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THE WEEK

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THE BEST OF THE BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

The attack on Trump Will he come back stronger?

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SEAMASTER AQUA TERRA
Co-Axial Master Chronometer

LEGENDS INSPIRE LEGENDS

Throughout a career, every swimmer has their own lane to follow. In his lane, Michael Phelps became the most decorated Olympian in history, achieving 28 medals and some of the fastest times ever recorded. Now, a new champion has entered the pool. Léon Marchand has already conquered his first World Record and is carving his own path through the water towards his dreams at Paris 2024. An inspiration to the next generation. Just like the legend before him.



What happened

The Trump shooting

Donald Trump officially secured the Republican presidential nomination this week, days after surviving an assassination attempt at a rally in Pennsylvania. Appearing at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee with a bandage on his bullet-grazed right ear, Trump announced his choice of running mate as the 39-year-old Ohio senator J.D. Vance. The author of a bestselling memoir about growing up in rural poverty, Vance was once a fierce critic of Trump, but is now a leading backer – and a prominent opponent of military aid to Ukraine.

The gunman was identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks, who lived 43 miles away and worked in the kitchen of a care home. Crooks was a registered Republican voter, but had, in 2021, donated \$15 to a liberal campaign group. He had climbed onto the roof of a bottle factory outside the rally's perimeter fence and fired at Trump with an AR-15 rifle – killing an audience member and critically injuring two others – before being shot dead by Secret Service agents. As attention focused on the security lapses that had enabled him to carry out his attack, investigators pored over the details of his life, in an effort to determine his motive.



Evan Vucci's powerful photo

What the editorials said

The attempted assassination of Donald Trump “was a shocking moment for America”, said the LA Times. Not since the shooting of Ronald Reagan 43 years ago had anyone made a serious attempt on the life of a former or serving president. As Trump wrote on his Truth Social site: “It is incredible that such an act can take place in our Country.” Yet it wasn't entirely surprising, said The Economist. This campaign had been “seething with contempt and chaos”, and political violence has been rising in the US: witness the attack on the Capitol in 2021, and the hammer attack on the then-Democrat speaker Nancy Pelosi's husband in 2022.

The fear now is that the country will move “in an even darker direction”, said the FT. Although past attacks on presidents have acted as a “wake-up call”, US politics is currently so fractious, this one could lead to yet more “bitter rhetoric”, and further acts of violence. Trump's initial statements were impressively restrained, as were those of President Biden, said The Wall Street Journal. Let's hope their parties follow that lead. Democrats should stop presenting Trump as a fascist, and Republicans should tone down their inflammatory language too. The country must not miss this opportunity to pull out of its current “partisan death spiral”.

What happened

The King's Speech

King Charles set out the new Labour Government's legislative plans on Wednesday. At the State Opening of Parliament, the King unveiled 40 bills that Keir Starmer said would “take the brakes off Britain”. The package included a raft of planning reforms aimed at accelerating the building of houses and infrastructure, and a bill to allow VAT to be charged on private school fees. There were also bills paving the way for the launch of GB Energy (a state-owned energy firm) and a Border Security Command to crack down on people smugglers. Other bills will strip voting rights from hereditary peers; stop people who were born after 2009 from ever buying cigarettes; beef up workers' rights; toughen penalties for shoplifting; and gradually renationalise rail services.

Separately, ministers used Labour's second week in office to unveil a series of policy changes in key areas. The Energy

Secretary, Ed Miliband, gave the green light to three massive solar farms in the east of England that Tory ministers had blocked. The Government also withdrew official support for a new coal mine being planned at Whitehaven in Cumbria, and



was reported to be seeking legal advice about how to implement its policy of stopping new drilling for oil and gas in the North Sea. Wes Streeting, the Health Secretary, vowed to make permanent a temporary ban on private clinics supplying puberty blockers to under-18s; and Deputy PM Angela Rayner offered councils without devolution deals the opportunity to ask for new powers from Whitehall, as part of a “devolution revolution”.

Last week, Starmer made his debut as PM on the world stage at the Nato summit in Washington. He was greeted warmly by leaders including Emmanuel Macron, Volodymyr Zelensky, and Joe Biden, with whom he held talks for almost an hour in the Oval Office. On Thursday, he was due to welcome some 50 European leaders for a summit at Blenheim Palace, where he was expected to begin work on improving the UK's strained relations with some EU countries.

It wasn't all bad

A lost slice of Celtic rainforest in Pembrokeshire is to be replanted and restored to its ancient glory. The 146-acre site, set around two standing stones and an abandoned farmhouse near Fishguard, is now mainly grassland, but will be planted with an array of broadleaf and other species as part of a project by the Wildlife Trust. “The aim is somebody walking through the site in 30 to 50 years' time won't say, ‘I wonder who planted this.’ People will say ‘what a lovely place,’” said a spokesman.

Britain's oldest surviving recipient of the Victoria Cross – and the last person alive to have been awarded it during the Second World War – was honoured with a flypast of his nursing home in Aberdeen this week, to mark 80 years since the act of valour that won him the award. In 1944, John Cruickshank, now 104, was piloting a Catalina amphibious aircraft that was providing submarine cover for ships during an unsuccessful mission to sink the German battleship Tirpitz. During an attack on a German U-boat, the Catalina came under heavy fire. It was damaged, and his navigator was killed, but despite being wounded in 72 places and bleeding heavily, Cruickshank carried on, and sank the U-boat. The flypast also flew over the cemetery where his navigator, John Dixon, is buried.



Rollout has begun of a new, affordable malaria vaccine that could save hundreds of thousands of lives. The R21 vaccine, which was developed by Oxford University in partnership with India's Serum Institute, is the first to meet the World Health Organisation's target of 75% efficacy at preventing the disease. It costs £3 per shot and is given to children under the age of two. The first doses will go to infants in Ivory Coast and South Sudan, but 15 African countries in all are expected to introduce the vaccine this year.

What the commentators said

“This could have been the most catastrophic event in modern political history,” said Alan Dershowitz in *The Daily Telegraph*. There’s no telling what “turmoil” would have been unleashed had the attack succeeded – and it “came within centimetres” of doing so, thanks to the Secret Service’s lamentable failure to watch every rooftop in rifle range. Trump’s supporters are saying that he had to rely on God to save him. The attack’s impact will still be profound, said Fraser Nelson in *The Spectator*, not least because it has delivered what is sure to become “one of the defining images of American history”. Evan Vucci’s photo of Trump with his security detail – face bloodied, fist raised, the US flag behind him – is a “perfect metaphor” for his campaign.

As for Joe Biden, the attack may help him in the short term, said Anne McElvoy on inews, by taking the wind out of the Democrat campaign to unseat him as their candidate. But if his internal critics do fail in their efforts, he now has less chance than ever of winning re-election, said Arwa Mahdawi in *The Guardian*. Despite being only three years younger, Trump had already successfully positioned himself as the more capable, vigorous candidate; “that contrast has been extraordinarily heightened”. If you fed “all-American tough guy president” into an AI image generator, it could hardly spit out anything as powerful as Trump, 60 seconds after being shot, jumping up, pumping his fist and appearing to mouth: “Fight, fight, fight.” The odds on a Trump victory have shortened appreciably, said Nate Silver on *Silver Bulletin*. “Trump fans will now walk over glass for their martyr.” And Republican-leaning voters who previously disdained him will find him a more sympathetic character now, and easier to vote for.

The “biggest question” is what will Trump do now, said Edward Luce in the FT. His position on gun rights won’t change, despite the ubiquity of AR-15-type semi-automatic rifles of the type that nearly killed him (there are an estimated 44 million in the US). But will he keep up his statesmanlike talk of unity, or will he seek to raise the temperature? Vance has already claimed that Democratic rhetoric “led directly” to the attack. And Trump has long vowed “retribution” against his enemies if he is returned to the White House. America is staring into the abyss.

What the commentators said

“Even the most partisan Tory would have to admit that Starmer has made a successful start” in No. 10, said Leo McKinstry in the *Daily Mail*. He “cut an impressive figure” in Washington, and shows no sign of being “paralysed by the burdens of the job”, as Theresa May seemed to be, or of being temperamentally unsuited to it, like the “reckless” Liz Truss or the “neurotic” Gordon Brown. Moreover, his Government seems commendably open to radical thinking: as evidenced by its appointment of the renowned surgeon Ara Darzi, and the respected Blair-era adviser Paul Corrigan, to help reform the NHS. The “sheer number” of bills in the King’s Speech was intended to reinforce the sense of energy that Starmer is keen to cultivate, said John Rentoul in *The Independent*. But what will “make or break” his Government will be its ability to deliver. Housebuilding targets “will not lay a single brick”; legislation alone won’t slash NHS waiting lists; and nor will a new body with “Command” in its title stop small boat crossings.

Labour strategists know that, and are trying to buy Starmer time by trashing the Tories’ record, said Andrew Rawnsley in *The Observer*. They want to emulate George Osborne, who deflected blame for unpopular Tory policies after the 2010 elections by claiming that they were a result of Labour’s “fiscal incontinence”. The more Labour can “dramatise the dreadful legacy of the Conservatives”, the thinking goes, the “more slack [it] may be granted by voters”. Still, there are limits, said *The Times*. The “nothing seems to work” narrative has been a potent one in recent times, and helped propel Labour to power. What people don’t want, however, is a new Government “wallowing in the gloom of its inheritance and dragging the national mood down”. On the contrary, they want to know how Labour will build on recent positive economic news (rising growth, target-level inflation) to deliver “genuine improvements” in their lives.

What next?

Trump received ringing endorsements this week from two of his biggest rivals for the Republican nomination, Nikki Haley and Ron DeSantis. Both gave speeches eulogising him at the GOP convention. Trump was also endorsed by Elon Musk – breaking the convention that social media bosses remain impartial in elections. It was reported that Musk plans to give \$45m a month to a Trump-supporting campaign committee – though he indicated this was fake news.

Many Republicans see Vance as key to attracting votes in “blue wall” states such as Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, says *The Times*. His selection is also a sign that Maga politics “will pass onto the next generation of party leaders”.

What next?

The King’s Speech also contained bills to allow local leaders to bring bus services under their control; to end no-fault evictions; to make water firm bosses personally liable for their companies’ lawbreaking; and to introduce a “duty of candour” on public servants and authorities to prevent cover-ups of scandals.

Starmer is under increasing pressure from Labour MPs to end the two-child benefit cap. The Institute for Fiscal Studies says that doing so would cost £3.4bn and lift 500,000 children out of poverty; but Starmer has so far resisted calls to act.

THE WEEK

Since the attack on Donald Trump, commentators have looked back at previous attempts on the lives of prominent American politicians, for clues as to what might happen next. Teddy Roosevelt, for instance, who took a bullet to the chest while campaigning for a controversial third term in 1912. His life was saved by his glasses case and a folded copy of the long speech he was about to deliver. Like Trump, he had some bravado, and insisted on making that speech, with blood seeping through his shirt, before receiving medical help. “I’m fit as a bull moose,” he declared. His courage boosted his popularity (and may have helped win him his spot on Mount Rushmore), but Woodrow Wilson won the election. Ronald Reagan was gunned down in Washington in 1981. “Honey, I forgot to duck,” the president quipped to his horrified wife, Nancy. Although seriously wounded, he was back at work 13 days later and was re-elected by a landslide in 1984. But historians don’t think his resilience after the shooting had much to do with that. Then there is George Wallace, the Alabama governor notorious for his fiery populist rhetoric and staunch defence of Jim Crow laws in the Civil Rights era. He was shot while running for the Democrat nomination in 1972. Left paralysed, he withdrew from the race, was subsequently “born again”, and repented of his racist views. It’s doubtful that whatever lies in Trump’s future involves that level of transformation. But at a febrile time in US politics, Wallace’s story serves, at least, as a reminder that America has been here before.

Caroline Law

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Controversy of the week

Releasing criminals

“It is not an announcement that any sane politician would wish to make, or member of the public to hear,” said The Times: “that thousands of prisoners will be released early in their sentences because jails are full to bursting and the space is urgently required for those guilty of more heinous crimes”. Yet this was the message that Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood had to deliver last week, just days into her new job. The prison estate in England and Wales is “failing”, and Labour has been “handed a poisoned chalice of rare toxicity”. Of the nearly 84,500 places in men’s prisons, all but some 700 are full. If prisons were to run out of capacity, “police cells would fill up, courts would stop cases, and the police would find themselves unable to arrest dangerous criminals”. Mahmood’s temporary solution is to release thousands of prisoners who would usually have been let out halfway through their sentences after they have served only 40%. This will not include those guilty of serious violent or sexual offences; but it seems that some who have committed assault, burglary and robbery will be released.



Shabana Mahmood: “poisoned chalice”

New governments love blaming everything on the last one, said Sean O’Grady in The Independent. But in this case, the Tories richly deserve it. Prisons have been starved of funds since 2010; inspectors regularly report on overcrowding, and horrendous, dangerous conditions. Rishi Sunak’s justice secretary, Alex Chalk, had prepared an identical release plan earlier this year but, he has revealed, Sunak “blocked” it, as he was worried about the political reaction before the election. Britain incarcerates more people than anywhere else in western Europe, said Stephen Bush in the FT. To a certain extent, “prison works”, to quote Michael Howard, the minister who started us down this road in 1993: crime has fallen dramatically since then. But it’s very expensive, and the real problem is that, in the past decade-and-a-half, Britain has tried to pursue an authoritarian prisons policy on “a reform-minded minister’s budget”. “The results are, as you’d expect, a disaster.” Prisons are in a disgraceful state, and reoffending rates are very high: nearly half of inmates go on to reoffend.

Turning the situation around will require “an end to the ratchet of tabloid-pleasing longer sentences, and a serious attempt at rehabilitation”, said Camilla Cavendish in the FT. The Government has signalled its intentions by appointing James Timpson, whose family business has successfully recruited thousands of prison leavers, as Prisons Minister: he is a proponent of the Dutch system of community sentencing. It won’t be cheap, said Anne Owers, former chief inspector of prisons, in The Guardian. New ministers inherit “broken and demoralised” prison and probation systems, as well as chronic underfunding of linked services – the courts, housing, education and addiction support. We certainly need to build more and better prisons. But that is only one aspect of a much wider malaise.

Spirit of the age

Wimbledon is hosting its first e-sports tennis tournament in an effort to attract more young fans. Qualifying rounds involving players from all over Europe, the UK and North America began this month; those who get through will be invited to compete in in-person finals at the Wimbledon Media Theatre in September. The e-champion will win a gold-plated PS5 etched with their name by Wimbledon’s official engraver.

Britain has elected the most irreligious parliament in history, according to analysis by the group Humanists UK. It found that about 40% of MPs chose to make a secular affirmation rather than take a religious oath on being sworn into the Commons this month, up from 24% in 2019.

Good week for:

Amazon, after the GMB narrowly lost its bid to formally represent workers at the company’s warehouse in Coventry. The union needed a majority, but it fell just short: 49.5% of the 2,600 workers who took part voted in favour. The GMB claimed it had lost by 28 votes, and accused Amazon – which is notoriously averse to its staff organising – of hiring hundreds of new workers in order to frustrate its bid. Amazon denies the charge.

Bad week for:

Jack Black, the actor and musician, who was forced to cancel his comedy rock band’s world tour after his bandmate made a joke about the attempted assassination of Donald Trump. On stage in Australia with Tenacious D, Black presented Kyle Gass, 64, with a birthday cake and asked him to make a wish. “Don’t miss Trump next time,” Gass replied. He has since offered a profuse apology and been dropped by his talent agency.

Ford, which enraged fans of retro cars with its revamped Capri. The “legend is back”, it had proclaimed. But those expecting an update on the low-slung, two-door coupé that was loved by boy racers in the 1970s and 1980s, were appalled to find that the new Capri is a four-door SUV. “Stop ruining iconic cars just so that you can sell school-run cars,” said one furious X/Twitter user.

Strictly Come Dancing, after another of its professional dancers left the show, amid a BBC investigation into allegations of abusive behaviour. Giovanni Pernice left earlier this year; Graziano Di Prima seems to have been fired last week after being accused of “gross misconduct”. A third dancer is under investigation.

Gething resigns

Vaughan Gething announced his resignation as First Minister of Wales this week, days after four members of his government resigned in protest at his leadership. Gething (pictured) made history in March, when he was elected leader of Welsh Labour, and so became the first black leader of any European nation. But from the moment he took office, he was dogged by questions about his decision to accept a £200,000 donation from a businessman who’d been convicted of environmental crimes, and about how WhatsApp messages he’d sent during the Covid pandemic had come to be deleted. In May, he sacked one of his ministers, Hannah Blythyn, after messages that seemed to undermine his version of events, appeared in the press – though she protested her innocence (and the news site in question has since denied that she was the source).



Plaid Cymru withdrew from a cooperation agreement with Labour, and Gething lost a confidence vote. The ministers who resigned had warned that Labour could not “get back on track” with him at the helm.

Water bills to rise

Water bills in England and Wales will go up by an average of £94 over the next five years, under plans set out by the regulator Ofwat. The rise is less than a third of the amount the water companies requested, and is equivalent to £19 per household, per year (see page 36). This week, Ofwat announced it had opened enforcement cases into four more water companies. This means that all 11 companies in England and Wales that have a waste-water component are now being investigated over potentially illegal sewage spills.

