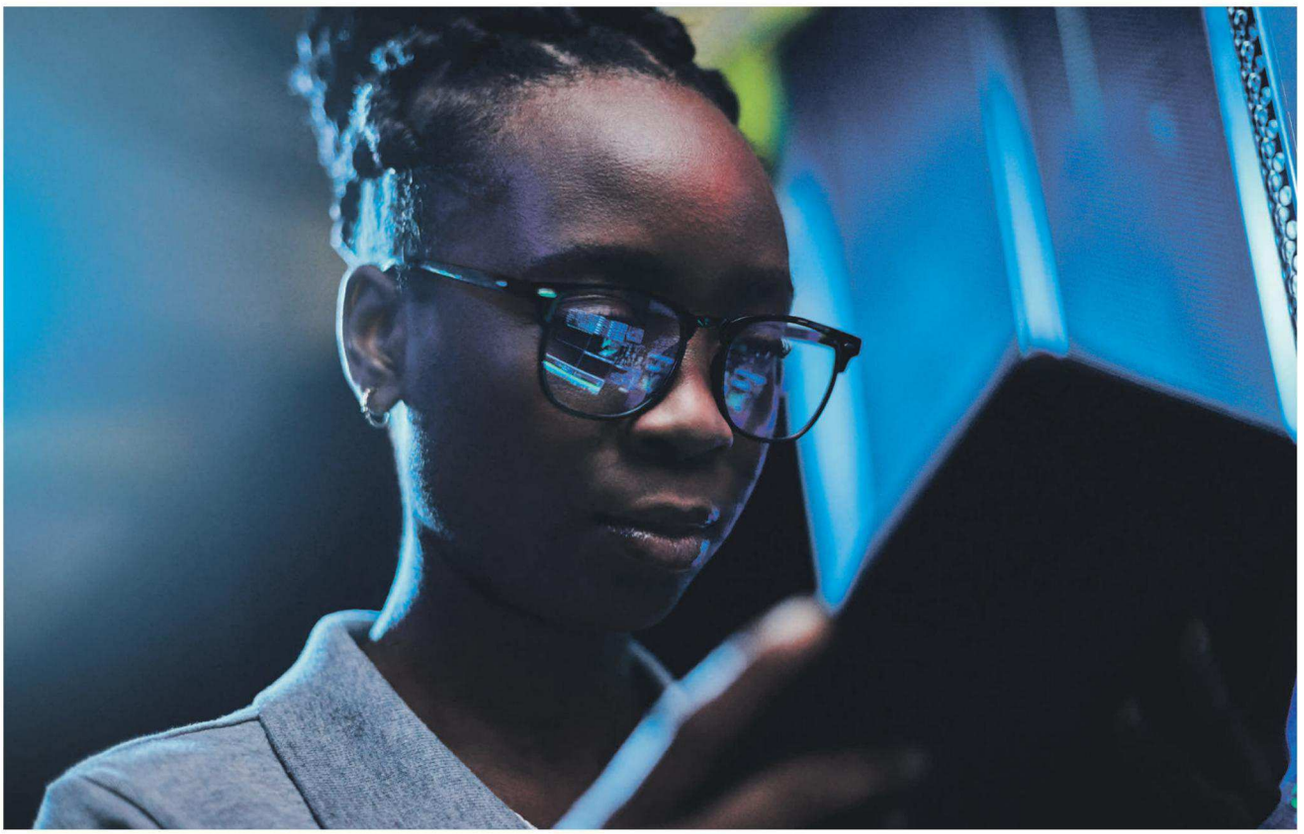
It is no secret that artificial intelligence is transforming the world of work. Already employees use a plethora of AI assistants to streamline everyday tasks, such as writing emails, developing code, crafting marketing strategies and even managing company finances. The trend is set to accelerate as the technology develops, yielding huge productivity benefits for organisations.

Yet as thousands of new AI-enabled applications are launched each week, many of them free to use, there are growing concerns about the data protection risks.

Many organisations have no idea what AI apps and services are being used by their staff, or for what purpose. They are also unaware of what data is being shared and with whom, or how it is being managed and protected.

This heightens the risk of data breaches that come with significant financial and reputational costs. Additionally, there is a real possibility that organisations may be feeding AI tools with sensitive corporate information without realising, contributing to the training of potentially competitive AI models.

So how can firms reap the benefits of AI while mitigating against the risks?



Data protection is non-negotiable

Neil Thacker is chief information security officer EMEA at Netskope, a secure access service edge (SASE) provider that helps organisations around the world to prevent data loss, leakage and misuse. He says the arrival of AI is much like the advent of cloud computing or even the internet, with companies still scrambling to understand the technology and its risks.

"This comes as data regulation is being tightened up around the world, making the safeguarding of sensitive data non-negotiable for every business," Thacker says. The EU's existing GDPR rules and new AI Act, which is set to come into force over the next few years, are cases in point.

At the same time corporate use of AI-enabled apps is accelerating rapidly. According to Netskope Threat Labs' Cloud & Threat Report 2023, organisations of 10,000 staff or more accessed at least five generative AI apps daily last year, with ChatGPT, Microsoft Co-pilot and GitHub Copilot being among the most commonly used.

The algorithms that power these platforms develop and improve based on the data fed into them, which raises myriad copyright and intellectual property issues. For example, last year source code was being posted to the most popular generative AI app, ChatGPT, at a concerning rate of 158 incidents per month in 2023, according to Netskope research.

"If firms are not careful they could leave sensitive data such as proprietary IP, source code or financial information accessible to competitors. Without realising it you are helping train even smarter AI platforms that can help your competitors," Thacker says. "The risk is immediate too. It used to take years to train powerful new algorithms but these days it can be done in a matter of days and weeks."

> **Without realising it you are helping train even smarter AI platforms that can help your competitors**

Private AI?

Thacker says firms must deploy continuous data protection policies and tools to protect themselves. Chief information security officers (CISOs) should make an inventory of all the AI services in use across their organisation, identifying those that are truly relevant to the company.

They then need to vet each platform vendor and assess its data policies, including whether it relies on third- or fourth-party support.

"There are significant costs associated with AI technology, so it's obvious that free or inexpensive options make their money in other ways – by selling data or the AI intelligence that it has contributed towards," says Thacker. "In such cases, a thorough examination of the terms and conditions becomes imperative for CISOs to ensure the protection and privacy of sensitive data."

What many organisations do not realise is that popular AI apps often offer private subscription plans, where for a fee customer data is not used to update the public model. Yet given the large and growing number of platforms in use in the corporate world, doing so for every app would be costly and impractical while failing to offset future risk.

Data loss prevention (DLP) tools must be deployed to help bridge these gaps. Take Netskope's platform, which uses a proprietary system to ensure no sensitive information is used within input queries to AI applications without informed consent.

It plugs seamlessly into cloud services, flagging the risks associated with more than 85,000 cloud apps and services including AI apps. Powered by AI itself, it learns how to recognise sensitive data based on an organisation's preferences and identify it in real time.

When a risk is detected it issues a pop-up message telling the employee the risk level of the app they are using on a scale from 0-100.

"We base the score on 50 variables, including the security controls that platform has in place, its privacy policy, where any data is being processed and the regulatory challenges, and any other potential legal liability issues," says Thacker. "If an app is high risk the employee can make a call on whether to use it depending on the sensitivity of the data involved. Netskope may also be able to offer them an alternative that is more secure for the organisation."

Research has shown this behavioural approach to data security is highly effective, given that a staggering 95% of cybersecurity incidents stem from human error. Continuously training people using point-in-time warnings is highly effective the same way reinforced training is used in AI models; "I use the analogy of radar speed cameras that tell you your speed," says Thacker. "Once you are reminded how fast you are going and the consequences, you slow down. It's about point-in-time awareness of the risks."

Founded in 2012 Netskope has become a leader in the SASE space, offering unrivaled visibility, real-time data and threat protection for cloud services, websites and private apps. Known for its data and threat protection, the US company is now leading the way in the AI security space globally.

"As the digital transformation of companies continues, AI will offer enormous benefits in terms of enhanced efficiency, competitiveness and end-user experiences," says Thacker. "But it has also become the frontline in the fight to protect data, and organisations that do not adapt to the evolving threat landscape could pay a high price."

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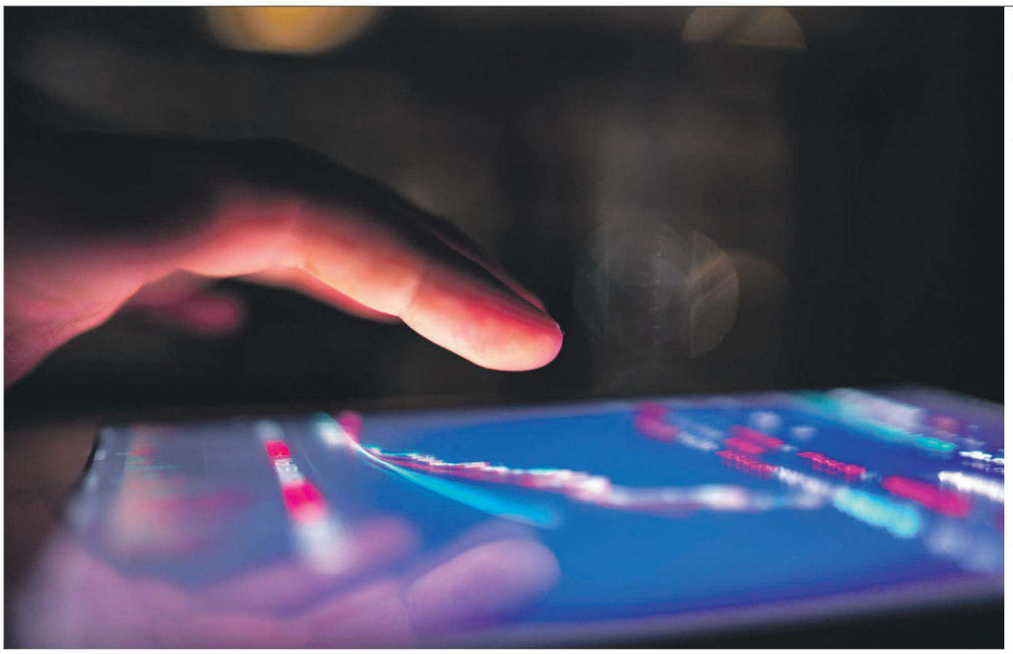

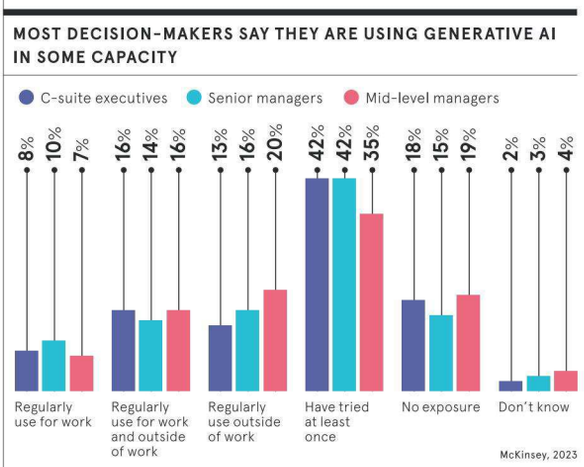

Securing the future: data integrity in the age of generative AI

Businesses can only unlock the benefits of artificial intelligence if they tackle their long-standing data management issues

Artificial intelligence is set to transform the way companies operate over the next decade, making workers more productive, improving customer service and offering firms invaluable insights on their operations.

Yet despite the huge competitive advantages AI offers, many early adopters have not achieved the results they hoped for, while others have found it hard to adopt these systems at scale.

Typically, data management issues are to blame, as organisations struggle to access the high-quality data needed to power the AI algorithms supporting their operations. Poor data input leads to bad outcomes at scale, as using poor-quality, incomplete or untrusted data as a foundation for AI assistants results in inaccurate or biased decisions that are of no help to firms, and may even hinder them.

Poor data management could also create compliance problems, as organisations lose track of the data driving their AI platforms, putting themselves at risk of breaching incoming AI regulations.

So how can organisations get a grip on their data today and fully reap the benefits of the AI revolution?

No silver bullet

Greg Hanson is GVP and head of EMEA North for Informatica, a leading cloud data management provider that helps businesses handle the complex challenges of dispersed and fragmented data to innovate with their data and AI.

"Technology forms a major part of the solution," says Hanson. "But organisations also need a data management strategy and cultural change which involves sponsorship at board level, engagement of people and the establishment of governance polices."

This is why Informatica works closely with leading advisory organisation Cognizant, a global strategic alliance partner of Informatica, that helps firms embed the tech, teams and processes for successful AI adoption. Making the most of data is a theme that both Informatica and Cognizant are witnessing among customers, says Sean Heshmat, GGM data and AI head at Cognizant.

He adds: "without the right input you will simply make incorrect decisions at an accelerated pace. Firms need to build the right foundations to ensure AI works for them, not against them."

It's a sentiment that Hanson agrees with: He adds: "Many organisations believe AI will be an overnight silver bullet but there is a significant amount of foundational work required to benefit from this technology. That's because when it comes to data, the old adage applies – if you put garbage in, you will get garbage out."

For any business adopting AI at scale, the first task is to corral all the data it has in one place so it can be processed and accessed with ease. But this can be challenging as large firms typically have multiple divisions, servers and systems in place around the world and data is often siloed.

To counter this they must simplify their data landscape, standardise the tech they use and deploy an effective data catalogue to organise and manage data assets properly.

"A company can't get a proper picture of their customers or operations if their datasets are incomplete or disorganised," says Heshmat. "Similarly, AI can't make quality decisions in real-time without real-time data, and that is hard to achieve with myriad different systems and integration points."

Quality control

According to *The State of AI in 2023* McKinsey survey , inaccuracy is the biggest risk companies face when it comes to AI. Yet just 32% said they were mitigating that threat of inaccurate data and inaccurate outcomes, even lower than the 38% who said they mitigated cybersecurity risks.

> **Organisations need a data-management strategy and cultural change, which involves sponsorship at board level, engagement of people and the establishment of governance polices**

As such, it is vital that organisations have high-quality data to power their AI platforms, although identifying, verifying and extracting this information can be challenging. Staff also need to be able to access data with ease, while establishing robust data principles to ensure regulatory compliance.