Paris

Seine swim: As the Olympic torch arrived in Paris this week, the city's mayor, Anne Hidalgo, made good on her long-standing promise to take a dip in the Seine, to show that its water is clean enough for the open swimming events. Since 2015, \$1.5bn has been invested in cleaning up the river, including the construction of a huge basin, capable of storing 50,000 cubic metres of water, by Austerlitz station. Dubbed Paris's "underground cathedral", this will store untreated wastewater and storm water that would otherwise spew into the Seine when Paris's sewers are overwhelmed by heavy rain. Potentially harmful levels of E. coli were still being detected in the Seine in early July. However, officials said that, with dryer weather, acceptable standards should be reached before the start of the Games on 26 July and, on Wednesday, Hidalgo felt confident enough to get into the water and swim about 100 metres, switching between front crawl and breaststroke.

Dublin

Protest turns violent: Fifteen people were charged with public order offences in Dublin this week, after a demonstration against an accommodation centre for asylum seekers turned violent. More than 100 people, some of them masked, had gathered at the site of a disused paint factory, in the north of the city, which is due to be converted into housing for 1,500 asylum seekers – and where a protest camp aimed at halting the work was established earlier this year. Vehicles including a digger were set alight and, as the incident escalated, bricks and fireworks were thrown at police, who used pepper spray in an effort to disperse the crowd. The Taoiseach, Simon Harris, described the riot as "reprehensible", but more protesters gathered at the site the next day, carrying banners reading "protect our children" and "border control is everyone's duty".

Paris

Fractured politics: President Macron accepted the resignation this week of his prime minister, Gabriel Attal, and his government – marking the formal beginning of a transition period in which the outgoing administration will govern in a caretaker capacity until a new executive is appointed. In the past, such transition periods have not lasted more than a few days, but in the current landscape, it is not clear who will form a government. The hastily assembled green-red New Popular Front coalition unexpectedly won the most seats in this month's snap parliamentary elections, but it is well short of having an absolute majority, and its disparate members have been struggling to agree on a possible prime minister. This week, the hard-left France Unbowed, led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, accused the centre-left Socialist Party of inflexibility, after it vetoed all its suggestions.



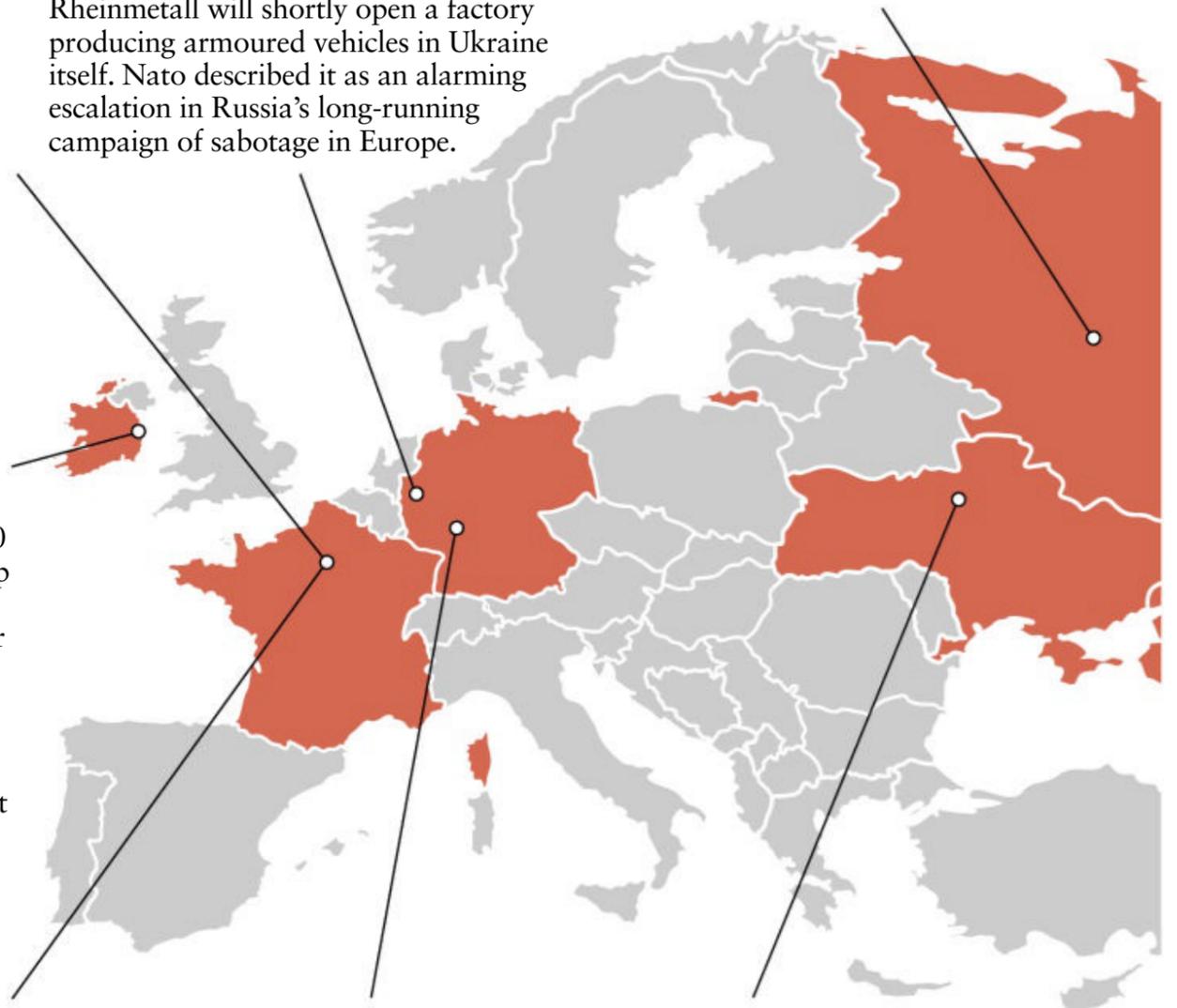
Düsseldorf, Germany

Assassination plot: Russia planned to assassinate the chief executive of a German arms manufacturer that is a major supplier of arms to Ukraine, it was claimed last week. Sources report

that US intelligence uncovered the plot to kill Armin Papperger, of Rheinmetall, along with less well-developed plans to kill other defence industry executives, and tipped off their German counterparts. Papperger (pictured) may have been targeted because Rheinmetall will shortly open a factory producing armoured vehicles in Ukraine itself. Nato described it as an alarming escalation in Russia's long-running campaign of sabotage in Europe.

Moscow

Widow's warrant: Five months after her husband's death in a Russian prison in the Arctic Circle, Alexei Navalny's widow has been issued with an arrest warrant by a court in Moscow. Yulia Navalnaya, who lives with her two children in a secret location outside Russia, stands accused of being a member of an "extremist" group. The warrant means that she would be arrested and detained were she to set foot in Russia. Navalnaya has been a vocal critic of the Kremlin since her husband's death, which she alleges was ordered by President Putin. She was unable to attend Navalny's funeral in Moscow, for fear of repercussions. She responded to the arrest warrant by reiterating her claim that Putin is "a murderer and a war criminal".



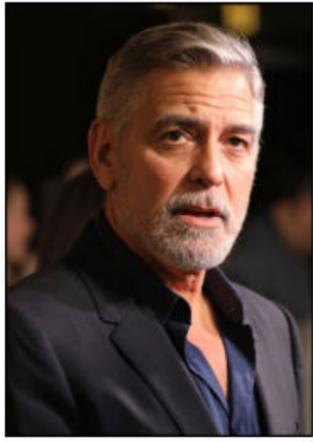
Frankfurt, Germany

Rail renewal: Germany has launched a six-year, €40bn overhaul of its railways, which have become a byword for breakdowns and delays following decades of

underinvestment – as football fans travelling to games during the Euros discovered. "We're no longer just patching things up, we're completely renewing everything," said transport minister Volker Wissing this week, as the state-run operator Deutsche Bahn began work on the first stage – a €1.3bn renewal of the 43-mile stretch between Frankfurt and Mannheim, which is expected to take five months.

Kyiv

Jets delivered: Kyiv is finally poised to take delivery of its first US-made F-16 fighter jets, almost a year after they were first promised. In a statement issued during last week's Nato summit in Washington, the Danish and Dutch governments said the "transfer process" of the jets had begun, following months of training for Ukrainian pilots and negotiations about how they will be used. The Dutch pledged an initial batch of 24 jets; Denmark has said it will send 19. In total, Ukraine's allies are expected to provide up to 80 F-16s. Few analysts think that the jets will be a "game-changer" in the war, but they are expected to help Kyiv fend off Russian aerial attacks. Separately, it was announced that US hypersonic, SM-6, and Tomahawk cruise missiles will periodically be stationed in Germany from 2026, for the first time since the Cold War – a decision that sparked anger in Moscow.

**Washington DC**

Biden respite: Joe Biden's campaign team has suspended a planned \$50m advertising campaign in swing states that would have depicted Donald Trump as a would-be "dictator" and a threat to democracy. In the days following the attempted assassination of the former president, Democrat campaign staff were also told to avoid directly criticising him, and Biden and his VP, Kamala Harris, pulled out of planned campaign speeches.

The pause in campaigning gave Biden a respite from the weeks of bruising questions he has faced about his fitness for re-election. The 81-year-old's mental acuity had been challenged by reporters at last week's Nato summit in Washington, where he introduced Ukraine's President Zelensky as President Putin (he corrected himself), and referred to Harris as "Vice President Trump". The day before, George Clooney (pictured), a major Democrat donor, had written an op-ed in *The New York Times* in which he urged Biden to step aside – a call that was publicly echoed by 19 Democrats in congress. But in a TV interview on Monday, Biden reiterated his determination to carry on, and there was speculation among Democrats that the Trump shooting had effectively derailed their campaign to replace Biden by starving it of momentum.

Santa Fe, New Mexico

Baldwin free: Alec Baldwin will face no more criminal charges relating to the death of Halyna Hutchins, following the collapse of his trial in Santa Fe last week. The actor accidentally shot Hutchins on the set of the film *Rust* in 2021, when a prop gun he was holding went off. He said he did not know it was loaded, and had not pulled the trigger. Prosecutors, however, accused him of failing to follow gun protocols, and charged him with involuntary manslaughter. But during the trial last week, his lawyers learnt that the prosecutors had failed to disclose the existence of a cache of live bullets that had allegedly been found on set, and handed to the authorities. Citing the Brady rule, which requires the prosecution to turn over any material that could be relevant to the defence, they successfully called for the case to be dismissed.

Palm Beach, Florida

Trump case dismissed: The federal judge in Donald Trump's classified documents case dismissed all the charges against him this week, in a ruling that stunned legal experts. After dozens of top-secret files were found in Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort in 2021, Merrick Garland, the attorney general, appointed a special counsel, Jack Smith, to prosecute the former president. In the US, independent counsels are often appointed to work on politically sensitive cases, and usually by the attorney general. But in her ruling, Judge Aileen Cannon – a right-wing Trump appointee – argued that Smith's appointment should have been approved by the senate, since no federal law specifically gives attorney generals the power to make such appointments. Her ruling may be overturned on appeal, but it will significantly delay the case.

**San Salvador**

Children jailed: Thousands of children have been arbitrarily detained as part of El Salvador's draconian crackdown on criminal gangs, a new report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) has claimed. It estimates that since President Bukele launched his drive in 2022, more than

3,000 children and teenagers have been detained, at least 1,000 of whom have been sentenced to between two and 12 years in juvenile detention facilities. Many of the children, HRW says, had "no apparent" connection to gangs, and were convicted after being coerced into giving false confessions.

Washington DC

China tensions: Nato leaders issued their strongest condemnation to date of China's role in the Ukraine War last week, when they met for the 32-member alliance's 75th anniversary summit in Washington. In a joint declaration, they accused Beijing of acting as a "decisive enabler" of Moscow's war effort – citing its "large-scale support for Russia's defence industrial base" – and demanded that it "cease all material and political support to Russia's war effort". In response, Beijing accused Nato of having "a Cold War mentality", of "spreading falsehoods" and of "smearing" China with "malicious intent". In the days afterwards, Chinese warplanes taking part in military drills passed close to Taiwan, and two Russian warships arrived in China for joint naval exercises. Nato's declaration also reaffirmed that Ukraine is on an "irreversible path" to membership; members agreed to provide Kyiv with \$43.3bn in military aid over the coming year.

**Corumbá, Brazil**

Early fires: Scientists have sounded the alarm over the wildfires that are laying waste to the Pantanal – the world's largest freshwater wetland, most of which lies in Brazil. Normally, the wildfire season peaks in August or September, but fires have already been raging for months, and some 1.8 million acres of the Brazilian Pantanal – an area covering 42 million acres, and a key habitat for species such as jaguars and giant armadillos – have burned. Experts are now warning that the season could end up being worse even than 2020's, when a third of the Pantanal was destroyed and 17 million vertebrates died. Most fires start as small blazes set by farmers to replenish land; but scientists say climate change and high temperatures are making them more intense.

Yaoundé

Daughter's defiance: The daughter of Cameroon's president has come out as a lesbian and says she wants to help change her nation's anti-gay laws, among the harshest in Africa. Brenda Biya, who lives in Switzerland, posted a picture on Instagram of herself and Layyons Valença, a Brazilian model, sharing a kiss and captioned, "I'm crazy about you and I want the world to know." The post has caused an outcry in Cameroon: an anti-LGBTQ+ group has accused Biya of "promoting and inciting" homosexuality and lodged a complaint with the public prosecutor. Biya has taken down the post after receiving angry phone calls from her brother, mother and father, but still hopes her story will help lead to the repeal of the anti-gay laws. Her father, Paul Biya, president since 1982, is 91 and the world's oldest head of state.

Khan Younis, Palestinian Territories

Camp strike: More than 90 people were killed and at least 300 injured in an Israeli air strike that hit a camp for displaced people in the Israeli-designated "safe zone" of al-Mawasi, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Israel says the strike was targeted at a compound where Hamas's elusive military chief, Mohammed Deif (right), was thought to be hiding. Dubbed "The Guest", because he's said to switch where he sleeps every night, Deif was one of the orchestrators of the 7 October massacre in southern Israel, and has been involved in the kidnapping and killing of Israeli citizens for decades. Hamas maintains that Deif was not hit in the attack, but denies reports that it is suspending ceasefire negotiations with Israel in response.



The strike on al-Mawasi came amid one of the deadliest weeks of Israeli aerial attacks on Gaza since the war started nine months ago. The UN Environment Programme estimates that the offensive has so far destroyed a quarter of the buildings in Gaza. Israel has now issued an evacuation order to civilians in Gaza City, in the north of the Strip, an area it had earlier declared pacified. The admission that Hamas has resurfaced there calls into question claims that Israel is close to victory in Gaza.



Beijing

Cooking oil scandal: The revelation that cooking oil sold across China is being transported in tanker trucks that carry liquefied coal, and without them being cleaned out before doing so, has created a furore on Chinese social media. Food safety is a major concern in China following a decade-long series of scandals. The government has promised "severe punishment" for those responsible, but all references to companies implicated in the scandal, both state-run and private, have been censored on social media.

Nairobi

Serial killer: The discovery of nine dismembered bodies at a Nairobi rubbish tip has led to the arrest of a 33-year-old Kenyan man, reportedly tracked down from information found on a victim's phone. Police say Collins Jumaisi Khalusha has confessed to murdering 42 women, his wife included, over the past two years and dumping their bodies on the tip. But Khalusha claimed in court this week he'd been tortured into confessing; and pro-democracy activists, who have seen friends killed or disappeared by police in recent anti-government riots, suggest that the police themselves could have been behind the killings. The police watchdog, noting that the tip is near a police station, said it will look into the possibility that the police might be involved in the deaths.



Mumbai, India

Starry wedding:

The most lavish display of wealth ever exhibited by India's new elite is how the papers billed it. Last week's wedding of Anant Ambani, son of Asia's wealthiest man, Mukesh Ambani, and Radhika Merchant, daughter of a rich industrialist, concluded five months of celebrations costing some \$600m and featuring such stars as Justin Bieber, Adele and Rihanna. Guests flying in to the three-day event included the Kardashians, Mike Tyson, the Beckhams, and ex-PMs Tony Blair and Boris Johnson. But many locals were enraged when police shut down busy streets in the city centre for the event.



Brisbane, Australia

Spy charges: In the first case brought under strict new espionage laws introduced in 2018, an Australian soldier and her husband have been charged with spying for Russia. Kira Korolev, an information systems technician in the Australian Defence Force – aided by her husband Igor, a self-employed labourer – is alleged to have tried to access classified defence information and pass it on to Moscow. Both are Australian citizens born in Russia who moved to Australia more than a decade ago. Each could face up to 15 years in jail if convicted of espionage.

Tolerating differences

Taffy Brodesser-Akner has a busy career: she's a staff writer on *The New York Times*, and her novels include the bestseller *Fleishman Is in Trouble*. But her sisters lead a radically different life to hers, because as children, they joined a sect of ultra-Orthodox Judaism. It was their mother who first turned to Hasidism, she told Julia Llewellyn Smith in *The Times*. Her sisters happily followed suit, but Taffy was shocked by this turn of events, and held out. "On Tuesday nights I would sneak downstairs where we still kept the television, and would watch [the drama] *Thirtysomething*, so I would know how a secular, normal adult would act once I was able to leave the house. That was my dream and I wanted to hit the ground running." She did exactly that, yet despite the yawning gap between them, she and her sisters have remained close. It's what has made her into a journalist, she says. "It made me able to tolerate other people's views, no matter how extreme, and reconcile that I still love them."