Firms have already had to adapt to the EU's GDPR rules, and over the next few years the EU's AI Act will come into force, requiring companies to demonstrate they have full oversight of the data going into their AI platforms, with breaches leading to significant fines.

Informatica's solutions offer organisations vital support as they prepare for AI adoption. The firm's AI cloud platform enables them to manage and organise all their data with ease via one unified platform that breaks down silos.

It also lets users locate, extract and cleanse data to develop first-class algorithms, while supporting good data governance by recording the data trails and providing data lineage visualisation sitting behind automated decisions, simplifying compliance.

Democratising data

Cognizant deploys Informatica's solutions as part of its wider work supporting organisations' digital transformations. It acts as a trusted partner to companies, helping them to change their data culture and processes and get the most of data management and AI systems.

"Together we help organisations democratise data and bring it to life," says Hanson. "This helps to make it more easily accessible to those in the company that need it – subject to data access controls. With Informatica, teams no longer need to ask IT for the information they require to make more informed business decisions, it is self-serve and ready to use."

Gilead Sciences knows first-hand why good data governance is essential to business success. The global biopharmaceutical company worked jointly with Informatica and Cognizant to bring more value to customers by getting more out of the data the firm had amassed through the manufacture and development of advanced treatments.

Gilead wanted to improve its master data management processes and compliance controls, while bringing data into the hands of employees who needed it. It deployed a data mesh framework on Amazon Web Services, supported by Informatica's AI-powered cloud platform which provides useful, holistic data to decision makers.

As a result, Gilead was able to speed up its drug development, discovery and commercialisation processes and bring down costs.

"To us, a cloud-based enterprise data platform is not just about cost or operational efficiencies. For us, it's a competitive differentiation in the industry, we can make better, faster decisions about our business," says Murali Vridhachalam, head of cloud, data & analytics at Gilead.

Cognizant and Informatica have partnered to help many global brands deliver greater value to their customers. One such brand is BMW, which worked with both Informatica and Cognizant to implement a unified platform for global product data that provides a trusted, omnichannel view of critical information.

The Informatica system enables the German manufacturer to deliver consistent comms globally and one that is helping to power a next-generation customer experience capable of leveraging new technologies like AI. BMW finds itself in the midst of an AI journey as it seeks – like many other businesses – to unlock the huge potential benefits of AI, but to do so requires organisations to resolve their long-standing data management issues.

"Adding that good data governance is an end-to-end process, not a one-shot deal. says Heshmat. "It's about having a data-driven culture, the right tech, and proper communication between your board, the business and IT to make sure data is treasured and protected across your organisation."

Hanson agrees, "AI requires holistic, trusted and governed data for companies to succeed with correct, unbiased insights. Our goal is to help firms unlock the power of AI and bring their data to life."

To find out more please visit informatica.com/gb

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REGULATION

What UK firms need to know about the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act

This landmark legislation was recently approved by the European Parliament and will come into force gradually over the next two years. How will it affect businesses beyond the bloc?

Paulcreaud via iStock

Chris Stokel-Walker

Ever since ChatGPT shook up the business world in Q4 2022, firms have been racing to use AI, but regulators are catching up fast in their bid to ensure that any such application is safe and trustworthy.

In March, for instance, the European Parliament signed off the EU Artificial Intelligence Act. Pending final checks, the legislation should be adopted before the parliamentary election in June, with its provisions taking effect in stages over 24 months. It amounts to the world's first major set of statutory standards governing the use of AI.

"With the growing presence of AI in all aspects of daily life, legal frameworks are urgently needed to regulate its uses and protect data," says Neil Thacker, CISO at cybersecurity firm Netskope in EMEA.

He adds that one of the main objectives of the new legislation is to "strike the right balance of enabling innovation while respecting ethical principles". As part of this effort, the act splits AI systems into different risk categories governed by requirements of varying stringency.

It will also apply to any system that touches, or otherwise interacts with, consumers in the EU. That means it could have a broad extraterritorial impact. A British company using AI to analyse data that's then sent to a European client, for instance, would be covered by the legislation.

> **The AI Act is wide-ranging, trying to provide guidance and protection across the multitude of areas that AI will affect**

"The act is wide-ranging, trying to provide guidance and protection across the multitude of areas that AI will affect in the coming years," Thacker says.

The main concern for UK business leaders is how onerous the new law is likely to be for their firms. For many, the EU's previous big statutory intervention – the General Data Protection Regulation – has cast a long shadow since taking effect in 2018. Remembering the paperwork this required and the many changes they had to make to ensure compliance, they're understandably worried that the new legislation could impose similar bureaucratic burdens, which might prove costly.

Fear not, says Michael Veale, associate professor at University College London's faculty of laws, who has been poring over its small print.

Many of its provisions are "quite straightforward and imaginable", he says. These include "making sure that your system is secure and not biased in ways that are undesirable, and that any human overseeing it can do so robustly".

Such requirements shouldn't be too taxing, according to Veale.

"They echo a variety of the very basic demands on AI systems in recent years," he explains. "While it may be difficult to interpret them in every single context, they aren't particularly onerous or revolutionary."

One of the most fundamental questions for any UK firm to ask itself is whether it's selling high-risk systems into the EU, says Veale, who notes that the vast majority won't be. In any case, the few that are "should be looking at the standards and making sure they're following them anyway".

The EU won't be assessing firms and certifying them as compliant, so third-party industry-led standards bodies will likely self-police, with the regulators stepping in only if needed, he adds.

There are certain aspects of the act that "average non-specialist businesses should know", so that they can take steps to ensure compliance, according to Thacker.

"Initially, they should heed its references to general-purpose AI systems," he advises. "The new law includes transparency requirements including technical documentation and compliance with EU copyright laws. Where such information is not available, businesses will be required to control the internal use of such systems."

Thacker points out that the legislation includes explicit requirements for detailed summaries about the content used in training any general-purpose AI systems.

Companies specialising in areas that the legislation deems "high risk" will need to be particularly attentive to its terms. That's not only because of the more stringent requirements that will apply to them. It's also because they'll have less time to ensure compliance. While most organisations will have two years to implement any required changes, the deadline is tighter for makers of high-risk systems.

Most of the applications identified as high risk by the act are those that public sector organisations would use for purposes such as education, the management of critical infrastructure or the allocation of emergency services.

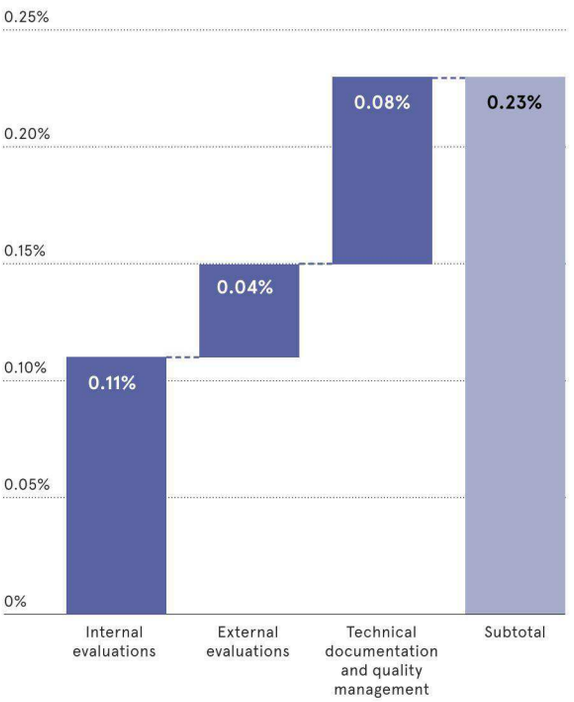
Any UK firm selling AI products for such purposes would need to register these in a centralised database and undergo the same certification process that applies to any EU counterpart.

Beyond that, all businesses would be wise to audit their systems and use of AI more regularly and thoroughly. This should help them to prepare for any further statutory changes in this fast-moving field.

The EU's act is the first legislative effort of note to lasso a constantly evolving technology that, in its current form, is barely 18 months old. The situation could easily change radically long before this law's final provisions are due to take effect. It's therefore vital for businesses to keep abreast of AI developments as a matter of course, Thacker stresses.

THE COST OF COMPLIANCE

Projected compliance costs for GPT-4 under the act, as a share of the total investment required to develop an AI system



The Future Society, 2023

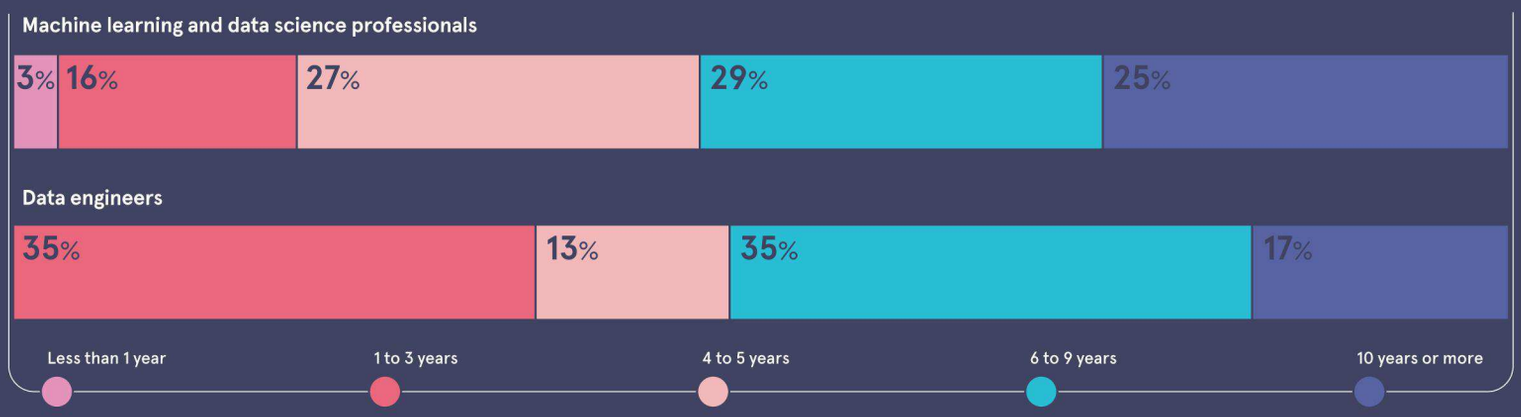
THE AI TALENT POOL

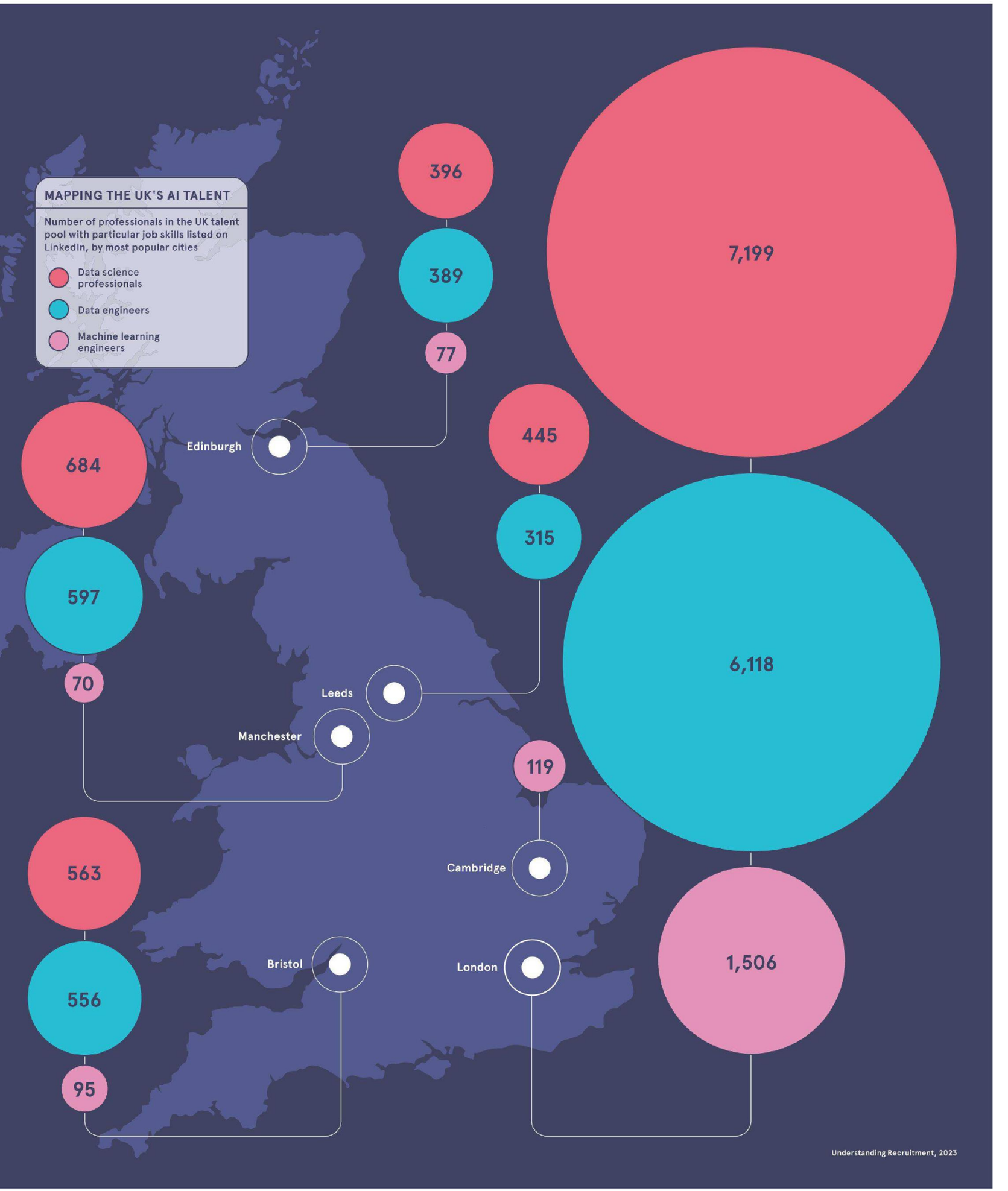
Artificial intelligence is expected to be a driving force for business innovation and efficiency. But to get the most out of the technology, firms will require certain technical expertise in their workforce. Machine learning and data engineers, along with data scientists, are indispensable for organisations seeking to develop and deploy AI tools at scale. Where should UK firms recruit for these skills? And, what should they expect from candidates for AI roles?