Kevin Bacon's disguise

Having been a Hollywood star for decades, Kevin Bacon began to fantasise about being able to go about his life unrecognised. Putting on a hat and dark glasses didn't work; so he commissioned a special-effects artist, who made him fake teeth and a prosthetic nose. This worked a treat, he told *Vanity Fair*. In a shopping centre in Los

Angeles, not a soul recognised him. He was elated at first. But then a strange sensation came over him: the feeling of being invisible. "People were kind of pushing past me, not being nice," he recalls. "Nobody said, 'I love you.' I had to wait in line to, I don't know, buy a coffee or whatever. I was like, 'This sucks. I want to go back to being famous.'"

The prison consultant

Every morning, the American "prison consultant" Sam Mangel opens his emails to find a new list of demands from his clients, says Josie Ensor in *The Sunday Times*. One might want a quieter cell; another some phone credit; a third might be after a cushy job in the prison library. While lawyers work to keep their clients out of jail, "prison consultants" such as Mangel help theirs navigate what happens after they're convicted. A former inmate himself – he served a prison term for fraud – he works with white-collar criminals, "the criminal 1%", and his high-profile clients include Sam Bankman-Fried, the cryptocurrency fraudster, and Steve Bannon, Donald Trump's former adviser. Often, these people get sent to low-security jails, with sports facilities and nice grounds, but it's still scary, and a big shock to the system. "My clients are used to getting what they want, so it's a difficult adjustment becoming just an eight-digit number," he says. His advice, however, is pretty straightforward: "Be a little fish in a big pond."



Kiran Shah may have appeared in more blockbuster movies than anyone else on Earth, says Steve Rose in *The Guardian*. The world's smallest stuntman (he's under 4ft 2in), he began his film career in 1976 after seeing an advert for a casting call. "It was a sci-fi film looking for a little guy," he recalls. He went along and met a nervous young man named George Lucas, who asked him to get into a bin and move about in it. He later realised that he'd been auditioning for the role of R2-D2, and it went to Kenny Baker; but the casting director liked him, and got him an agent. Since then, he has scarcely stopped working: he was an Ewok in *Return of the Jedi*; he doubled Bilbo Baggins and Frodo in the *Lord of the Rings* films (pictured), and was the stunt double for all the children in *Titanic*, which meant sliding off decks, running down corridors full of water and being carried onto a lifeboat by Billy Zane. He also stood in for the 6ft 4in actor Christopher Reeve in *Superman* (1978). For that film, he was a perspective double, used to show the "Man of Steel" flying at a distance. This, he says, was a particularly happy time: he got on well with Reeve, and the pair would sneak off for cigarette breaks together, both dressed in their Superman outfits. Now 67, Shah reckons he has been pretty lucky. "Things happened to me that shouldn't have really happened, but they did. And it's been fun."

**Castaway of the week**

This week's edition of *Radio 4's Desert Island Discs* featured the composer Errollyn Wallen

- 1 *Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92 – IV: Allegro Con Brio* by Beethoven, performed by André Previn and the LSO
- 2 *Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered* by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, performed by Ella Fitzgerald
- 3 *L'Oiseau de feu* (from *The Firebird*) by Stravinsky, performed by the Bergen Philharmonic (cond. Andrew Litton)
- 4 *I Am Sitting in a Room*, written and performed by Alvin Lucier
- 5* *Concerto for 2 Violins in D minor, BWV 1043. II. Largo ma non tanto* by Bach, performed by Itzhak Perlman, Isaac Stern and the New York Philharmonic (cond. Zubin Mehta)
- 6 *Signed, Sealed, Delivered (I'm Yours)* by Stevie Wonder, Lee Garrett, Syreeta Wright, Lula Mae Hardaway, performed by Stevie Wonder
- 7 *What's up Doc*, written and performed by Errollyn Wallen
- 8 *Peter Grimes, Op. 33, Act III, Scene 7 (Mister Swallow!)* by Britten, performed by the Bergen Philharmonic (cond. Edward Gardner)

Book: a collection of Bach sheet music

Luxury: Wigmore Hall

* Choice if allowed only one record

Viewpoint:**Southgate's legacy**

"When England returned home from the 1990 World Cup in Italy, the crowd that had assembled at Luton Airport to greet them was vast. There were 100,000 people around the airport and 250,000 on the streets. Yes, fourth-placed England were given an open-top bus reception. We were more easily pleased then. Indeed, it has got to the point where we are not happy unless England win. Nothing but a trophy is good enough, now. That is where Gareth Southgate has taken this team, to a place where second against Spain wasn't good enough. This is a reflection of his success. It may be a curse for his successor, but it pays a direct compliment to his achievements." *Owen Slot in The Times*

Farewell

Frederick Crews, provocative literary critic, died 21 June, aged 91.

Shannen Doherty, actress who starred in *Heathers* and *Beverly Hills 90210*, died 13 July, aged 53.

Sir Jack Petchey CBE, businessman and philanthropist, died 27 June, aged 98.

Bill Viola, pioneering video artist, died 12 July, aged 73.

Dr Ruth Westheimer, America's favourite sex therapist, died 12 July, aged 96.

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A brief history of the modern Olympics

Paris 2024 will be the 30th instalment of the summer Games

What are the Olympics' origins?

The first Olympic Games are traditionally dated to 776BC. Games were held all over ancient Greece; but the most famous were held every four years in the sanctuary at Olympia, in the Peloponnese, as part of a religious festival in honour of Zeus. These Games attracted crowds of tens of thousands, who gathered to watch athletes compete in events such as running, boxing, discus, long jump and pentathlon; to pay homage at the giant gold and ivory statue of Zeus; and to witness the ritual sacrifice of 100 oxen. Athletes would compete, mostly in the nude, for the chance to win a wreath of leaves and to receive a hero's welcome on their return home. But the Games' popularity waned after Greece was conquered by Rome in the 2nd century BC. They ended around AD394, when Theodosius I outlawed pagan celebrations, and weren't held again for another 1,503 years.

How did the modern Games come about?

The word "Olympics" started to be used again for sporting events in England in the Renaissance: the Cotswold Olimpicks were held near Chipping Campden from the early 1600s; the Wenlock Olympian Games, at Much Wenlock in Shropshire, began in 1850. The modern Olympics were the brainchild of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, a Hellenophile French educator and historian with a strong belief in the power of sport to form character and to promote peace between nations; he was greatly inspired by the sporting theme in Thomas Hughes's 1857 novel *Tom Brown's School Days*, and by the Much Wenlock Games, which he visited in 1890. In 1892, de Coubertin proposed reviving the Olympics in Paris, initially with little success. But his efforts led to the formation of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894, and to the first modern Games, in Athens in 1896.

What were the early Games like?

The Athens Games were small – 241 athletes from 14 countries competed – and somewhat chaotic. An Irishman named John Pius Boland won gold in the men's singles tennis having entered on an impulse while on holiday. The next two Games, in Paris in 1900 and in St Louis in 1904, were also fairly minor events: effectively sideshows of, respectively, the World Exhibition and the World Fair. The 1908 London Games were the first in which the modern Olympics began recognisably to emerge. A large stadium was built at White City, and athletes joined an opening ceremony parade behind their national flags for the first time. Crowds of nearly 70,000 watched 110 events in 25 sporting disciplines.

How did the Olympics develop?

They gathered pace, with innovations such as the photo finish (Stockholm, 1912) and the athletes' village (Paris, 1924). There were no Games during the First World War, but the 1920 Antwerp Olympics saw the rings logo, designed by Coubertin to reflect the five continents, used for the first time. The first Winter Olympics were held



The torch relay entering the stadium in Berlin, 1936

at Chamonix in 1924. The Olympic flame first appeared in Amsterdam in 1928, and the podium four years later. But, arguably, the Berlin Olympics in 1936, with its display of Nazi pomp and grandeur, did much to give the Games the status they have today. The torch relay is a tradition invented for Berlin: it was welcomed by 29,000 members of the Hitler Youth, on a seven-mile avenue bedecked with giant swastikas and guarded by 40,000 stormtroopers. Berlin was a major propaganda success for Hitler, although his efforts to advertise the supremacy of the Aryan race were undermined by the African-American sprinter Jesse Owens, who won four gold medals. In 1948, the Paralympics were born at Stoke Mandeville spinal injury hospital in Buckinghamshire.

Were the Games always political?

In theory, no: the Olympics' unofficial mantra is "politics and sport don't mix". But, in practice, they often do. In Mexico City in 1968, ten days before the opening ceremony, hundreds of left-wing protesters were killed by the army. The same year, two African-American athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, gave a Black Power salute on the podium. At Munich in 1972, West Germany's attempts to show a new face to the world ended in tragedy, when 11 Israeli athletes were taken hostage and killed by Palestinian terrorists. The Olympics were a forum for Cold War rivalries. From the 1960s until 1989, East Germany ran a huge doping operation, designed to establish communism's superiority. In 1980, the US led more than 60 countries in a boycott of the Moscow Games in protest at the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Four years later, the USSR led 12 other eastern bloc states (and Cuba) in a boycott of the Los Angeles Games.

What about the business side?

The arrival of TV in the 1960s heralded a new era of corporate sponsorship; and since the 1980s, professional athletes have been allowed to compete – a departure from de Coubertin's vision of the Games as an amateur affair. At times, commercialisation has threatened their integrity: the huge role of Coca-Cola at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics raised eyebrows. Today, money remains a vexed issue. TV rights are worth some \$3bn, and sponsorship over \$1bn. Host cities, though, pay a high price (see box).

The winner's curse

Hosting the Games is eye-wateringly expensive. The London Olympics in 2012 cost \$17bn, the Rio Games in 2016 \$20bn (and led to 60,000 people being displaced from their homes). The main costs are the creation or upgrading of stadiums, and facilities for sports such as cycling and swimming, as well as extra housing and transport infrastructure. The legacy is often a series of white elephants. Sydney's stadium costs \$30m a year to maintain. The \$3bn costs of Athens 2004 contributed to the country's debt crisis; almost all the facilities built for it are now derelict. These problems – known as the "winner's curse" – have a long history. Debts from the 1976 Montreal Olympics were only paid off in 2006. Revenues do not cover spending: Tokyo made \$5.8bn in 2020, but spent \$13bn. The IOC keeps most TV and sponsorship money (it spends 90% of that supporting athletes, the Games and the "Olympic movement").

The idea is that the Games provide a long-term lift to the economy, tourism and jobs – and to participation in sport. The evidence says otherwise, with the exception of Barcelona in 1992. The IOC has tried to drive down costs; Paris's budget is relatively small: \$8bn. Critics say they should come down further, or that the Games should be held in one city in perpetuity (see page 37).

What about the sport?

The number of sports and athletes represented has ballooned: the Tokyo 2020 Games brought 11,479 sportspeople from 206 countries, competing in 50 disciplines, from the 100 metres to surfing to softball and golf. The Olympics have always provided electrifying spectacles, from Bob Beamon's long jump in 1968, to gymnast Nadia Comaneci's perfect ten at Montreal in 1976, to Usain Bolt's record-breaking sprints at Beijing 2008, to Mo Farah's triumphs at London 2012. Whatever criticisms they attract, the Olympics always capture the world's imagination.

How Nato failed Ukraine... and itself

Simon Tisdall

The Observer

Did last week mark the moment Vladimir Putin won the war in Ukraine? Looking at the way Nato leaders meeting in Washington stuck to “a route map to defeat”, it could well be the case, says Simon Tisdall. Yes, “repulsing” Moscow was vital for Europe’s future security, they all agreed; yes, Ukraine must be offered a “bridge” to “irreversible” Nato membership; yes, Nato would supply new air defence systems and planes. But all too little, too late. Chancellor Olaf Scholz, “the ultimate Ukraine foot-dragger”, was adamant he would not send German Taurus missiles. Keir Starmer said Kyiv could use UK-made Storm Shadow ones defensively against Russia, but only in Crimea. And Joe Biden still refused to let Kyiv use US-supplied weapons to strike the bases deep inside Russia launching the missiles that are now destroying Ukrainian infrastructure. Meanwhile, the Putin fan who might well decide to withdraw protection from Nato if he wins looks ever more likely to become the next US president. Nato’s pusillanimity may spell doom not just for Ukraine, but for the alliance itself.

Britain’s voters deserve a better system

Editorial

The Economist

When a party wins 63% of the seats on only a third of the vote, the case for reforming our first-past-the-post system begins to look overwhelming, says *The Economist*. We have just witnessed the most skewed result in Britain’s electoral history. Given the way its voters are distributed, Labour needed fewer than 24,000 votes for each of its seats: Reform UK needed well over 800,000. And it’s not an anomaly: voter allegiances have fragmented. Aside from the “Brexit elections” of 2017 and 2019, no party has won more than 40% of the vote since 2001. Small wonder public support for a more proportional system has risen from 25% in 2011 to 50% today. PR systems do, of course, have flaws of their own: they tend to encourage the rise of smaller, more extreme parties, and lead to coalitions that then agree policies very different from those the voters thought they’d voted for. So Labour shouldn’t rush into this: the urgent priority is restoring stability and “souping up” growth; a protracted constitutional battle is the last thing it needs right now. But voting reform should be in its manifesto for 2029.

Don’t let the progressives steal our notes

Peter Hitchens

Daily Mail

In several states in the US, traders are obliged by law to take it. In France, article 642-3 of the penal code imposes stern penalties on traders who refuse to accept it. I’m talking about cash, says Peter Hitchens, and the need to follow the Americans and the French in resisting the growing trend to get rid of it. It’s well under way here: the “contactless payments only” sign pops up everywhere – in cafés; on train refreshments trolleys. Sweden, and other socially “progressive” places, are now almost cash free. Caught short in the Netherlands recently, I couldn’t use the public toilets because I didn’t have the right type of bank card. Progressives love all this, of course: when every transaction is electronic, it’s easy for the state, and your bank, to know exactly what you’re up to and supervise your spending habits. But it’s not just the loss of privacy and the growth of state power. A cashless society robs us of so many small but important freedoms: putting cash in a homeless man’s hat, slipping a banknote note to our grandchildren, giving the waitress a tip rather than submitting to the restaurant’s compulsory service charge. Say “no” to the cashless society.

Atrocities that may disgrace the Army

Editorial

The Times

There’s no doubt that the former Tory defence secretary, Ben Wallace, must have felt that some terrible wrong had occurred for him to greenlight an independent investigation into alleged war crimes committed by Britain’s elite force, the SAS. Such is the top secret nature of its operations, not even the Commons Defence Committee has authority to question Special Forces (SF) personnel. Yet so horrific are the accounts by Afghan families, published in *The Times* this week, of atrocities they say SF troops committed in Helmand, you see at once why Wallace set up the Independent Inquiry relating to Afghanistan. Lord Justice Haddon-Cave is examining claims that 80 or so Afghans were summarily killed by SAS units in night-time raids between 2010 and 2013. These weren’t crimes committed in the heat of battle: the men killed were allegedly taken from their homes, tortured and shot in cold blood. And “the quest for culpability” should extend beyond the soldiers, to the politicians and senior officers who chose to ignore all the evidence this was going on. “Britain’s credibility as a responsible power with Armed Forces ruled by laws depends on it.”

IT MUST BE TRUE... I read it in the tabloids

A 90-year-old woman in rural China found a hand grenade in a field and unwittingly used it as a makeshift hammer for two decades. The woman, identified only as Qin, mistook the grenade for a “metal lump” when she happened upon it on her farm in Huangbao county. “I’ve been using it to pound red pepper, crack nuts and hammer in nails,” she said. Last month, workers at her home noticed the grenade, which was dented from use and had its fuse exposed, and alerted the authorities. They dispatched a bomb unit, which confirmed it was a grenade and destroyed it.



A German police officer who bears a striking resemblance to Gareth Southgate was serenaded by England fans attending the Euros semi-final in Dortmund last week. Clips shared online show the officer trying to stay composed as the supporters sing a fan-favourite version of Atomic Kitten’s song *Whole Again*, which includes the altered lines: “Southgate you’re the one. You still turn me on. Football’s coming home again.”

A novel about a pink mouse that causes a zombie apocalypse has been banned in Russia because it contains “false messages” and threatens public order. *Mouse* by Ivan Filippov is about an infected mouse that escapes from an institute that is developing a serum to make President Putin immortal, with apocalyptic results. Among those who perish are regime supporters including the propagandist Margarita Simonyan and the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill.

The Biden question: if he stands down, who could replace him?

Despite the crescendo of voices calling for him to stand down, Joe Biden himself insists only “the Lord Almighty” can convince him to quit the race”. Let’s suppose he does change his mind: what then? Best positioned to replace him as the Democrats’ presidential nominee, said Will Weissert and Bill Barrow on [Associated Press](#), is his vice-president, Kamala Harris. After all, it’s the delegates to the Democratic convention in August who’ll be making the decision; and as most are pledged to support Biden, at his urging they’d choose his deputy. Those disenchanted with Harris, however, are hoping some telegenic state governor such as California’s Gavin Newsom or Michigan’s Gretchen Whitmer might secure the delegates’ blessing. So they are pushing to hold “a mini-primary” in which a small field of hopefuls could set out their stalls in TV debates before the convention. But mini-primary or no, Harris is the best bet. She has been tested in the glare of a presidential campaign, has national name recognition, and has banked “years of goodwill with core party constituencies”. And crucially, under party rules, she has seamless access to the \$91m Biden has raised for his re-election, which the others don’t.



Governor Gretchen Whitmer: a better bet for the Democrats?