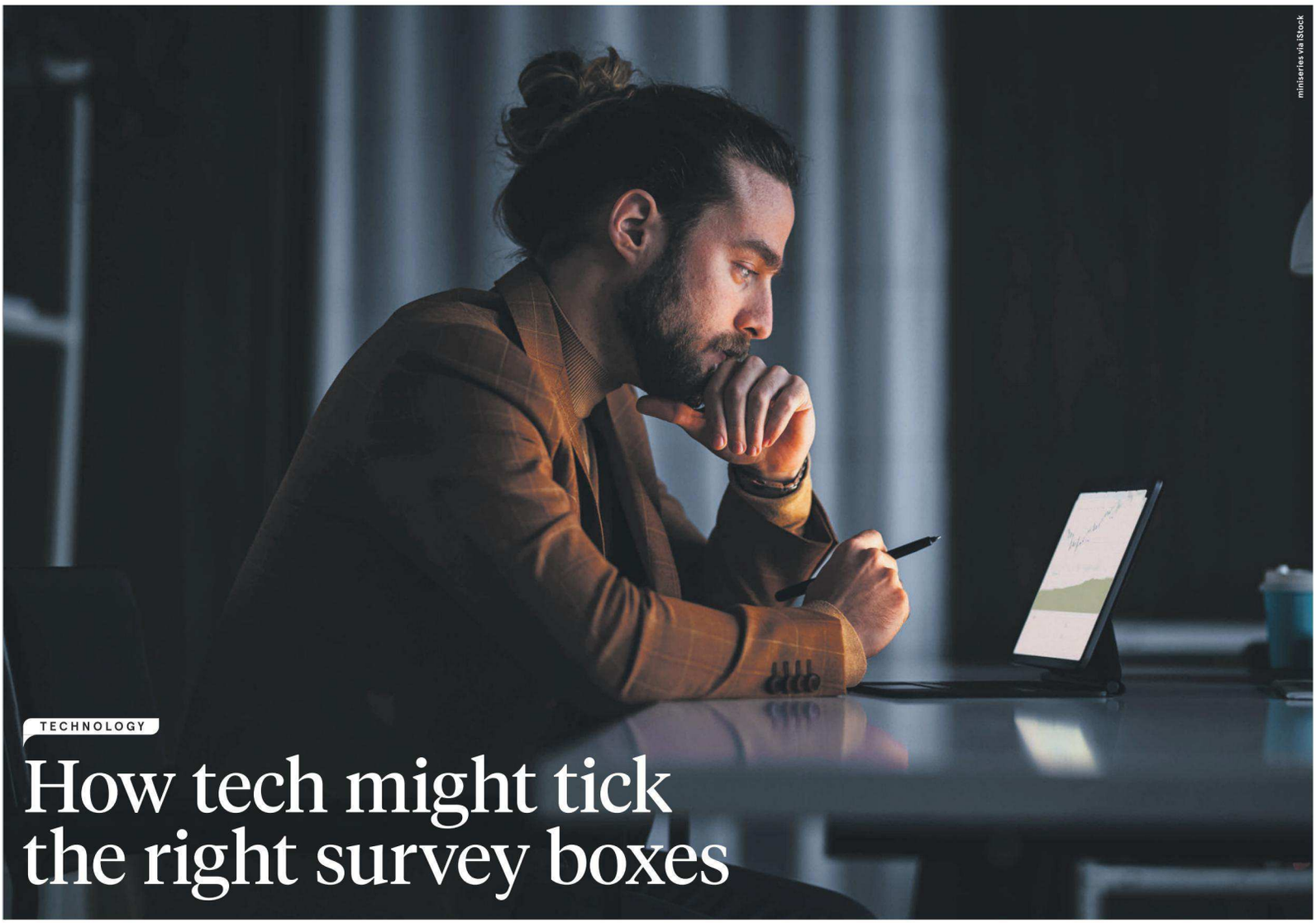
	Data science professionals	Data engineers	Machine learning engineers
Number of professionals in the UK talent pool with particular skills stated on LinkedIn	14,222	14,101	2,497
Gender split of the talent pool	81% men, 19% women	70% men, 30% women	78% men, 22% women
Median tenure before finding a new role, months	15	15	16

MORE THAN HALF OF DATA AND MACHINE LEARNING PROFESSIONALS HAVE AT LEAST SIX YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Years of experience in the talent pool of professionals with particular data and AI-related skills




MAPPING THE UK'S AI TALENT
Number of professionals in the UK talent pool with particular job skills listed on LinkedIn, by most popular cities
Data science professionals
Data engineers
Machine learning engineers
396
389
77
7,199
Edinburgh
684
597
70
445
315
6,118
Leeds
Manchester
119
563
556
95
Cambridge
Bristol
London
1,506
Understanding Recruitment, 2023



miniseries via iStock

TECHNOLOGY

How tech might tick the right survey boxes

Not content with using AI to analyse feedback from consumer polls, market researchers hope it could eliminate human respondents from the process by generating the same replies they'd have given

Sean Hargrave

Market-research companies have found AI to be a useful analytical tool, particularly its ability to understand what consumers write on questionnaires and say in audio or video interviews. The technology can also reliably interpret their answers to reveal hidden insights. It can even suggest next steps.

But in the next wave of adoption, market researchers will test AI's ability to use synthetic responses of its own devising, effectively cutting human interviewees out of the equation. If their experiments prove successful, AI could provide near-instant low-cost 'consumer' insights, reducing the need to conduct costly surveys and, potentially, enabling brands to more efficiently reach lucrative niche markets.

To produce reliable responses, the technology must be able to understand the views of the target audience and provide results that match those elicited by traditional consumer research methods. Naturally, the question at this stage of development is: can the synthetic data it will produce be trusted?

Market researchers at Kantar have taken the first steps in answering this. They prepared a set of questions and compared real data drawn from human surveys with responses given by OpenAI's GPT-4 large language model (LLM). The queries they used covered a wide range of matters, such as whether the price of luxury holidays is off-putting and whether a given piece of technology helps the owner to connect with people who share their interests.

When asked about more practical issues, GPT-4 gave similar answers to those provided by the human respondents. However, the more nuanced questions, requiring greater emotional reflection, produced significant differences.

Such results are what you might intuitively expect, notes Jon Puleston, vice-president of innovation at Kantar's profiles division. AI is good for some parts of market research, but it's limited if asked to adopt the persona of diverse human audiences.

"It's clear that there are risks to relying solely on synthetic data if you're making a business decision that's worth billions," he says. "Real human insights still form the heart of good market research. A more realistic use case for synthetic data is as a tool to complement, rather than replace, traditional research – for instance, by boosting sample sizes in surveys, particularly for niche audiences."

The experiments' results so far indicate that the LLM's outputs are only as good as the human-profiling data fed into it, notes Marius Claudy, associate professor of marketing at University College Dublin, who has been researching the impact of training on AI outcomes.

While the technology can provide a good analysis of qualitative research, such as understanding what someone has said or written, it's less effective at understanding the emotions that underpin people's responses. This leaves the notion that AI could ever make traditional market research obsolete open to question.

"The issue will always be how meaningful the results are, particularly when you're asking about unknown propositions, such as a product that has yet to launch," says Gary Topiol, managing director at market research firm QuestDIY. "Getting responses will be fairly easy but, as with all new methods, understanding when they can be trusted will take time."