Quite so, said Jill Filipovic on [Slate](#). True, Harris’s approval rating is abysmal at present, only a few points better than Biden’s. But she’s an effective, passionate campaigner on abortion rights – the Democrats’ strongest issue – and at 59 is more than two decades younger than Biden. She can win: “We – and the guy currently at the top of the ticket – just need to give her a chance.” Why take half measures at a time like this, asked Jonathan Chait in [New York Magazine](#). “If you start to take Vienna, take Vienna,” as Napoleon put it. If Democrats are going to risk “swapping out” their presidential nominee because he’s losing ground “to a sociopathic criminal”, they should select

the candidate who gives them the best chance of winning. And that certainly isn’t Harris, whose own presidential campaign bombed in 2020. Compare her with 52-year-old Whitmer, who is now a sudden favourite among despairing Democrats – and you can see why, said Jonathan Martin in [Politico](#). She won reelection as Michigan governor in 2022 by nearly 11 points: her blue-collar bona fides could see her sweep the Rust Belt swing states. And as one lobbyist reminded donors, “Big Gretch” is the only potential nominee to have “faced down a kidnap attempt” by Maga extremists.

It’s not clear Harris wants the nomination, said Ron Brownstein in [The Atlantic](#), but if she does, then drafting anyone but her would risk “tearing the party apart” and losing anyway. To deny the prize to the first woman of colour to have served as VP would enrage progressives and alienate the party’s most reliable and influential voting bloc: black women. Believe me, black voters have other concerns, said Jerusalem Demsas in the same publication. We want “a candidate who’ll win” more than the consolation of watching Democrats crown Harris. Besides, when did Democrats become so scared of democracy? A contested primary “is always chaotic and brutal”, but it results in a battle-hardened candidate behind whom the party can unify. Democrats are so panicked about “what could go wrong”, agreed Ezra Klein in [The New York Times](#), that they haven’t allowed themselves to consider the upside of an open convention. They’ve “a party suffused with talent” and vote winners – think Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo. A vigorous, forward-looking contest for the nomination could captivate the nation, and reveal which of the many faces on the party’s deep bench is “ready to rise to the moment”. But first, of course, Biden will have to stand down.

The supreme court’s power grab

Ruth Marcus

The Washington Post

“Mission accomplished. Power grabbed,” said Ruth Marcus. When the supreme court overturned the decades-old precedent known as the Chevron deference last month, it achieved “a holy grail of the conservative legal movement”. The court’s 1984 ruling in *Chevron v. Natural Resources Defence Council* held that judges should defer to federal agencies when there are disputes over unclear language in laws passed by congress. It was “a sensible power-sharing arrangement”: every law has ambiguities, and the Environmental Protection Agency, the Food and Drug Administration and others have the skills to address the “myriad intricate and technical questions that inevitably arise”. But conservative activists have long argued that this put excessive power in the hands of unelected bureaucrats, presumed to be their ideological enemies; while corporations claimed it encouraged overregulation. Now, in a 6-3 ruling, the court’s conservative majority has decided that judges, not agencies, should have the final say on laws that affect “everything from clean air to drug safety to student loans”. In her dissenting opinion, Justice Elena Kagan described it as “judicial hubris”: the court has turned “itself into the country’s administrative czar”, though it simply doesn’t have the necessary expertise. Decades of agency actions will be challenged. The result is likely to be “a flood of conflicting rulings as different courts reach different results”.

Canada is free riding on our defence dollars

Editorial

The Wall Street Journal

Canada is a “defence scofflaw”, says *The Wall Street Journal*. The minimum obligation, for all member states of Nato, is that they should spend 2% of GDP on defence. This year, 23 out of 32 members of the alliance are on track to meet that. “Canada isn’t close.” In 2024, Ottawa is forecast to hit 1.37% of GDP, up from 1% in 2014. Only Belgium, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Spain spend less, as a proportion of their economies. “Canada appears to think the world hasn’t changed since Russia invaded Ukraine, China became aggressive in the Pacific, and both powers began cooperating to dominate the Arctic.” Canada’s military failures are based, in part, on “a sense that it can free ride off the US”. This is both unfair and unwise. As the Arctic Ocean thaws, it is facing greater Russian and Chinese activity in the form of ships, submarines, long-range aircraft and other “surveillance platforms”, alarming Canada’s own defence analysts. “Europe slept even as Vladimir Putin rearmed and threatened Ukraine. Canada is still sleeping, and if it doesn’t meet its alliance obligations, it will have no cause to complain if the alliance wonders if the country should remain a member.”

The Iranian election: does it mark a turning point?

He says he'll block the "Hijab and Chastity Bill", which would bring in new penalties for women who fail to wear the hijab. He has slated the regime for its brutal crackdown of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests in 2022. He wants to relax the internet restrictions that shackle commercial and social life. He talks of reducing tensions with the West and restoring the 2015 nuclear deal with the US. The victory of the reformist Masoud Pezeshkian in Iran's presidential election – called as a result of the death in a helicopter crash of the hardline president Ebrahim Raisi – has brought to an end "three years of conservative dominance over all branches of government" in Iran, said Sina Toossi in *Foreign Policy (Washington)*. And if Pezeshkian makes good on even a few of his promises, his victory could be transformative.



Mansouri, the kingmaker (left), and new president, Pezeshkian



them? The situation in Iran is miserable: inflation is at 40%; inward investment has dried up; corruption is rife. Iranians have no faith in elections. No wonder only 49.8% voted in the run-off on 5 July. Even so, Pezeshkian does represent a true break from the past, said Ghazal Golshiri in *Le Monde (Paris)*. A softly spoken cardiac surgeon from Iran's Kurdish northwest, and a former health minister, he articulates the concerns of the middle classes, of women, and of the young; his victory was met with dancing in the

streets. But he's no liberal, said Majid Mohammadi in *Iran International* – not in the Western sense. "Reformists" in Iran are just one faction of the ruling elite; they still subscribe to sharia law. Pezeshkian is no exception. He is not going to challenge the Guardian Council's influence; and his voting record during his five years in parliament rather calls into question his avowed commitment to women's rights.

It's far from clear he'll be able to, said Lawdan Bazargan in *Iran International*. Real power in Iran lies not with the president but with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and "the unelected bodies that serve him". A key one of these is the Guardian Council, a 12-member body of jurists and clerics, which vets all candidates for high office and can disqualify anyone deemed insufficiently loyal to the regime. And the fact that they let a reformist run and didn't disqualify him is down to a woman, said Arash Azizi in *The National (Abu Dhabi)*. Azar Mansouri, who heads the group of reformist parties known as the Iranian Reformist Front (IRF), has proved herself a "kingmaker" in the male-dominated world of Iranian politics. It was she who gave an ultimatum to the Guardian Council, saying that IRF voters would sit out the election if its candidates were disqualified. The prospect of a low turnout was a real threat, as it would undermine the legitimacy of the vote, so although the council vetoed two of the IRF's three candidates, it gave the green light to Pezeshkian, who duly beat his hardline rival by 16.4 million votes to 13.5 million.

But even with a reformist running, millions of Iranians didn't vote, said Amir Samani in *Shargh (Tehran)*. Who can blame

Still, he is progressive by Iranian standards, said K.N. Pandita in *The EurAsian Times (New Delhi)*. The "million-dollar question" is whether the elected president can effect change in a country headed by an unelected supreme leader. An early test will be his choice of cabinet, said *The Economist*. Ending the virtual "taboo on female and minority representation" would be a sign of progress: in 45 years, the Islamic Republic hasn't had a single Sunni minister and only one who was a woman. Much will depend on how the US reacts, said Daniel Byman and Katherine Trauger in the *Centre for Strategic and International Studies (Washington)*. Tehran turned to Russia and China after being hit by Donald Trump's crippling sanctions in 2018, and even though Joe Biden has eased some of these, Iran's economy hasn't recovered. Should Biden win a second term, he might be tempted to go further in return for Iran curtailing its disruptive influence in Middle East politics. But Trump would never countenance such a move. The election that may prove more consequential for Iran is the one being fought in America in November.

VENEZUELA

High noon for the man who bled the nation

Clarín
(Buenos Aires)

Whisper it quietly, but Venezuela's dreadful president, Nicolás Maduro, may soon be on the way out, says Ludmila Vinogradoff. The rotten regime he leads has clung to power for more than two decades by rigging elections. Last year, when the opposition united behind the candidacy of María Corina Machado, Maduro had a court disqualify her. But his ploy has failed. Machado may not be running in this month's election, but her proxy, former diplomat Edmundo González Urrutia, certainly is, and he is polling 30 points ahead of Maduro. Opposition rallies are drawing vast crowds; Maduro's are deserted. To regain a foothold, Maduro has resorted to detaining activists and setting up roadblocks to stop his rivals travelling. But the more his regime harasses them, the more popular they become. Machado is a "champion" at evading obstacles: she has even managed to get the drivers who've been given petrol to attend pro-regime rallies to donate it to her instead. Maduro won't go quietly, but if he tries to cling on after losing, he'll face massive protests. Change is coming to Venezuela at last.

BRUSSELS

The far-right in the EU is a busted flush

Il Foglio
(Rome)

"Patriots for Europe" is the name of the new far-right grouping in the European Parliament brought together by Hungary's president, Viktor Orbán; and now that France's National Rally (RN) has joined, it will be the parliament's third-largest bloc. Cue panic from the pundits, who fear its arrival will spark a revolution and destroy the EU from within. They should relax, says David Carretta. Had Orbán managed to unite all the EU's nationalist parties, he'd have created a bloc of 200 of the 720 MEPs: that would have been a "historic shock". But he didn't, and for the simple reason that the nationalists, riven by differing goals, "cordially hate each other". Alternative for Germany (AfD) has been excluded because the RN leader Marine Le Pen can't stomach the pro-Nazi outbursts of some of its leaders. Poland's Law and Justice party and the Brothers of Italy are sticking with the mainstream European Conservatives and Reformists group. And though they've joined the Patriots, Spain's Vox and Portugal's Chega have been strong Ukraine supporters – this in a group that is avowedly pro-Putin. No, the Patriots only present the illusion of power. A group that only "serves the interests of Russia" cannot have much influence in Strasbourg, however much noise it makes.

What the scientists are saying...

Pollution's impact on reproduction

Exposure to air pollution before the retrieval of eggs can cut women's chances of having a live birth after IVF by approximately 40%, an Australian study has found. The research was based on some 1,836 women who had frozen embryo transfers. The team looked at the air quality in the weeks and months before their eggs were collected, and found that greater exposure to particulate matter pollution (PM2.5 and PM10) correlated to a lower chance of a successful birth. The women who were exposed to the highest levels in the two weeks prior had a 38% lower chance of having a live birth than those with the lowest levels. Those exposed to air pollution in the months before embryo transfer were also less likely to have a live birth. Yet throughout the study, the air quality was good. Levels of PM2.5 and PM10 exceeded WHO guidelines on fewer than 5% of the study days. The researchers said their findings were distinctive in suggesting that pollution has a negative impact on the quality of eggs, not just the early stages of pregnancy. "Climate change and pollution remain the greatest threats to human health, and human reproduction is not immune to this," noted Dr Sebastian Leathersich, the lead author of the study.

Hope for a new test for autism

It can be difficult and time-consuming to diagnose autism, as the process relies heavily on interviews with parents about their children's behaviour and observations from practitioners – and their responses may be skewed by their hopes and fears, attitudes and biases. Added to that, symptoms can vary widely. But now a study published in the journal *Nature Microbiology* has suggested that it might



Air quality has an impact on IVF success rates

be possible to develop a test, based on stool samples, that could produce earlier, and more accurate diagnoses. It has long been known that – for reasons that are unclear – people with autism tend to have an unusually narrow range of bacteria in their digestive systems. For the new study, researchers in Hong Kong analysed 1,627 stool samples from children, and identified several distinct biological "markers" in the gut flora of autistic children. They then used machine learning to devise a test that proved able to identify autistic children from their stools with 83% accuracy. Twin studies have indicated that about 80% of the risk for autism comes from genes, and there is no evidence that the condition is caused by a disrupted microbiome; however, the team say the microbiome might influence the severity of symptoms, by, for instance, modulating immune responses. If so, the finding could in time also lead to new therapeutic strategies.

White roofs create cool cities

To keep London cool in a warming world, we should paint all the city's roofs white, a study has found. Because buildings and roads absorb and re-emit the Sun's heat more than natural environments, cities get hotter during heatwaves than the surrounding countryside. To examine how best to minimise this "heat island" effect, researchers at University College London built a climate model of the capital, and tested the effects of various heat-management systems, including painted "cool roofs", "green" roofs (planted with vegetation), solar panels, street-level trees and air conditioning. They found that had cool roofs been adopted widely on the two hottest days of 2018, outdoor temperatures would have been 1.2°C lower, on average. Although green roofs have other benefits, their impact on heat was found to be negligible, as what warmth they'd absorbed during the day they'd have emitted at night. Solar panels and street-level trees would have had a small net cooling effect, while extensive use of air-con would have warmed the outside world.

The impact of the sugar tax

The amount of sugar children consume from soft drinks has fallen dramatically since the sugar tax was announced in 2016, a study has found. Researchers looked at the findings of national nutrition surveys involving more than 15,000 adults and children, and found that children's daily sugar intake from soft drinks halved in the three years after 2016, while that of adults fell by a third. In the year after the levy was introduced, in 2018, children's daily intake of sugar fell 4.8g, and adults' fell by 10.9g. However, the study found that overall sugar intake was still higher than WHO recommended levels.

Hippos can become airborne

They're large and bulky and weigh well over three tons, but it turns out that hippos can fly – in a manner of speaking. Scientists at the Royal Veterinary College have discovered that, when moving at speed, hippos are often airborne (with all four of their feet off the ground at once) for as much as a third of a second, significantly longer than other mammals of a similar size.



We have lift-off (for up to a third of a second)

There are relatively few studies of the biomechanics of hippos, because the semi-aquatic herbivores are extremely dangerous; they are most active at night; and they spend a lot of their time in water. This research was based on video footage of hippos running at the Flamingo Land Resort in Yorkshire, and more gathered online. By going through it frame by frame – an exercise lead researcher Prof John Hutchinson described as "really boring", if not "agonising" – the team established that hippos generally stick to a trot, moving their diagonally opposite legs in synchrony, even when they're moving fast. By contrast, elephants never move beyond a walking gait, and never fully leave the ground, while rhinos walk, trot, and then break into a gallop.

Ozempic linked to vision loss

The weight-loss wonder drug Ozempic has been associated with a rare eye condition that can cause blindness. Published in the journal *JAMA Ophthalmology*, the study found that people who are prescribed semaglutide (marketed as Ozempic and Wegovy) for diabetes were four times more likely to develop non-arteritic anterior ischemic optic neuropathy (NAION) than diabetics who'd been prescribed other treatments; and that people who took it to lose weight were seven times more likely to develop NAION than those taking other weight-loss drugs. NAION affects two to ten people per 100,000. The vision loss progresses rapidly; it can be mild to severe, and is irreversible. The study, which involved nearly 17,000 people, was led by an ophthalmologist who had been surprised when three patients came to him with NAION in a week; all three had been taking semaglutide.

Southgate's England: a bittersweet swan song

“Surely after almost six decades, it had to be time for a new script?” England fans certainly dared to dream before Sunday’s Euros final, said Robert Hardman in the Daily Mail. So many of them had decided to travel last-minute to Germany in the hope of breathing “the air of victory”, the last tickets on packed-out flights had sold for up to £950, and Berlin’s air space was unable to cope with the traffic: German media reported that two hastily chartered Ethiopian Airlines flights had ended up landing in Leipzig, 120 miles away. The German capital itself was “overrun” with England supporters. And though many of them watched the game in the mile-long “fanzone” by the Brandenburg Gate, a surprising number had obtained tickets to the final, for which touts were charging as much as £5,000. England’s official ticket allocation was 10,295. Yet inside Albert Speer’s austere 74,475-seater Olympiastadion, it was a sea of red and white flags.

But football didn’t come home, not to England at least. With their 2-1 win, “La Roja” proved that football’s home is Spain, “the dominant football culture of the age”, said Barney Ronay in The Guardian. At the final whistle, England were “distracted”. When the bruises heal, this young team will be proud to have fought through “seven high-drama games” to reach the first overseas final in the history of the men’s national side. But in truth, Gareth Southgate’s players had not met on that journey a world-class rival like Spain – and against that “supremely coherent and talented team”, they struggled to find their rhythm. Early on, Spain dominated the ball, and in the second half, it took just 70 seconds for their electrifying wingers – Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams – to get it into the net. Meanwhile, Harry Kane in attack “offered all the mobility, touch and spring of a rain-sodden hay bale”. After 60 minutes, Southgate finally took him off, then sent on Cole Palmer, who scored a “sublime equaliser” moments later. The England fans erupted in joy. But it wasn’t enough. Spain also brought on a back-up striker, and in the 86th minute, Mikel Oyarzabal scored the winning goal.

For Kane, England’s captain, who was “clearly short of fitness”, the “feeling of loss is unfathomable”, said Oliver Brown in The Daily Telegraph. England’s greatest goal scorer by volume has now overseen two “last-gasp” losses in a Euros final in a row. As for Southgate, this match turned out to represent his last as manager. The man who was vilified after his missed penalty sent



“Painfully aware of the burden of expectation”

England out of the Euros in the semi-final in 1996 resigned this week, having fallen short of achieving arguably “the grandest act” of sporting redemption in history.

The tournament had felt like Southgate’s last, said Martin Samuel in The Times. On Sunday, he did not look as if he’d now be gearing up for a World Cup campaign. This decent man had endured too much. Before Jude Bellingham’s dramatic bicycle kick delivered that crucial 95th-minute equaliser against Slovakia, his name was booed by fans, he was pelted with cups, and he was “disparaged by former players he saw as allies”. Those things hurt. As he said, “We all want to be loved.” So

he is right to move on for his own sake; but also, for England’s. In eight years, he has taken the team a long way. Now it is time for someone else to have a go at scaling the final peak; another chef may have the ingredient he lacked to turn England’s great players into a world-beating side. Still, “history will treat him kindly”, as the manager who changed the culture, and who made watching England, and playing for it, enjoyable again.

In 2016, England had not won a tournament knock-out game in a decade, said Jonathan Northcroft in The Times. Things were so bad, the FA told Southgate that he didn’t even need to qualify for the World Cup in 2018 to keep the job. Painfully aware of the intolerable burden of expectation on England players, Southgate innovated:

he brought in psychologists to help the squad share their fears, and introduced a buddy system, so that no player need walk back alone from a missed penalty. His methods worked, said Jonathan Freedland in The Guardian: from then on, England qualified for every major tournament, and reached at least the quarter-final in all of them. But vital to his success was also the way he backed his side. When, in 2021, the then home secretary Priti Patel said fans could boo England players who took the knee, he fought back with his famous “Dear England” letter, in which he wrote that “our lads” were joining in efforts to create a “more tolerant and understanding society”. The youthful team he built embodied “the best of this country”, and was one we could all rally behind, said the Daily Mirror. “Modest in victory, gracious in defeat”, they were “tenacious and fearless”. And they were a real team: “every individual effort was celebrated collectively”. Southgate’s England may not have lifted trophies, but they raised our spirits. He can look back with pride.

“History will treat him kindly,
as an innovative manager
who changed the culture”

Pick of the week's Gossip

Before moving into TV, the comedy producer **John Lloyd** worked for BBC radio. Among other things, he co-wrote *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, and yet the Beeb refused to promote him. Finally, when he was 26, he tendered his resignation. “Don’t be a young fool!” the BBC’s head of radio comedy told him. “Why, in seven-and-a-half years you could be deputy head of this department!”



Jacob Rees-Mogg (pictured) may have been ejected from the Commons – but he will still

be in the public eye. He and his family are to star in a five-part “fly-on-the-wall” documentary on Discovery+ that promises to “lift the lid on the man behind the public image”. Writing in the Daily Mail, **Amanda Platell** offered the former MP a “cautionary word”. In the 1980s, she was asked to appear in a film about successful women in Fleet Street. She jumped at the chance, imagining how proud her parents back in Australia would be. But, she recalls, when the show was broadcast “it featured mostly pictures of my legs in stilettos, and had been retitled *Killer Bimbos on Fleet Street*”.

The American sex therapist and Holocaust survivor **Dr Ruth Westheimer**, who died last week aged 96, doled out advice in a voice described by The Wall Street Journal as a cross between Henry Kissinger and Minnie Mouse. Her tips ranged from the reasonable – “everyone needs practice”; “don’t be in a rush” – to the eyebrow-raising, such as: “Make up your own games. Like an onion ring tossed onto an erect penis!” Yet she may not have followed her own advice. “It’s all talk,” her third husband, Fred, lamented. “Remember, the shoemaker’s children don’t get any shoes.”

The Tories: a new round of infighting

It baffles me, said Harry Cole in *The Sun*, how anyone could look at the thumping just dished out by voters and think that “the answer is more Tories shouting at each other in public”. Yet since the election, a new round of infighting has already begun between senior Conservatives, as leadership hopefuls jostle for position. The former home secretary, Suella Braverman, didn’t even wait until the results were in on election night before slamming Rishi Sunak on TV; and she has repeatedly rubbished colleagues such as Robert Jenrick, another potential leadership contender. The bookies’ favourite to be the next party leader, Kemi Badenoch, also laid into Sunak about the election campaign in a shadow cabinet meeting – the details of which were soon leaked – and accused Braverman of having a “very public nervous breakdown”.



Badenoch: grassroots support

Many veteran Tory MPs, shellshocked by the result, want the “closure” of a quick leadership contest, said *The Times*. That would be a mistake. The party is “battered, broken, irrelevant in the House of Commons and intellectually exhausted. Any good psychotherapist would caution their client not to take life-altering decisions when in such disarray.” What’s needed is a prolonged period of calm reflection and debate – if necessary

under a caretaker leader. “The Tories should take their time. They are not short of it.” But the truth is, “whether the Tories have the contest now or in a year, the same debates are going to need to take place”, said Katy Balls in *The Guardian*. Should it tack to the right, with a leader such as Braverman or Jenrick? Or should it move to the centre, with a One Nation candidate like Tom Tugendhat or Victoria Atkins? It’s a fight for the soul of the party, and it won’t be pretty.

A moderate candidate such as Tugendhat or James Cleverly would be the obvious choice, said Ian Dunt in *The i Paper*. But the members, who get the final say, are likely to go for Badenoch instead. The former housing minister “holds the standard grab-bag of right-wing ideas – dislike of Europe, distrust of net zero, an aversion to state interference”, a relish for culture-war battles. The grassroots love this, even if it alienates most voters. As a result, she’s way ahead in polls of members. Actually, it would make sense to choose a right-winger like Badenoch, said Rod Liddle in *The Sunday Times*. It’s simply not true, as the One Nation types argue, that the Tories can only win from the centre: their big majorities (1979, 1983, 1987 and 2019) have all been won from the right. But Badenoch probably won’t win. In Tory contests, “the favourite almost never becomes leader”.

Defence: the crisis in the Armed Forces

In Keir Starmer’s “first appearance on the world stage” as Prime Minister, at the Nato summit in Washington last week, he was keen to proclaim Britain as a “major” military power, said Con Coughlin in *The Daily Telegraph*. Starmer declared that security was his “first priority”; reiterated his firm support for Ukraine; and called on all Nato nations to increase their spending on defence from a minimum 2% of GDP, the current commitment, to 2.5%. “The only problem” with Starmer’s otherwise laudable ambitions is that Britain’s Armed Forces are currently “small and under-equipped”, and that he and his new Defence Secretary, John Healey, seem to have “little idea when, if ever” their own Government will actually meet that 2.5% target. Furthermore, there will be no extra spending in the near future: Labour is insisting that, before decisions are made, there must be a full strategic defence review, a process that could mean no decisions are taken until next year at the earliest.

In the meantime, it is widely accepted that Britain’s Armed Forces are in “crisis”, said Larisa Brown in *The Times*. General Sir Patrick Sanders, the recently retired chief of the general staff, warned that they are so worn down that they could not defend the country if the worst happened, or even fight “a small war” abroad for more than a month. UK forces lack

essentials, from supply trucks to electronic warfare systems. The RAF and the Royal Navy have overspent on planes and ships, so the Army has had to cut back. It is now less than 73,000 strong, its smallest size since the Napoleonic era, and it is “considered deficient” in important areas such as artillery and air defence. Earlier this year, the MPs’ Public Accounts Committee warned that the gap between the Ministry of Defence (MoD) budget and the cost of meeting the UK’s desired military capabilities has grown to at least £16.9bn, its largest-ever deficit.

Still, demanding that the new Government raise spending “within days of taking office” is wrong and “pointless”, said *The Guardian*. Budgets are limited. Providers of all essential public services are “lobbying the Government with the strongest cases they can muster”. And the strategic defence review is badly needed, said Edward Stringer in *The Daily Telegraph*. The MoD is in “a downward spiral of paying more to get less”. The Ukraine War has been a wake-up call. Our “bonsai” peacetime forces, based on small amounts of top-of-the-range military equipment, would be hopeless in a sustained conflict. We need to build up supplies of artillery shells and other munitions, and to adapt to drone warfare. If we want a military that “our allies and foes will respect”, a “fundamental reset” is needed.

Wit & Wisdom

“Nothing in life is so exhilarating as to be shot at without result.”
Winston Churchill, quoted in The Wall Street Journal

“An actor’s a guy who, if you ain’t talking about him, ain’t listening.”
Marlon Brando, quoted in the Daily Mail

“We cannot build the future by avenging the past.”
T.H. White, quoted in The Times

“There is always time for a magnum of champagne between the revolution and the firing squad.”
Central European saying, quoted in The Spectator

“Never miss a chance to have sex or appear on television.”
Gore Vidal, quoted on Forbes

“He who cannot dance puts the blame on the floor.”
Hindu proverb, ibid.

“War hath no fury like a non-combatant.”
C.E. Montague, quoted on The Browser

“It is not easy being a mother. If it were easy, fathers would do it.”
Dorothy Zbornak of The Golden Girls, quoted in Woman’s Day

“Have you ever noticed that anybody driving slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than you is a maniac?”
George Carlin, quoted on Today

“It’s pointless for a human to paint scenes of nature when they can go outside and stand in it.”
Ron Swanson of Parks and Recreation, quoted on inews

Statistic of the week

Labour declared £9.5m in donations during the general election campaign, more than all the other parties combined. The Conservatives raised just under £1.9m, down from £19m during the 2019 campaign.

BBC News

Tennis: Alcaraz demolishes Djokovic at Wimbledon

A year ago, Carlos Alcaraz “snuck away” with the Wimbledon title when he beat Novak Djokovic in an “up-and-down five-set saga that lasted nearly five hours”, said Matthew Fitterman in *The New York Times*. This year, the same match-up produced a totally different final: the 21-year-old Spaniard “hammered and danced and drop-shotted” his way to the title with a resounding 6-2, 6-2, 7-6 victory. The win not only gave Alcaraz his fourth grand slam, but earned him a place in one of tennis’s “most exclusive clubs”. Previously, in the open era, only five male players – Rod Laver, Björn Borg, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Djokovic – had ever won on the slow red clay of Roland-Garros in June and then on the “slick grass of SW19” in July. Now Alcaraz, who overcame Alexander Zverev in last month’s French Open final, has joined their select company.



Alcaraz: “prodigious and intimidating”

Djokovic was undoubtedly below his best, having undergone surgery on a torn knee meniscus three weeks before Wimbledon began, said Simon Briggs in *The Daily Telegraph*. Reluctant to trade blows with Alcaraz from the baseline – perhaps fearing that his knee wouldn’t hold up – the 37-year-old resorted to a tactic he tends to use sparingly: he frequently rushed to the net. It was a strategy that had worked brilliantly earlier in the tournament, especially in his semi-final against Lorenzo Musetti, but here it backfired: time and again, Alcaraz “bypassed a stranded Djokovic with his broad repertoire of passing shots”.

When the opening game went to seven deuces (before being won by Alcaraz), most spectators assumed they’d be in for a long afternoon, said Stuart Fraser in *The Times*. Yet the match was never as competitive again. Alcaraz continued to apply relentless pressure to Djokovic’s serve, while mostly holding his own with ease – even recording his fastest serve of the tournament, at 136mph, early in the first set. Only once did Alcaraz seem rattled,

when he failed to convert three match points at 5-4 in the third set and ended up being broken for the first time, said Riath Al-Samarrai in the *Daily Mail*. But he was quickly “back to his old self”, and sealed the match in a tie-break.

Alcaraz is a “prodigious and intimidating” player who startles with his “sheer range of shotmaking”, said Matthew Syed in *The Times*. The “copious top spin” he puts on his groundstrokes enables him to fuse power and consistency. “He is stunningly fast around the court”, has a rare tactical intelligence, can slice and volley, hit brutal serves, and “plays drop shots with a felicity” at odds with his muscularity. And the package is completed by a “likeable, friendly and gracious” personality.

It is, of course, too early to say whether he’ll go on to match the achievements of Djokovic, Nadal et al – not least because longevity is a “complex thing”. But the “omens” look good.

The women’s final was won by Barbora Krejčíková of the Czech Republic, who overcame Italy’s Jasmine Paolini 6-2, 2-6, 6-4 to claim her second grand slam title, three years after winning her first at Roland-Garros, said Tomaini Carayol in *The Observer*. The victory marked a remarkable turnaround for Krejčíková, who had been on “pitiful form” this year, winning just three singles matches between the end of the Australian Open and the start of Wimbledon. Seventh seed Paolini, a finalist at Roland-Garros, fought back bravely after being outplayed in the first set, but the Czech player was able to dominate with her powerful forehand in a “thrilling” final set. Afterwards, Krejčíková could not keep back the tears when she saw her name engraved on the All England Club’s honours board close to that of Jana Novotná – her compatriot and one-time coach, who died, aged 49, in 2017. “The only thing going through my head was that I miss Jana a lot,” the 28-year-old said. “It was just very, very emotional.”

Euros: the secrets of Spain’s success (and England’s failure)

“One more” was Gareth Southgate’s rallying cry when England beat the Netherlands to reach their second successive Euros final. But four days later in Berlin, “one more” was what his team notably lacked, said Jonathan Northcroft in *The Times*. And now, three days after losing to a fearless and vibrant Spain, Southgate has resigned. Many of the players wanted him to stay on, but whether that would have been the best thing for England is another matter. It’s undeniably true that on the basis of their squads, England should have been at least Spain’s equal, said Michael Cox on *The Athletic*. In the most recent Ballon d’Or, only one Spanish player (Rodri) featured on the 30-man shortlist (whereas Jude Bellingham, Harry Kane and Bukayo Saka all did). In Phil Foden, Kane and Bellingham, England had arguably the three best players in the world’s three best domestic leagues last season. So Southgate’s team wasn’t “short of star power” – where they fell short was on cohesion. Analysis of their passing patterns across the tournament reveals “absolutely no interplay between the attackers” (their single most frequent combination was John Stones passing back to Jordan Pickford). They were “notably passive” in their pressing, few pairs of players developed close understandings, and it’s “difficult to recall many examples of them springing into attack on the break”. Rather than working as a collective, they were “a side that relied on moments of magic”.

What a contrast with Spain, said Sid Lowe in *The Guardian*. In the statistics for the tournament, Spain led “in almost every



Williams and Yamal celebrate

metric”. They won all seven matches they played, beating Italy, Germany, France and England – all World Cup-winning nations. There has never been a Euros or World Cup in which one team was so “manifestly superior”. Huge credit must go to Spain’s coach, Luis de la Fuente, so little-known before the competition began that Declan Rice admitted he didn’t know who he was, said Pol Ballús on *The Athletic*. He has virtually no track record as a club manager, but has been “part of Spain’s set-up since 2013”, guiding their youth team to two major titles. Appointed senior manager in 2022, he has spearheaded a move away from traditional Spanish “tiki-taka” to a faster, more direct and versatile style. He has blooded brilliant youngsters, notably 17-year-old winger Lamine Yamal, and made sure each player understands precisely his role. As a result, his formerly “under the radar” team now has the “potential to rule the world”.

Sporting headlines

Rugby union England lost their second Test against New Zealand 24-17, having led 17-13 with 20 minutes to play. The All Blacks won the series 2-0.

Cycling Tadej Pogačar won stage 15 of the Tour de France. With the race ending this weekend, the Slovenian looks on course to clinch his third yellow jersey.

Cricket Jimmy Anderson played his final Test, against West Indies at Lords. England won by an innings and 114 runs.

Pick of the week's correspondence

Our prisons problem...

To The Times

The new Government may wish to remedy the causes of overcrowding in the UK's antiquated prisons. Since 2004, the judiciary, sitting in criminal cases, has been required to comply with Sentencing Council guidelines. The less widely publicised purpose of this was to enable governments to predict the prison population and the money needed to maintain and build jails. This spend failed to materialise. Instead, cuts were made to every meaningful alternative to immediate custody, including unpaid work requirements, probation supervision, drug rehabilitation and psychiatric treatment programmes. Failed experiments with private-sector suppliers didn't help either, save to make it obvious that they didn't work.

Added to which, the government reduced the number of court buildings and the number of permitted sitting days. The inevitable impact of this lack of joined-up thinking is the resulting overcrowding, delay and lack of any offender reforming elements within the criminal justice system for England and Wales.

His Honour Peter Moss, Fernhurst, West Sussex

...is no easy fix

To The Daily Telegraph

The prison I visit is building two new blocks. There are nine in total, and the prison already has a huge shortage of officers. I cannot always visit the men on a weekly basis, as they are often in "lockdown", which means they are locked up in their cells for 23 out of 24 hours because there is only one prison officer instead of two on duty in every block. Being in lockdown for so long brings anger, resentment and violence.

Where does the Government think it is going to get more prison officers from, when there are already shortages across the country?

Rosemary Corbin, Zeals, Wiltshire

Rebuild Britain: repeal...

To The Guardian

Gaby Hinsliff reports that the Greater Manchester Mayor, Andy Burnham, wants to build 10,000 social homes and

Exchange of the week

Making peace with Putin

To the Financial Times

Russia's latest military gains in the Donetsk region reinforce the case for a negotiated settlement of the war in Ukraine. The US and its allies support Ukraine's key war aim, which is a return to the 2014 frontiers, i.e., Russia's expulsion from Crimea and Donbas. But all informed analysts agree that, short of a serious escalation of war, the likeliest outcome will be continued stalemate on the ground, with a not insignificant chance of a Russian victory.

This conclusion points to the desirability, even urgency, of a negotiated peace. Reluctance by the West to accept this rests on the belief that anything short of a complete Ukrainian victory would allow Putin to "get away with it". But this ignores by far the most important outcome of the war so far: that Ukraine has fought for its independence, and won it. Some territorial concessions would seem a small price to pay for the reality, rather than semblance, of independence.