> **Businesses will need to ensure they have a clear legal basis for uploading any personally identifiable data to AI tools**

Another concern is the well-documented bias to which GenAI is susceptible – again, as a result of its training. For instance, researchers at Harvard have found that ChatGPT's views and values are closely aligned with those of US citizens.

Claudy points out that "the more distant a country is from the US culturally, the lower the correspondence between the human responses there and ChatGPT's. An LLM may be able to approximate the responses of the 'average' person on historical topics, but it might struggle to mimic the responses of certain subgroups or minorities accurately."

The first concern about AI models is that they are programmed to pick up views from the internet. This can engender a Western, English-language bias and create an echo chamber too. While that's a worry for Jeremie Brecheisen, managing partner of Gallup's EMEA division, he thinks there's an even bigger issue.

As every market researcher knows, consumers don't always make the logical choices a computer would expect of them. For instance, we often buy goods based on a whim, rather than a logical assessment of their attributes and overall value. This is why it is important to ask real people questions that cover a range of emotional responses. It's the answers to these questions that AI will struggle to mimic for the foreseeable future, he says.

"Our brains and emotions are highly complex, so it will require a lot of experimentation to understand whether AI can get close to replicating the results of human surveys," Brecheisen says. "There's a lot of interest in using synthetic data to cut costs, but that's not a great reason when you don't know if you can trust those answers."

Concerns are not limited to whether future models can replicate real human responses. There are also legal considerations, warns Ben Travers, a partner specialising in IT matters at law firm Knights. While he shares researchers' worries that AI bias may lead to poor outcomes, he is also troubled by the use of personal data found on the internet to build profiles.

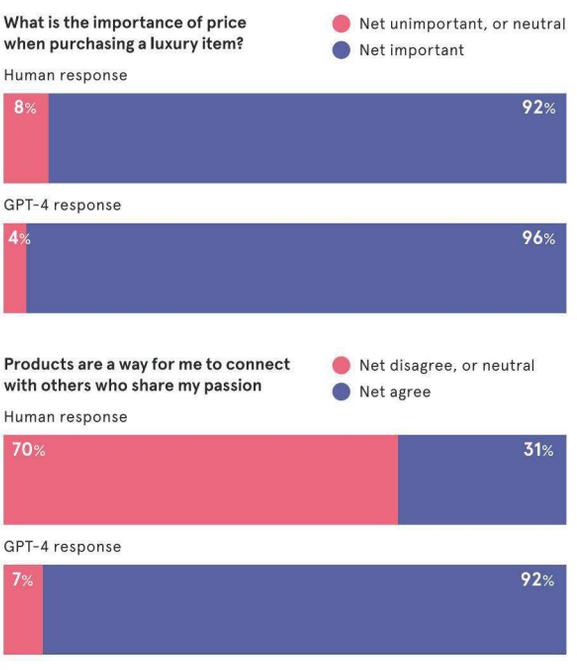
> **A more realistic use case for synthetic data is as a tool to complement, rather than replace, traditional research**

"Businesses will need to ensure they have a clear legal basis for uploading any personally identifiable data to AI tools," he says. "And all AI users must be alert to copyright issues. These apply to both the content fed into an AI and the content it produces. Just because this material is easily accessible does not mean that it's lawful to copy it. Such content is not 'fair game' – copyright will enable the rights owner to control how it is used."

The future of AI in market research is unclear. While the technology is undoubtedly a boon to those compiling surveys and interpreting responses, it remains to be seen whether it can reliably answer questions itself. The ultimate prize of having a system that can accurately predict which car will sell best among millennials in Peru, say, or how much sugar to remove from a soda for the Hungarian market seems to be the stuff of science fiction – for now, at least. ●

AI DOES BEST WITH MORE PRACTICAL QUESTIONS

Human and AI-generated responses to particular product-related questions



*Owing to rounding, responses do not total 100%

Gartner, 2022

Commercial feature

Mastering CX: how AI can improve customer service

Consumer frustrations with long call-waiting times and unresponsive chatbots are harming customer-service metrics. But generative AI can transform how answers are delivered

Customer service is no stranger to the rise of automation, from having to choose numbered call centre options to asking online chatbots for advice.

While many consumers cite frustrations with such systems that haven't quite got it right, increasing numbers of incoming queries have left companies reliant on chatbots to reduce long waiting times for customers and employees alike.

For Girish Mathrubootham, CEO and founder of Freshworks, a company that creates AI-boosted business software, there is a better solution available – embedding generative AI to deliver quicker, simpler and more seamless customer service, without sacrificing user experience.

"If a business scales from serving thousands of customers to millions of customers, it is not sustainable to keep hiring more and more people to deal with level one customer service," he explains. Enquiries regarding order tracking or cancellation are simple and can easily be dealt with by generative AI.

"Businesses have always driven automation through self-help, but generative AI is a significant leap in what can be accomplished in customer service," he explains.

More accurate responses

Mathrubootham suggests consumers aren't bothered if problems are solved by AI or humans, as long as they get the right answer, and fast.

Through generative AI, automated customer service can now handle queries in near real-time, in multiple languages and through a two-way conversation, even when the discussion is complex. It can also decipher and understand audio, images or videos.

"The biggest achievement," Mathrubootham says, "is having a multi-turn conversation with follow-up questions. This powerful technology produces a faster, more accurate and personalised response."

A major timesaver for human colleagues

Generative AI's role within customer service is to act as a co-pilot, working alongside humans to make their day-to-day tasks easier. This frees up human agents' time to solve more complex problems or helps them complete administrative tasks more efficiently, such as locating information from huge digital knowledge bases.

It can also proactively provide quality control on replies to customers, monitoring outbound messages and suggesting better responses.

"The AI might say 'this doesn't look like the right answer'," Mathrubootham explains. "It can also detect if the tone isn't professional or courteous, raising prompts to rephrase. This feature is particularly useful for training new employees."

For generative AI to perform at its best, companies must initially feed in the right training data, set strong guardrails on the language used and ensure systems are secure.

One solution is to use the best and brightest human customer service agents in an organisation to train models, with these colleagues continually testing and refining automated responses until they sound human.

"If you put garbage in, you get garbage out," Mathrubootham warns. "When you're training machines with data that is not accurate, machines can pick the wrong answers. You can't just feed them a million customer service calls or a million response tickets from the past."

The route to strong business metrics

Customer happiness is critical to long-term success and embedding generative AI within customer service is now key to achieving satisfaction at scale.

For example, companies with high levels of unstructured data, such as customer satisfaction surveys or email queries, can quickly use it to pinpoint what support enquiries are most common. This allows organisations to highlight nuances from customer replies to clearly show why they are satisfied or disillusioned and increase productivity by dealing with simple queries in large batches.

Implementing technology from a trusted partner can prove the best value. Freshworks' Freddy AI, for example, uses its existing data training sets alongside a company's internal databases, creating a tailored customer experience.

"When we talk about empathy and a human experience, some of this is readily available with generative AI," says Mathrubootham. "Customer service leaders must accept this is a big opportunity for their metrics, improving average handling and resolution times."

Mathrubootham explains that over the past three or four decades, businesses had to use humans to structure data in CRM or helpdesk systems to access the best insights, a process which lacks efficiency and limits productivity.