Washington should start talks with Moscow on a new security pact, which would safeguard the legitimate security interests of both Ukraine and Russia. The announcement of these talks should be immediately followed by a time-limited ceasefire in Ukraine, [which] would enable Russia and Ukraine to negotiate in a realistic, constructive manner.

The sooner peace is negotiated, the more lives will be saved and the more quickly the world can be pulled back from the dangerous brink at which it stands.

Lord Skidelsky [et al], professor emeritus in political economy, University of Warwick

To the Financial Times

The argument put forward by Lord Skidelsky et al seems at first sight to be a reasonable one. But at the heart of their proposal is a "new security pact" between the US and Russia, designed to safeguard the security interests of both sides. This is naive. The Russian government in its current state would not honour any such pact. There is already an agreement in place safeguarding Ukrainian territorial integrity: the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, which Russia signed with the US and the UK, and which Putin has ignored.

I do not understand how the West can now sign any new deal with Putin. Leave that to Kim Jong Un and his like.

Richard Bridge, London

affordable flats, and is urging the Government to make public land available at below-market rates for building, which the Treasury is blocking.

One way to achieve these goals would be to repeal the Land Compensation Act 1961. Before this Tory act, the uplift of the land values was split between landowners and local councils. The act granted the full increase in land values to landowners, making new housing more expensive.

Repealing the act would help Labour to meet its pledge to rebuild Britain.

Ray Corbett, London

...or regulate?

To The Times

Never mind relaxing planning regulations; I suggest a

tightening. Once planning permission has been given, building work should be started within 12 months and completed within 36 (longer for large sites). If homes are not completed, they should be offered to the council or housing association at the original land cost. That would make developers build homes rather than bank land.

David Simpson, former chairman of planning, Hart District Council, Hampshire

Unmerited bonuses

To The Daily Telegraph

The chief executive of Thames Water, whose total pay for the three months to the end of

March was £437,000, has defended his bonus package, saying, "You need to be able to attract the right talent".

How many more times do we have to hear this phrase from highly paid senior executives?

No one would mind high salaries providing they came with proper, effective and capable management. Thames Water should not be paying a single bonus at present.

Mike Metcalfe, Butleigh, Somerset

Money and politics

To The Guardian

I would like to endorse Polly Toynbee's plea that now is the time to take money out of politics. May I make a few suggestions? No business or financial institution should be allowed to donate to political parties. Individuals should only be allowed to donate if they have been fully paid-up party members for at least a year, with the amount limited to, say, £10,000 per annum.

Auctioning access to ministers should be made illegal. All party accounts should be freely available, and all think-tanks and lobbying groups should disclose all their sources of support.

I further suggest that, at all elections, each voter is given a money voucher that they can donate to any party on the ballot paper. This would have two huge beneficial effects.

First, it would encourage voting. Second, it would make political parties focus more on groups that they largely ignore.

Both would have the benefit of reducing the money slopping around in politics and its inevitable corruption.

Dr Peter Estcourt, South Chailey, East Sussex



"I'm sorry Rishi, but the 'ex-Tory prime minister after-dinner speech' market is saturated."

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Review of reviews: summer books

The best newly published holiday reads, based on summer round-ups in the press

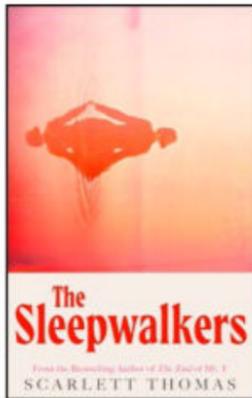
Hardbacks

The Sleepwalkers

by Scarlett Thomas

Scribner 304pp
£16.99 (£13.99)

Thomas's 14th novel is an "ambiguous chiller worthy of Patricia Highsmith", said The Daily Telegraph. It is set in an exclusive Greek resort, to which "absurdly ill-suited" newlyweds Richard and Evelyn have come for their honeymoon. With its "highly original" narrative (one chapter is an AI-generated audio transcript), this is an "unpredictable and unputdownable summer holiday read", said the FT.

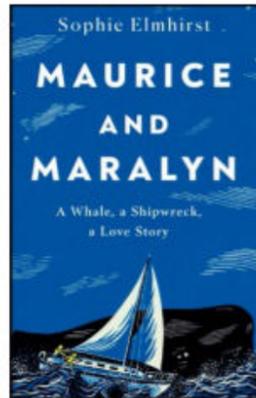


Maurice and Maralyn

by Sophie Elmhirst

Chatto & Windus
272pp £18.99
(£14.99)

This "gripping" work of non-fiction revisits the story of an English couple who "sold everything", and in 1972 set sail for New Zealand, said the FT. When their boat was destroyed by a whale, they were "left adrift on a tiny raft" – and survived for 117 days by eating raw turtles. Both a love story and an epic tale of survival, *Maurice and Maralyn* is a "superb debut", said The Spectator.

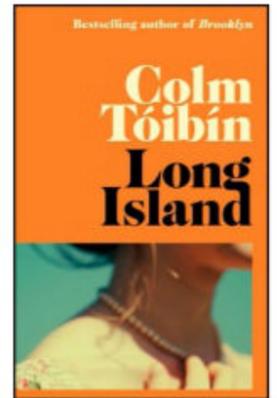


Long Island

by Colm Tóibín

Pan MacMillan
304pp £20
(£15.99)

In Tóibín's latest novel – a sequel to his "heartrending" 2009 bestseller *Brooklyn* – we follow Eilis Lacey as she returns to Enniscorthy, 20 years after leaving Ireland for New York, said The Times. As she encounters familiar figures, old emotions are rekindled – and the results are "fantastically stressful". Every bit as good as its predecessor, this is a "wonderful read", said The Observer.

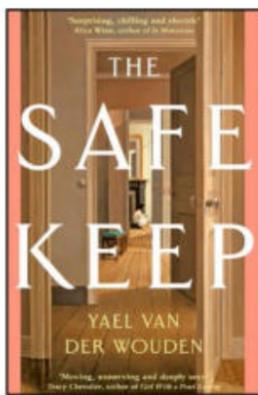


The Safekeep

by Yael van der Wouden

Viking 272pp
£16.99 (£13.99)

In a small Dutch town, 15 years after the end of WWII, the solitary life of 30-year-old Isabel is interrupted by the arrival of her "debonair" brother and his "vivacious" girlfriend Eva, said The Observer. When her brother is called away, Isabel is left alone with Eva. What begins as a "beautifully written lesbian romance" turns into something "much darker", said The Times – a "shocking" exploration of "the legacy of the Holocaust".

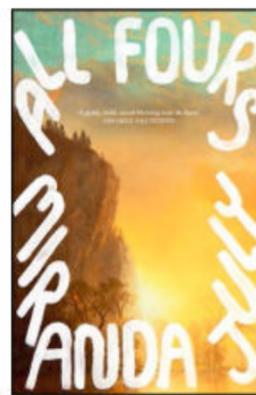


All Fours

by Miranda July

Canongate 336pp
£20 (£15.99)

July's "erotic, witty and moving" novel follows a 45-year-old woman who leaves her child and husband behind for a solitary road trip across the US, said The Guardian. Barely 20 miles in, she "catches sight of a hot young guy on a garage forecourt", and then "embarks on a very different kind of journey". With this "outrageous and outrageously hilarious" work, "perimenopausal readers finally have their own *Portnoy's Complaint*", said The Washington Post.

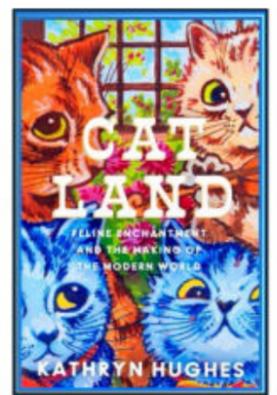


Catland

by Kathryn Hughes

Fourth Estate
416pp £22
(£17.99)

"Before they were beloved pets, cats were merely rough-and-ready mousers", said The Guardian. Then along came the Victorian illustrator Louis Wain, who transformed our relationship with felines by depicting them as cute and cuddly. Hughes's "joyous cultural history" is full of juicy titbits, said The Times – such as the fact that Charles Dickens turned the paw of his much-loved departed cat into a letter opener. It makes for a "charming" read.



Paperbacks

My Husband

by Maud Ventura
(trans. Emma Ramadan)

Penguin 272pp
£9.99 (£7.99)

"I love my husband as much as the first day I met him," the narrator of *My Husband* declares. You just know she's not to be trusted, said The Observer; and sure enough, Ventura's novel – a sensation when published in France in 2021 – tells a "compulsively disquieting" story. Dark and compelling, it's the "perfect psychological thriller" to "rip through by the pool", said The Independent.

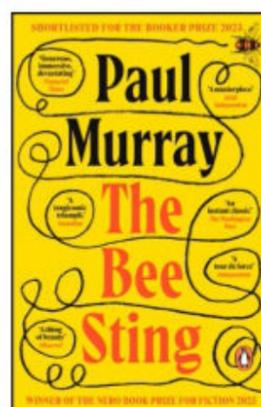


The Bee Sting

by Paul Murray

Penguin 656pp
£9.99 (£7.99)

Arguably "robbed of last year's Booker Prize", Paul Murray's novel is "unputdownable", said The Sunday Times. Set in Ireland after the 2008 crash, it chronicles the often very funny tribulations of the Barnes clan – a well-to-do family now facing financial ruin. From mum Imelda, "eBaying like mad", to 12-year-old PJ, the characters in this "timeless family saga" are highly memorable, said The Guardian.

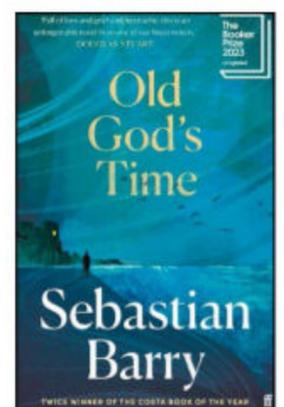


Old God's Time

by Sebastian Barry

Faber 272pp
£9.99 (£7.99)

Tom Kettle is a retired Dublin copper who "spends his days in a wicker chair gazing out at the Irish Sea", said The Times. But when two young policeman show up, asking about an old case involving "fecking priests", Kettle finds himself drawn back into his former life. Barry is one of our best writers, and his latest novel – long-listed for the Booker Prize – is "shattering".



To order these titles from The Week Bookshop at the bracketed price, contact 020-3176 3835, theweekbookshop.co.uk

Theatre: *Slave Play*

Noël Coward Theatre, London WC2 (0344-482 5151). Until 21 September Running time: 2hrs ★★★

“Is London ready for *Slave Play*?” runs the tagline for the biggest US import of the season, said Dominic Cavendish in *The Daily Telegraph*. Having been garlanded with awards on Broadway, Jeremy O. Harris’s play about the legacy of slavery arrives in the West End on a wave of hype, owing to its challenging themes, “risqué” content – racial slurs, nudity, simulated sex acts and violence – and its producers’ decision to hold “Black Out” performances for “black-identifying” theatre-goers, “an initiative seen by some as divisive”. With a strong cast that includes Kit Harington and Olivia Washington, the evening is not short of “arresting theatrics”, especially in the first act; but it suffers from a “long, sedentary” middle act, some declamatory writing, and a lack of characterisation. Perhaps, then, to avoid an anti-climax, audiences should set aside the hype, and approach the play not as a “zeitgeist-defining” piece of theatre, but as a “valuable work in progress” about the US’s “vexed race relations”.

Harris’s “overarching idea” is that historical racial violence lives on down the generations – and reveals itself in sexual dynamics, said Arifa Akbar in *The Guardian*. In the first act, three interracial couples are engaging in a novel sex therapy involving “antebellum” role play, which provides plenty of shock value:



Washington and Harington star in a needling piece of theatre

“rarely has a West End stage seen a giant black dildo employed on a *Gone with the Wind*-style four-poster bed”, along with master-slave cosplay. The second act consists of a group therapy session, and the third focuses on the intra-couple dynamics. Tonally uneven, with moments of “romping humour” and a “trotting pace”, the play throws its “subject matter in the air without quite landing it”. Nevertheless, this is a needling piece of theatre that will force a reaction, one way or another.

The evening works best in the “superior psychodrama” of the third act, said Dominic Maxwell in *The Times*. “Finally, there is real pain, ambiguity and oddness.” Ultimately, though, this is an “ideas-led piece” that might stimulate over one hour, but has “unwisely swollen to two”.

The week’s other opening

The Paddington Bear Experience County Hall, London SE1 (020-4592 8671). Until 30 March 2025

This immersive show, in which actors lead audiences through a series of hands-on games to prepare for a Marmalade Day jamboree at 32 Windsor Gardens, should prove a treat for Paddington fans of all ages, especially under-eights (*Guardian*).

Podcasts... on festivals, toxic chemicals, and cocaine gangs

Anyone heading to a music festival this summer should tune in to **Sonic Fields**, an “intimate” series exploring the history of festivals in the UK, said Miranda Sawyer in *The Observer*. It is the work of the producer Sam Tyler, who made the “endearing” five-part series *There Are No Greater Heroes*, about the “obscure psych-folk trio Tony, Caro and John”. Gentle as well as curious, Tyler is an excellent interviewer. From Ray Foulk, one of the organisers of the original Isle of Wight festivals, he discovers how Bob Dylan was persuaded to play there in 1969, though he declined to perform at Woodstock that year – and we also get the inside story of the 1970 Isle of Wight festival, which attracted a crowd of up to 700,000, making it bigger than Woodstock. We hear about Glastonbury in the days when it still had a “free festival” vibe, and about the legendary (and free) Stonehenge music festival of 1974. Put aside your “capitalist breadhead cynicism” and “get your mind boggled”.

The first series of *Buried*, a terrific investigative podcast made by the environmental reporters Dan Ashby and Lucy Taylor, was a hit last year, said Fiona Sturges in *The Financial Times*. For the second series, **Buried: The Last Witness**, the pair have teamed up with the Welsh actor Michael Sheen, to explore the “shocking” story of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), toxic fire-retardant



The 1970 Isle of Wight Festival

chemicals that were used in everything from paint to paper, until they were banned in most countries in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Back in 2017, Sheen was scrolling the internet when he saw a reference to Douglas Gowan, a former National Farmers’ Union consultant who’d become concerned about the impact of PCBs leaking from a landfill site in South Wales in the late 1960s, and spent years trying, in vain, to blow the whistle. Sheen arranged to meet Gowan, who died in 2018, and recordings of some of their conversations are included in this disturbing podcast. “There is much here that will make you gasp, not just at the human and environmental impact of PCBs, but at the brazenness of those responsible.”

“Who goes to a pub with a machine gun on Christmas Eve?” That’s the haunting question posed by the father of Elle Edwards, a 26-year-old beautician who was killed on 24 December 2022 when a low-level drug dealer involved in a local turf war opened fire outside a pub in the Wirral, said Jenny McCartney in *The Spectator*. Hers is one of several sobering human stories told in **Cocaine Inc.**, an “absorbing” eight-part true-crime podcast (from *The Times* and News Corp Australia), which explores the global impact of the cocaine industry through different local examples. It’s a “searing” series, packed with “compelling” stories.

Stars reflect the overall quality of reviews and our own independent assessment (5 stars=don’t miss; 1 star=don’t bother)



Longlegs

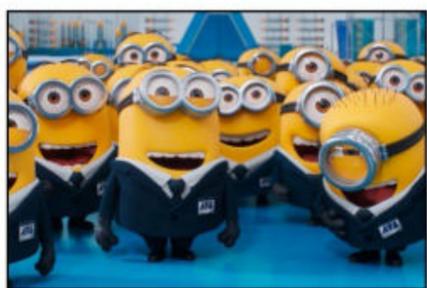
1hr 41mins (15)

A bewigged Nicolas Cage is truly terrifying in this nerve-jangling horror film

★★★★

You could easily mistake *Longlegs* for “just another serial killer flick”, said Tom Shone in *The Sunday Times*. But, in fact, it is something far rarer: “a horror film that gives you a bona fide case of the heeby-jeebies”. Set in Oregon in the 1990s, it stars Maika Monroe as FBI agent Lee Harker, whose uncanny, almost supernatural, talent for rooting out murderers lands her with a special assignment: to track down an elusive suspect dubbed Longlegs (Nicolas Cage). His MO is to persuade previously respectable men to murder their own wives and children, and then to kill themselves. The idea that drives *Longlegs*, an idea “shared by only the very best horror films”, is a thoroughly terrifying one – “that true horror does not reside in something outside menacing us, but the thoughts we can’t control bubbling up inside of us”.

“Only about once every two or three years does a horror-thriller as good as *Longlegs* lope into view,” said Tim Robey in *The Daily Telegraph*. Director Osgood Perkins fills every “sickly vista” with “an inescapable menace”; and “nested away” within the film is “perhaps the most terrifying performance of Cage’s career”. In the first half, we only get “cropped glimpses” of him – but “brace yourself for his strangely motherly set of lips”, his “hideous wig”, his habit of “gradually screaming”, and his penchant for “nonsense rhymes”. “Nerve-jangling and devilishly bleak, *Longlegs* is easily the front-runner for the scariest movie of 2024,” said Jen Yamato in *The Washington Post*. Cage “cranks the dial, sealing his Longlegs as one of the great horror villains”; and “even the end credits are cleverly designed to ensure viewers linger in a state of visceral unease, letting the dread sink in”.



Despicable Me 4

1hr 34mins (U)

Passable children’s entertainment timed for the school holidays

★★★

“The first popcorn-muncher and slushie-slurper of the summer is here, just in time for the school holidays,” said Brian Viner in *The Daily Mail*. “And the good news is that *Despicable Me 4* – the sixth film in the *Minions* franchise – is “great fun”, with “plenty of sharply scripted gags that will appeal to parents even while whizzing over the heads of their little cherubs”. In this outing, the former super-villain now super-agent Gru (voiced by Steve Carell) is forced to move with his family and Minion sidekicks into a safe house, because his arch nemesis Maxime (Will Ferrell) has escaped from jail and is bent on revenge. The film is “splendidly animated, laugh-out-loud funny at times”, and features an “A-list voice cast” that also includes Stephen Colbert, Steve Coogan and Kristen Wiig.

There isn’t a plot as such, said Robbie Collin in *The Daily Telegraph* – what drives the film along is just a series of implicit questions, such as: “What would happen if the Minions caught a bus?” What if they were given access to military hardware? “What if Gru played tennis?” But, like all the instalments in this series, it’s “light, bright and daft” – a 90-minute helping of “mad animals, disco music, violence and belching. If a good film can be made of those things, this is what it looks like.” It’s hardly surprising that they keep churning out *Despicable Me* movies, said Brian Lowry on CNN – the last one raked in more than \$1bn worldwide. The question is, will audiences keep watching? This animation struck me as a “tired” and “disjointed” mess, with “roughly as many legitimate laughs as can be counted on a Minion’s three-digit hand”. Whatever novelty existed “when the franchise made its debut” has now drained away, leaving nothing but warmed-up “Gru-el”.



Fly Me to the Moon

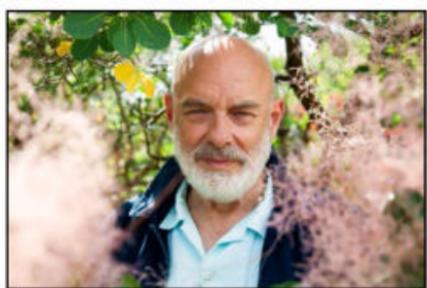
2hrs 12mins (12A)

Sketchy romcom set in 1960s America

★★

This period romcom treads over familiar ground, said Matthew Bond in *The Mail on Sunday*, while delivering a “likeable” slice of “lightweight entertainment”. Set in the late 1960s in the build-up to Nasa’s first Moon landing, it stars Scarlett Johansson as Kelly, a “ruthless advertising executive” who is hired by a shadowy Nixon apparatchik (Woody Harrelson) to sell the Apollo 11 mission to the American public – and to film a staged version of the landing in case the real one goes wrong. Nasa’s launch director, Cole (Channing Tatum), is appalled by Kelly’s strategy of creating “advertising tie-ins that see the crew of Apollo 11 wearing exclusive watches”, swigging soft drinks and posing in front of sports cars; but it’s clear from the start that this “clean-cut all-American hero also finds her very attractive”. Director Greg Berlanti imbues “the whole thing with a 1950s ‘sex comedy’ feel”. Johansson just about makes this conceit work, but Tatum “is no Gregory Peck”, and just seems miscast. Still, it’s all good fun, and you should leave the cinema smiling.

The film was originally destined for streaming, but was so positively reviewed at test screenings it was given a cinema release, said Kevin Maher in *The Times*. Alas, “boosted into the bigger, brighter and uncompromising glare of the cinema space, it is cruelly exposed”. The screenplay is “sketchy, at best”, and the romance is “completely devoid of rocket fuel”. Johansson is very “watchable”, and “the production values are sensational”, said Deborah Ross in *The Spectator*. But it isn’t especially funny, and Tatum, dressed in a series of turtlenecks, is “often left to stare into the distance”.



Eno

1hr 40mins (12A)

Unconventional documentary about the musician and activist

★★★★

How do you capture in a conventional documentary “the mercurial character, the elastic creativity and the prolific and endlessly inventive output of an artist such as Brian Eno”? The answer “is that you can’t”, said Wendy Ide in *The Observer*. So rather than follow the standard rock star documentary format, and provide a “dutiful plod through talking-head interviews and archive footage”, director Gary Hustwit came up with something entirely novel: a film that is different every time. Owing to “specially developed software”, each time the documentary plays in the cinema, different scenes will be shown in different orders. According to the filmmakers, there are 52 quintillion possible iterations. So I can tell you that the documentary I saw was “thoughtful and philosophical”, but bear in mind that this version “will never be seen again”.

Eno is a “fascinating honeycomb of interlocking sequences”, each of which tackles a “different facet” of the musician, producer, artist and activist’s methods, philosophy and career, said Sam Wigley in *Sight and Sound*. “Common to many of these particles are warm, unguarded interviews with Eno at his home and studio in Norfolk, where he’s seen layering sounds at his computer and out admiring shrubs in his garden.” His Roxy Music co-stars, his collaborator David Bowie, “and a mixing-desk session with U2 are in the blend too”. This “pick’n’mix doc” is not, ultimately, “as radical as it purports to be, or as revealing as it could have been”, said Steve Rose in *The Guardian*. But it is “stimulating and cerebral”, and Eno comes across as appealingly funny and self-deprecating.

Exhibition of the week **Francis Alÿs: Ricochets**

Barbican Art Gallery, London EC1 (020-7870 2500, barbican.org.uk). Until 1 September

Francis Alÿs “is one of the most humane and poetic artists at work today”, said Laura Cumming in *The Observer*. Born in Antwerp in 1959 and long based in Mexico, he is probably best known for his “tremendous” ongoing video series *Children’s Games*. Since 1999, he has been filming children at play all over the world, his camera recording everything from snail racing in Belgium to improvised games of jacks in Nepal to kite flying in Afghanistan – an activity famously banned by the Taliban. Each film is “brief, enthralling to watch and beautifully observed”. Each shows “inventiveness, vitality, resourcefulness, joy” – the “power of resilience and solidarity” of childhood play. This show at London’s Barbican brings together many of the 40-plus videos the artist has made to date, alongside drawings and animations created over the course of his travels. It is a “mesmerising” exhibition that demands to be seen.

Ricochets is a “cacophonous” experience, said Anna Parker in *ArtReview* magazine. Ten films play at once in a single gallery, filling the space with “shrieking and laughing”, as well as the onslaught of sound created by the games themselves: in Havana, children race across “unfinished concrete” on improvised go-karts; snow makes a “squeaky crunch” as it is compacted under the weight of sledges in Switzerland; in Morocco, kids clack pebbles



Children’s Game #39: Parol, Kharkiv (2023): the “power of resilience and solidarity”

together before skimming them across the sea towards Gibraltar. That many videos have been made in combat zones is no coincidence: “in wartime settings, children are powerless, but because ordinary routines have been disrupted, perversely they are left freer to play”. Alÿs captures one example in Kharkiv, where he films boys dressed in combat fatigues manning a makeshift checkpoint and flagging down cars to inspect papers or demand a password (the Ukrainian word for bread, which Russians find hard to pronounce).

Violence frequently punctures the fun, said Adrian Searle in *The Guardian*. One film sees a group of Ukrainian children playing a game called “Air Raid Alert”, in which voices imitating the noise of sirens become “intolerable” for one young participant, who “suddenly flees the camera”. In Mosul, Iraqi adolescents play football, running and tackling amid “burnt-out cars and shattered buildings”, stopping only when gunfire interrupts play. It takes a moment to notice that they don’t actually have a ball; in 2015, a caption informs us, 13 teenage boys were publicly executed by Islamic State for the crime of watching a televised football match. The show never feels intrusive or voyeuristic: whatever he does, Alÿs’s work is always “a collaboration with the participants” and he knows “when to stop”. *Ricochets* is “an often heart-stopping and frequently beautiful” exhibition.

Where to buy...

The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery

Patricia Leite

at Thomas Dane Gallery

Patricia Leite (b.1955) is an artist deeply versed in the folklore of her native Brazil, who seems particularly fascinated by connections between this heritage and the country’s ecology – much of which is now menaced by climate change and human interference. The works in *Paisagem de Lenda*, this show at Thomas Dane Gallery – nine paintings on wood, plus a large, rug-like tapestry – are largely inspired by the story of a young girl transformed into a water lily by an indigenous South American Moon goddess. Most, also, are rather beautiful: in two cases, Leite paints the ribs and veins of a lily directly onto boat-shaped drinking vessels; *Jaci* – named for the goddess – is a monumental (if more conventional) view of the night sky



Detail from Vista aérea (2024)

observed from under water, tropical foliage bowing down towards our view in apparent curiosity. *Mumuru* (por *Burle Marx*), the tapestry, is a bird’s eye view of what might be the same pond, its dark surface scattered with lilies. It’s as impressive as it is sad. Prices on request.

11 Duke Street, St James’s, London SW1 (020-7925 2505). Until 3 August

A rare “artist’s widow”

Dorothy Lichtenstein, the widow of the great Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, died earlier this month at her home on Long Island. “An elegant and engaging woman who did not claim to have any artistic talent, Ms Lichtenstein redefined the image of the ‘artist’s widow’, a relentlessly maligned art-world type,” said *The New York Times*. Far from being controlling and grasping, as the cliché suggests, she gave most of her husband’s work away: “paintings and sculptures, piles of sketchbooks, file drawers bulging with correspondence, and even the building in Lower Manhattan in which Mr Lichtenstein’s last studio was located”. The main beneficiary was the Whitney Museum of American Art, which in 2018 received a gift of some 400 works. She also supervised a *catalogue raisonné* of the artist’s 5,500-work opus. Most such catalogues are published in expensive deluxe editions; Lichtenstein’s is online, and anyone can consult it free of charge.





Best books... Mishal Husain

The journalist, newsreader and presenter of BBC Radio 4's Today chooses her six favourite books. Her new memoir, *Broken Threads: My Family From Empire to Independence* (Fourth Estate £18.99), is out now

The **Little Women** books by Louisa May Alcott, 1868-1886 (Vintage £7.99 each). Not so much the best-known first one, but the follow-ups, in which Jo sets up a school with her husband, and Alcott charts the lives of the boys who come there. I loved the entire quintet through my teenage years.

The Wandering Falcon by Jamil Ahmad, 2011 (Penguin £12.99). This can be seen as a novella or a series of linked short stories, but either way it's a poignant portrait of life in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan. There are age-old customs, social mores and privations, as well as conflict with nation-state ideology. The "falcon"

of the title is actually a little boy, struggling to survive.

The Past Is Myself by Christabel Bielenberg, 1968 (Penguin £10.99). I read this autobiography of a British woman's life in Nazi Germany after seeing *Christabel*, the BBC series it inspired, in the 1980s. Written with simplicity, directness and humanity, it laid the ground for my own interest in history as reflected in family stories.

The Ordinary Princess by M.M. Kaye, 1980 (Puffin £7.99). A children's story about a princess whose fairy godmothers turn up at her christening, bestowing gifts such as wit. The final one,

Crustacea, arrives in a bad mood and gives the baby ordinariness instead.

King Leopold's Ghost by Adam Hochschild, 1998 (Picador £10.99). A horrifying, brilliantly told account of colonialism as a personal enterprise, describing the Belgian king's "acquisition" and brutal plunder of Congo.

Selected Poems by Louis MacNeice, 1944 (Faber £14.99). This volume by the under-appreciated, Belfast-born MacNeice contains the lyrical *Autumn Journal*, written in – and about – the autumn of 1938. It powerfully conjures up ordinary life in England amid the hovering threat of war.

Titles in print are available from The Week Bookshop on 020-3176 3835. For out-of-print books visit biblio.co.uk

The Week's guide to what's worth seeing

Showing now

Elton John has written the music for this stage adaptation of **The Devil Wears Prada**, starring Vanessa Williams. Until 17 August, Theatre Royal Plymouth (theatreroyal.com); from 24 October, Dominion Theatre, London W1 (devilwearspradamusical.com).

Henry Moore's haunting sketches of Londoners sheltering in Underground tunnels during the Blitz are on display in **Shadows on the Wall**, a free show that challenges our view of Moore the sculptor. Until 22 September, The Courtauld, London WC2 (courtauld.ac.uk).

Book now

The **Summer at Snape** season features musical and spoken word events. Highlights include a performance by the Irish Baroque Orchestra and *Women's Stories from the Ancient World*, a collaboration between Mary Beard and soprano Nardus Williams. 26 July-31 August, Snape Maltings, Suffolk (brittenpearsarts.org).

Money Talks will weigh up the sometimes contentious relationship between currency



Detail from a Grayson Perry tapestry at Money Talks

and art, with exhibits ranging from ancient coins and art nouveau banknotes to works by Warhol and Banksy. 9 August-5 January 2025, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (ashmolean.org).

Adrien Brody makes his London stage debut in **The Fear of 13**, a new play about a death row prisoner. Inevitably, it sold out fast, but you can sign up to be alerted about ticket releases. 4 October-30 November, Donmar Warehouse, London WC2 (donmarwarehouse.com).

Television

Programmes

Love & Death True-crime drama starring Elizabeth Olsen and Jesse Plemons. In 1970s Texas, Candy starts an affair with a member of her church, leading to a brutal murder. Sat 20 Jul, ITV1 22:00 (55mins).

Britain Behind Bars: A Secret History Rob Rinder presents a three-part history of Britain's prisons, and meets former inmates who describe their experiences. Sun 21 Jul, C4 21:00 (60mins).

The Battle to Beat Malaria Documentary following scientists on four continents as they work to develop malaria vaccines. Mon 22 Jul, BBC2 20:00 (60mins).

Hell Jumper A powerful first-person account of the young volunteers – from Britain and elsewhere – who risked their lives to rescue strangers from Ukraine's warzones. Wed 24 Jul, BBC2 21:00 (90mins).

Olympics 2024: Opening Ceremony Clare Balding presents the BBC's coverage of the four-hour spectacle in Paris, which kicks off with a parade along the Seine. Fri 26 Jul, BBC1 17:45 (255mins).

Films

Chariots of Fire (1981) The Oscar-winning drama based on real events about two very different British runners, Eric Liddell and Harold Abraham, and their paths to the Paris Olympics of 1924. Sun 21 Jul, BBC2 13:00 (120mins).

Queen & Slim (2019) Daniel Kaluuya and Jodie Turner-Smith star in this politically charged drama about a young black couple in the US who are pulled over by cops on their first date, with disastrous consequences. Thur 25 Jul, BBC2 23:30 (125mins).

New to streaming TV

Sprint Netflix offers up a side order to the Olympics with this six-part docuseries following a group of elite sprinters preparing for Paris.

Lady in the Lake Drama series about an unsolved murder in 1960s Baltimore that drives a housewife (Natalie Portman) to reinvent herself as an investigative reporter. On Apple TV+.

The Archers: what happened last week

Alistair and Denise have a romantic day out on the lake; Denise knows she needs to tell John their marriage is over. George is anxious to hear that Chris was asking about the fruit cider bottle in Alice's car; meanwhile, Neil advises Chris to move on. George films the haymaking for his social media. With the strangles cases cleared, The Stables' temporary manager Carlotta helps Lilian plan the reopening. There's an awkward moment for Alistair as Paul talks about his parents' great marriage. Denise finally tells John the truth. John walks off, saying he won't see Paul tonight as planned – Denise can explain why. As they enjoy a beer, Neil and Ben hand George a fruit cider; paranoid George storms off, leaving them wondering why. After a tough first meeting with the BL Board, Stella has doubts about greenwashing but is determined to keep going. John tells Denise he's going to tell Paul their marriage is over. After a frosty scene at the surgery, Paul and John leave together, leaving Alistair to wonder if Paul will reveal their relationship – Denise doesn't know.

Elegant listed buildings

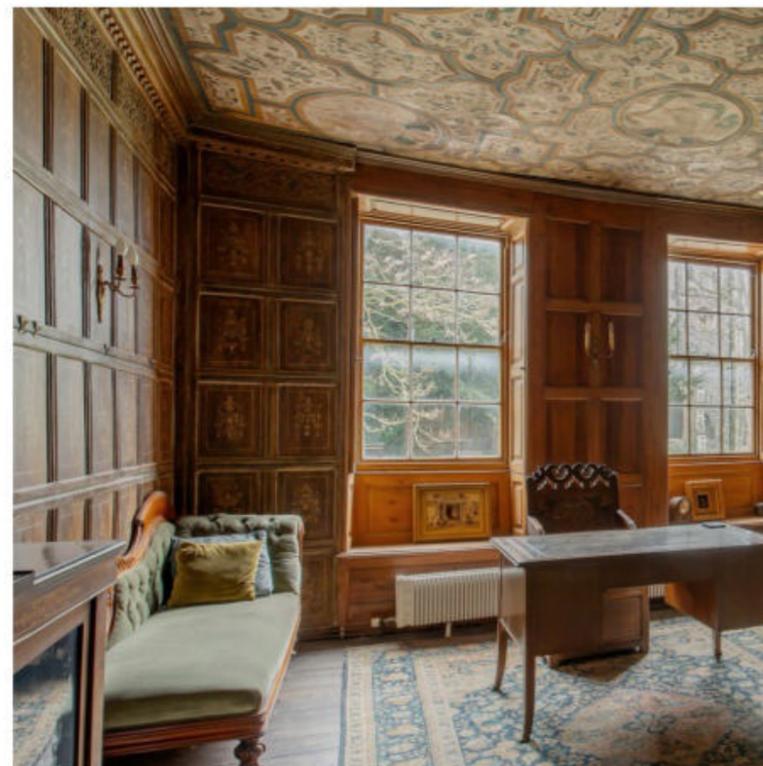


▲ **Suffolk:** Clare, Sudbury. A delightful 17th century farmhouse. 5 beds, family bath, shower, kitchen/dining room, 2 receps, garden, garage. £899,950; David Burr (01787-277811).