Now, generative AI is able to automatically complete these tasks in real-time, fundamentally changing the rules of the game. To unlock the benefits, businesses must pay attention to what their customers care about most and invest in a comprehensive generative AI partner.

For more information please visit freshworks.com

freshworks

RISK

Black-box blues: investors take big tech to task on AI opacity

As companies expand their use of AI, concerned shareholders are pressing them to become more open about how they're using the technology and what safeguards they have in place

Mark Walsh

Little more than a year after ChatGPT made its seismic impact on business and wider society, questions about the safety of AI have become a pressing issue for investors in the 2024 proxy season.

Several AI-related shareholder proposals have been prompted by growing concern about the risks that rapid advances in this field pose to core institutions and the fundamentals of democracy and human rights.

The nearly 20 proposals submitted since late last year have mainly been aimed at companies ushering in the age of AI, including Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Apple, Microsoft and Meta Platforms. The signatories are seeking greater transparency regarding how the technology is being applied at those companies, as well as the disclosure of ethical guidelines governing its use.

While these proposals have tended to come from the investment community's more socially focused members, their concern about the ramifications of AI usage reflects a sentiment shared among investors more broadly, according to finance and governance experts.

Courteney Keatinge is senior director of ESG research at Glass Lewis, a proxy advisory firm. She summarises the situation as "just a matter of investors getting a better understanding of how companies are using AI and companies being better able to communicate how they're using it".

That's easier said than done, of course. Companies don't seem keen to meet investors' demands by expanding on the voluntary disclosures that some have already made. But, given the growing societal pressure on big tech for greater openness in this respect, more formal reporting on AI-based activity is likely.

Investors aren't alone in calling for better governance and more transparency. A range of authorities are seeking to create standards covering the use and development of AI.

The most sweeping of these so far is the EU's Artificial Intelligence Act, approved in March by the European Parliament (see p4). This legislation aims to ensure fundamental rights and safety relating to AI systems. It will apply to any AI-based tool marketed in the EU, regardless of its creator's location.

In February, the UK government published its long-awaited plan for regulating AI. Built on core principles including transparency and accountability, the plan does not mandate legislation.

This past October, President Biden issued an executive order tasking federal agencies with the creation of guidelines for the use of AI. Scores of related bills are pending in the US Congress.

"I'm quite startled by how rapidly this is moving," says Heidi Welsh, executive director of the not-for-profit Sustainable Investments Institute in Washington DC, which tracks ESG-related proposals. "Usually with corporate responsibility issues, things kick around for a couple of years and then a policy slowly emerges."

Yet that's still probably not fast enough for some, including the AFL-CIO. The US trade union federation has adopted shareholder activism as a way to check the proliferation of AI. It has submitted half a dozen proposals seeking disclosures and ethical guidelines from the likes of Netflix, Walt Disney and Warner Bros Discovery.

The role of AI in film and TV production emerged as a contentious issue in last year's labour dispute between creative unions such as the Writers Guild of America and Hollywood's big studios. While the final settlements included protections for workers, the stir caused by the recent release of Sora, OpenAI's text-to-video tool, suggests that industrial strife concerning AI's role in the creative process may well recur.

Another focus of the recent AI proposals is the technology's potential for amplifying misinformation and disinformation, posing a threat to democracies around the world, especially at a time when several major elections are imminent. With this in mind, activist investment firm Arjuna Capital has called on a number of big tech firms to issue annual reports on the risks arising from facilitating misinformation/disinformation and how they would address the problem.

> **We can expect to see increased regulatory scrutiny and, most likely over time, disclosure standards and requirements**

In its formal response to Arjuna Capital's proposal, Microsoft indicated that it already had adequate policies and practices in place to manage such risks. Among other disclosures, it mentioned a new annual report on its AI governance practices – based on a commitment made at a White House meeting of major developers in July 2023 – which will be published by the end of this quarter.

Microsoft, which last year invested $10bn (£8bn) in OpenAI, also downplayed the disbandment of its ethics and society team last year, noting that it still had nearly 350 people working to ensure responsible developments in AI.

Its reply broadly reflects those of other firms that have received AI-related proposals. The general message is that they already have adequate safeguards in place to ensure AI safety and are complying with recent government initiatives in this area.

Two AI proposals have come up for a vote at annual shareholder meetings so far. The AFL-CIO's call for ethics disclosures at Apple drew support from 37.5% of investors. At Microsoft, meanwhile, 21.2% backed Arjuna Capital's proposal focused on AI misinformation.

Even though neither proposal gained the majority approval required for passage, Welsh says she is encouraged by the results – especially the Apple vote – given that the debate is such a new one.

The issue is coming on to the radars of larger, more traditional asset management firms too. A survey of governance specialists working at such institutional investors published by EY in February found that responsible AI had surfaced as an "engagement" priority (in talks with companies) this year, with 19% of respondents citing it.

Research published last year by

> It's about investors getting a better understanding of how companies use AI – and firms getter better at communicating it

ISS-Corporate, part of proxy adviser Institutional Shareholder Services, revealed that, as of September 2023, only about 15% of the S&P 500 were providing any information in proxy statements about their boards' oversight of AI.

Aiming to improve on that percentage, two shareholder proposals were submitted this year to Alphabet and Amazon respectively. One, from socially responsible investor Trillium Management, urged Alphabet to formally empower its board's audit and compliance committee to oversee the company's AI activities and fulfilment of its AI principles. The other, filed by the AFL-CIO, called on Amazon's board to create a new committee to address the perceived risks its AI-based systems posed to human rights.

Although companies do not yet have clear guidelines or disclosure requirements for AI in their financial reporting, that situation will change as the technology becomes ever more material to their businesses. So says Séverine Neervoort, global policy director at the not-for-profit International Corporate Governance Network.

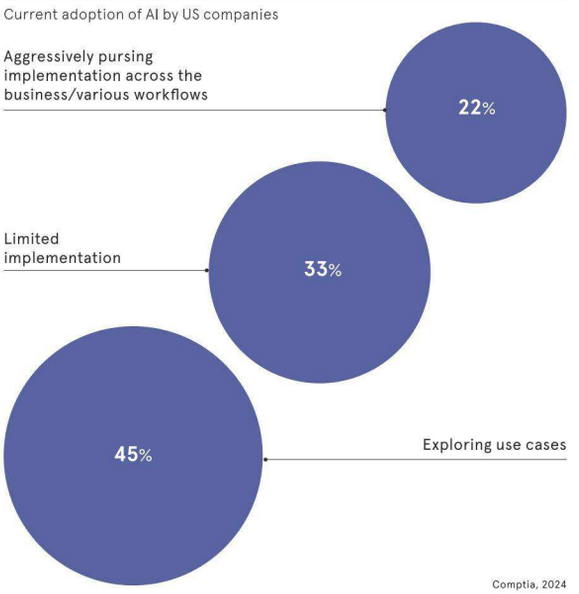
"We can expect to see increased regulatory scrutiny and, most likely over time, disclosure standards and requirements," she predicts.

The recent disclosure rules on cyber risks issued by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) suggest a possible future for AI reporting, according to Keatinge, who foresees "a natural extension" of the regulator's approach to cybersecurity matters.

Nonetheless, she acknowledges that a new set of SEC rules for AI-related disclosures is probably still some way off, given the painstaking nature of the regulatory process.

MORE THAN HALF OF US COMPANIES CLAIM TO BE USING AI

Current adoption of AI by US companies



Comptia, 2024

Commercial feature

Why it's time for law firms to start investing in generative AI

Demand for AI has arrived in the legal industry. Law firms must embrace the change or risk falling behind

As a profession rooted in tradition, the legal industry does not necessarily have a reputation for embracing change. Yet, there is a growing appetite for trustworthy and reliable artificial intelligence (AI) amongst lawyers.

In fact, Goldman Sachs has predicted that the legal industry is likely to be the second most impacted by AI, with 46% of tasks able to be automated by this technology. With this in mind, law firms should start thinking about how AI may intersect with the legal professions' demands.

"Firms are going to have to get comfortable with a different set of skills. The skill is no longer merely drafting a brilliant contract, it is ensuring the contract that has been created correctly meets all the client needs," says Stuart Greenhill, director of segment management at LexisNexis.

According to a survey by LexisNexis in January 2024, more than one-quarter of lawyers in the UK already use generative AI at least once a month. Back in July 2023, this number sat at 11%, showing a considerable mindset shift for an industry known for being risk-averse.

> Firms that embrace generative AI can leapfrog their competitors

So, while AI is already driving change in the legal industry, there are still significant concerns. The biggest challenge to adoption is the risk of hallucination, where the AI model 'hallucinates' something that isn't real.

For example, there have been reported instances where experienced lawyers have experimented with publicly available AI models, resulting in the citation of non-existent cases.

Another notable challenge is security. Given that law firms hold privileged information about their clients, there is a risk of it leaking into the public domain if lawyers are using AI that is insecure.

To help mitigate these issues, lawyers need to ensure they are using legally grounded generative AI systems that have been trained on legal data and do not retain confidential information. LexisNexis, for example, has created Lexis+ AI, a legal-specific AI engine. The AI model is built to access all of LexisNexis' legal research and practical guidance content, so when lawyers are seeking information, they can be assured it is generated from an authoritative source.

"Anything that our AI engine generates is cited and comes with a clickable link directly to the underlying source, so lawyers can check and be confident that what it says is accurate," says Greenhill.

This can significantly shorten the time spent on legal research tasks, for instance, quickly helping a junior associate understand what case law applies to a particular situation.

"Unless the case has been summarised for you, you will have to read it and that could take 20 minutes, it could take three hours, it could take a day or longer, depending on how big the case is," says Greenhill. "Now you can just click a button and AI summarises the case."

By freeing up time for junior associates, they can be assigned higher value work such as contract drafting or even business development and bringing in new clients, Greenhill adds. This speeds up training and gives law firms access to more advanced lawyers faster, elevating the internal talent pool.

So, the opportunities for law firms to gain a competitive advantage over their peers by moving faster on AI are significant.

"Firms that embrace generative AI can leapfrog their competitors because they are going to be more competitive, they're going to be able to invest more time in building relationships with their clients and therefore be able to spend more time on the higher value work," says Greenhill.

This is a pivotal moment for law firms and those that don't embrace technology run the risk of getting left behind.

"Client expectations are climbing – with a growing demand for work to be delivered faster and with a higher level of service. Firms need to continually innovate or else be overtaken by their competition," Greenhill says.

By investing in the right tools, law firms can get ahead of this trend and ensure they are on the leading edge of the legal AI opportunity.

For more information please visit lexisnexis.co.uk

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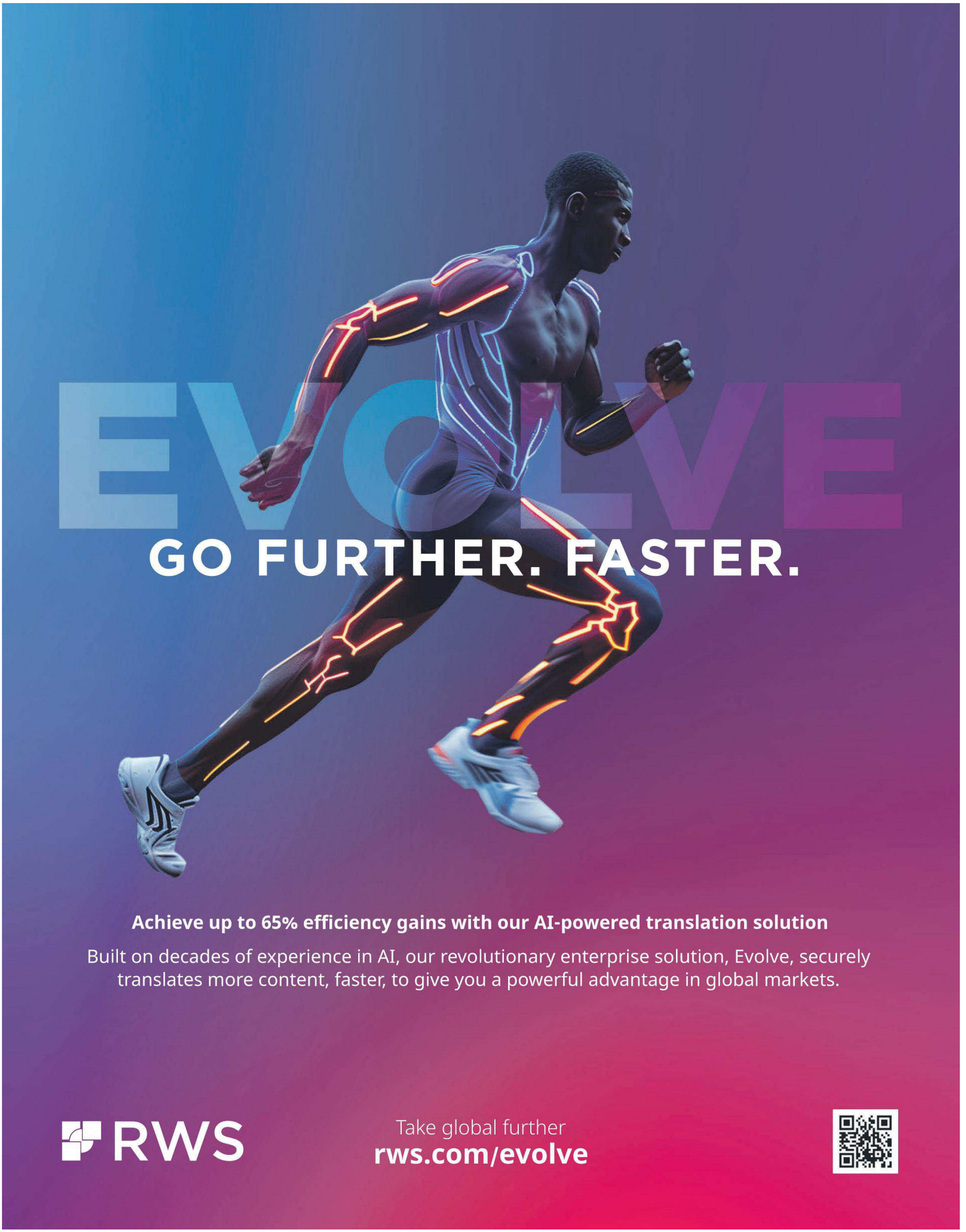
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