▼ **Dorset:** Stinsford House, Dorchester. Part of a converted manor house with plenty of original period features. 3 beds, 3 baths, kitchen/dining room, 2 receps, communal gardens, parking. £450,000; Symonds & Sampson (01305-261008).



► **Hertfordshire:** Melbourn Street, Royston. This handsome 17th century Grade I Jacobean house retains a wealth of original features, including murals and wood panelling. 9 beds, 3 baths, 4 receps, garden, outbuildings, parking. £1.85m; Savills (01223-347147).



▲ **Oxfordshire:** Manor Farm Cottage, Burford. An attractive Georgian property situated in a tranquil village and surrounded by mature gardens. 3 beds, 2 baths, kitchen/breakfast room, 2 receps, study, conservatory, garden, garage. £1m; Butler Sherborn (01993-825737).





▲ **County Durham:** Church House, Hunstanworth. This charming converted church dates back to the 1860s and overlooks the Derwent Valley. 3 beds, family bath, kitchen, 3 receps, garden, workshop, garage. £550,000; Finest Properties (01434-622234).

◀ **Essex:** Beeleigh Abbey. A Grade I, 13th century abbey with approx. 35 acres of grounds and 318 acres of farmland. 6 beds, 6 baths, kitchen, 4 receps, 3-bed cottage, outbuildings, garden (avail. in lots). £5.45m; Strutt & Parker (01473-220449).



▲ **Cornwall:** Wooda, Warleggan. This Georgian regency former farmhouse sits in a peaceful rural location on the southern edge of Bodmin Moor. 4 beds, family bath, shower, kitchen/breakfast room, 3 receps, garden, garage. £975,000; Lillicrap Chilcott (01872-273473).



▶ **Oxfordshire:** The Little Castle, Upper Brailes. An enchanting crenelated Victorian cottage in a popular village. 4 beds, family bath, shower, kitchen, 2 receps. £395,000; Hayman-Joyce (01608-651188).

◀ **West Sussex:** Barnham Court, Barnham. Magnificent 17th century Grade I English baroque property set in landscaped grounds. 5 beds, 5 baths, kitchen, 6 receps, self-contained 1-bed cottage, swimming pool, garden, garage. £3.75m; Knight Frank (01428-770562).



Unexpected ice cream pairings

In recent years, foodies have become accustomed to chefs devising ever wackier flavours of ice cream, says Tomé Morrissy-Swan in *The Observer*. An early exemplar of the trend was Heston Blumenthal, who first served his legendary bacon and egg ice cream at *The Fat Duck* some 20 years ago. Among the oddities that have since followed are the Heinz Beanz and Sarson's Malt Vinegar ice creams served at fashion brand Anya Hindmarch's summer concept store, *The Ice Cream Project*, in central London. Now, it seems, chefs – and some non-chefs – are getting similarly creative. “Waitrose's senior innovation chef, Will Torrent, said recently that he likes his scoop of sea salt and caramel ice cream with an added topping of stilton.” He also recommends pairing white chocolate ice cream with Brie de Meaux. Not to be outdone, the singer Dua Lipa recently announced that she drizzles her vanilla ice cream with olive oil, “prompting a flurry of TikTok copycats”. *Kitchen Table*, a two Michelin-starred restaurant in London, serves caviar on top of walnut ice cream. It seems that the days when an ice cream topping was likely to mean either strawberry or chocolate sauce – with the possible addition of rainbow sprinkles – are well and truly gone.

The search for Britain's oldest food

“An enterprising woman from Hampshire” named Polly Wood launched an ingenious competition earlier this summer, says Sophia Money-Coutts in *The Daily*



Anya Hindmarch's Heinz Beanz ice cream

Telegraph. Those entering the Great Store Cupboard Challenge were invited to rootle around in their cupboards in search of Britain's oldest pantry item. I have a tin of beans that I've been ignoring for four years but it would have stood no chance against some of the “impressively aged” entrants Wood garnered. Among them were two tins of snails from 1977, a packet of 40-year-old custard powder and a tin of chocolates bearing an image of Queen Victoria, and dated 1900. Apparently, it's from a line sent to British troops fighting the Boer War. The challenge was charitable: it raised money to send old cars to Ukraine for use as ambulances; but it

also served as a reminder of those earlier generations who never discarded an old tin of luncheon meat, in case it one day came in handy. Of course, they may have risked botulism, but on the other hand, with their simpler diets (and no bagged salad) they didn't waste nearly as much as we do.

A shop for knife geeks

“If you want to indulge your inner culinary geek,” says Tony Turnbull in *The Times*, “you can do worse than lose a morning in *Kitchen Provisions*”. Located in Soho, central London, the shop is dedicated to Japanese utensils and cookware. “You can browse specialist pantry brushes made with goat or horse hair”; there are “agar jelly cutters” and “kelp-infused paper” for wrapping fish. But of course, the real attraction is the shop's vast collection of Japanese knives. The owner, Tom Saunders, says he fell down the “rabbit hole” of Japanese knives 12 years ago, and is now their biggest importer in Europe. It's a world where the “level of geekery can be dialled up as much as you want”. So too can the price: a knife made by a master blacksmith can cost thousands, though Saunders says you can buy an excellent *santoku* (all-purpose chef's knife) for a “much more affordable £170”. To help the uninitiated, he offers a knife concierge service: for £100, redeemable against a purchase, he “will close the door for an hour and give you his undivided attention”, guiding you through questions of blade finish, handle type and “Rockwell scales of hardness”.

Recipe of the week: Ci Ci's pancakes

I devised this pancake recipe for my daughter, because we had to reduce the amount of dairy in her diet, says chef Paul Ainsworth. I've been making them with Ci Ci most Sundays since she was three years old, and they are a staple in our household. So when I started putting together my first cookbook, I knew this recipe had to be included.

Serves 4

160g self-raising flour 2 eggs 210ml oat milk (or your preference of milk) pinch of sea salt 25g crunchy peanut butter
 ½ tsp vanilla extract 15g honey 1 tsp unsalted butter, for frying
 To serve: bananas, sliced raspberries Greek yoghurt maple syrup juice of 1 lemon sugar, for sprinkling

- In a large bowl, combine all of the pancake ingredients, except for the butter, and whisk it all together.
- Over a high heat, melt the butter in a frying pan. Once the butter is brown and nutty, add a ladleful of pancake batter and tip the pan to spread the mixture evenly. Leave it to cook for about 2 minutes, then flip and cook for a further 2 minutes; until your pancake is golden brown on each side.
- Remove from the heat and stack your pancakes on a plate to keep them warm while you repeat the process to cook the remaining batter.



- To serve, Ci Ci and I like to fold each pancake into quarters. Eat with sliced bananas, raspberries and a dollop of Greek yoghurt and maple syrup – or you can keep things classic with lemon juice and sugar.
- **Tip:** You can adjust the consistency by adding more or less milk, depending on your pancake style preference. If you like American-style pancakes, then the batter should resemble the consistency of thick, live yoghurt. Ci Ci and I prefer the crêpe-style pancakes, which are thinner; the consistency of the batter should just coat the back of your spoon.

Taken from *For the Love of Food: Recipes for life's delicious moments* by Paul Ainsworth (Pavilion Books £26).
 Photography by Issy Croker. To buy from *The Week Bookshop* for £20.99, call 020-3176 3835 or visit theweekbookshop.co.uk.

New cars: what the critics say



Citroën ë-C3
Price: from £21,990

Car Magazine

Citroën is now positioned as the Stellantis group's value brand, to rival Dacia. The all new ë-C3 – the first C3 available with an electric powertrain – has been pared back, with 30% fewer parts than the previous generation, but it has grown in stature. At 1.57m high, it is 100mm taller, plus 19mm longer and 6mm wider than before, making it roomier inside. "It's good value, but doesn't feel cheap."

Top Gear Magazine

"Remarkably good value", the ë-C3 gets a 111bhp electric motor with a 44kWh battery for a range of 199 miles (a cheaper, 124-mile version with a smaller battery is due next year). Comfort is a priority, and with advanced suspension as standard, it has an impressively smooth ride. It's no sports car, but is nippy enough, and steering is light yet accurate. There is a bit of roll, though.

Autocar

This "feel-good supermini" is "refreshingly simple" inside: there's a 10.25in touchscreen with wireless connectivity, plus proper controls for heating and air-con. There's plenty of room front and rear, and the supportive seats sit higher for a commanding driving position. However, the 310-litre boot has an awkwardly high load lip, and there are "naff" tags with messages such as "be happy" on the armrests.

The best... chimineas



◀ Casa Mia Primo Wood-Burning Chiminea

This contemporary outdoor wood burner is made from powder-coated steel, and has a useful wood storage space in the base. With its tall (150cm) cylindrical design, it directs smoke upwards and away from those sat around it. Simple assembly required (£180; robertdyas.co.uk).

▶ Kilauea Steel Chiminea with Log Store

This industrial-style chiminea has a generous opening for extra warmth, and a peaked rain lid to keep everything dry. It also has built-in storage for logs at the bottom and measures 125cm high and 45cm wide. It does require minimal assembly (from £85; houseoffraser.co.uk).



▶ Ivylino Leo Steel Chiminea Firepit

A contemporary take on the classic chiminea, this tear-shaped burner is made from premium frost-proof, UV-resistant steel. It heats up efficiently, and gives off plenty of warmth and light. Easy to maintain, it comes fully assembled and is 120cm tall (£400; johnlewis.com).

◀ **Garden Heater with Wood Store** Available in matt black or this rust brown finish, this chiminea has a slim vertical chimney pipe with an integrated rain lid. It measures 140cm high by 38cm wide and is made from mild steel. It also has a space for storing logs (£229; aplaceforeverything.co.uk).



▶ Colima X-Large Mexican Chiminea

Handcrafted and painted in Mexico, this classic model has a wide belly with a generous opening for larger logs, and its tall chimney has a separate rain lid. The clay absorbs heat and acts like a radiator. 125cm high and 55cm wide, it comes with a steel stand (£272; diy.com).



SOURCE: THE INDEPENDENT

Tips... travel hacks to save money or time

- If you can, fly on a Monday. Flights will probably be cheaper than at the weekend. Hotels should be too.
- Travelling at the end of August is often better value than the beginning, as most families want to go on holiday as soon as possible after the schools break up.
- If you're hiring a car, don't get the excess waiver from the rental firm. Buy an independent waiver policy online, where it will cost as little as £16. Which? suggests Cover4Rentals and ReduceMyExcess.
- If you want to move faster through airport security, many airports now offer fast-track passes allowing you to use a dedicated line (for around £7 per person). You'll need to book through the airport's site in advance.
- If your phone provider has reintroduced data roaming charges to EU countries, buy an eSim and you can activate a plan with a cheaper provider, via an app, once you land.
- For long-haul flights, try leaving from a European airport. It may be cheaper, especially if you are going in business class.

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

THE WEEK 20 July 2024

And for those who have everything...



Backed by sommeliers and winemakers, the Winewizard claims to be able to "age" cheap plonk in seconds, transforming it into something far more well-rounded and complex. It works by flooding the wine with oxygen bubbles, to neutralise sulfites and soften tannins. **£50; vinalchemy.com**

SOURCE: THE MAIL ON SUNDAY

Where to find... the best wine subscription boxes

Wine Club by Majestic has an educational element, with tasting materials and expert advice via webinars. You get four cases a year, based around a different region, country or grape, to refine your knowledge (from £99/quarter; majestic.co.uk).

Savage Vines aims to introduce subscribers to new wine regions and grape varieties. It handpicks wines from small wineries with a focus on the organic and bio-dynamic (from £35/month; savagevines.co.uk).

Wine Unpacked lets you try before you buy. Its tasting kit has 12 mini bottles, to build a taste profile with your preferences. Its wines, from small, independent producers, have tasting notes and pairing suggestions (from £39/two months; wineunpacked.com).

Corkk Club focuses on English wine, championing independent vineyards. You can customise your subscription, with still, sparkling or mixed cases available in different sizes, from one bottle to 12 (from £19/quarter; corkk.co.uk).

SOURCE: EVENING STANDARD

This week's dream: across Andalusia on horseback

“This sort of landscape gives you an insight into Eternity,” wrote Penelope Chetwode of Spain’s rural south in her classic travel book *Two Middle-Aged Ladies in Andalusia*. The region’s rugged hinterland remains as “vast” and “beautiful” and “still” today as it was when she rode across it in 1961, says Sophy Roberts in the FT, and there’s no better way to discover it than on horseback. I joined a group riding trip with a guide – George Scott, who grew up in England but now lives near Cazalla de la Sierra, a village north of Seville. From there, we rode west through the Morena mountains to the Portuguese border – a journey of about 100 miles along old cattle trails, mule tracks and pilgrimage routes, on which we met just one other tourist in the course of a week.

Scott’s staff went ahead of us to set up bell tents “festooned with hurricane lamps”, and dining tables “dressed in gingham and antique damasks”. But Scott improvised the routes in between these camps, apparently trusting in “the poetry



The tour guide improvised and trusted in “the poetry of serendipity”

of serendipity”. (Chetwode herself wrote that she had made many discoveries owing to “the splendid inaccuracy of the maps”.) The journey felt more “difficult” as a result, and we occasionally got lost, but for me this only made it more dreamlike – a sense that began on the first night, when we arrived at Scott’s 16th century farmhouse to find its “crumbling courtyards” illuminated by hundreds of candles.

Scott proved a good guide to the region’s “cultural layers” – from bullfighting and shepherding to the “unspoken atrocities” of the civil war. We rode through pine forests and groves of evergreen oaks,

along riverbanks “bejewelled” with birds, and through wildflower meadows alive with butterflies. Deer staring at us from the woods called to mind a renaissance tapestry, and one day we were joined by a muleteer who sang flamenco beside our campfire – two timeless scenes among many on an unforgettable adventure.

The trip costs €7,000 per person (georgescottrides.com).

Getting the flavour of...



Wildlife spotting in the Cairngorms

With the third-largest area of ancient Caledonian forest in Scotland, the Glen Tanar Estate is a “beautiful” place to go looking for the region’s wildlife, says Sally Coffey in *The Times*. Set in the Cairngorms National Park – and encompassing one of its nine national nature reserves – it is home to pine martens, red squirrels and golden eagles. There’s a hide, from which I spotted a wildcat (although I later wondered if it was just a “feral tabby”), and I also enjoyed the tour I took with the guides at Wild Discovery, who charge £160 per hour for groups. The estate’s self-catering cottages are peaceful, and there are some charming villages to visit nearby, including Ballater (home to the “superb” Fish Shop restaurant) and Crathie, which is a stone’s throw from Balmoral Castle.

A quieter national park in California

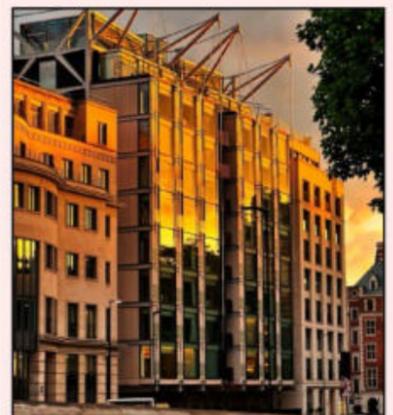
Nicknamed “the Galapagos of North America” for their many endemic species (roughly 150, all

told), California’s Channel Islands (pictured) are beautiful and relatively easy to reach. Yet they see far fewer visitors than some of the state’s other national parks, says Zoey Goto in *National Geographic Traveller* – making for more complete peace on their hilly hiking trails. During the three-hour ferry trip from Ventura – 70 miles north of Los Angeles – you stand a good chance of seeing whales and dolphins. On the second-largest island, Santa Rosa, you might spot rare species, such as the island spotted skunk and the island fox. And kayaking around the islands is great fun too. From Santa Cruz (the largest), I paddled in and out of an “echoey network” of sea caves, and spotted a seal “keeping a watchful eye over her fluffy pup”. See islandkayaking.com and islandpackers.com for further information.

Off the beaten track in Albania

Albania has emerged as this summer’s coolest beach destination. Its turquoise waters are all over Instagram, as is the hip party scene that has sprung up around the coastal town of Ksamil. But if you go, it’s well worth exploring inland too, says Johanna Thomas-Corr in *The Sunday Times* – and, beyond the best-known towns and cities (Tirana, Gjirokastër and so on), I can particularly recommend Shkodër. A “sedate” resort town in the north, it is the gateway to the spectacularly beautiful Accursed Mountains, and also worth getting to know itself, with its atmospheric old town. Stay for a few days’ hiking, and on the way back down south, stop off at Mrizi I Zanave, an “agriturismo-style farm restaurant” in a glorious setting, where the wonderful rustic cuisine and warmly festive atmosphere make you feel as though you’re a guest at a “19th century country wedding”.

Hotel of the week



The Emory London

London’s priciest hotels generally occupy solid old buildings of brick or stone – but not The Emory, says Toby Skinner in *Condé Nast Traveller*. The capital’s first all-suite hotel sits in a sleek “glassy box” overlooking Hyde Park – one of the late Richard Rogers’s final projects. Inside, however, it offers the same “quiet luxury” as its rivals – from its ground-floor restaurant (overseen by the chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten) to its 360-degree glass rooftop bar. The suites are all “soft-coloured” and “soft-edged”, and there’s a “gorgeously marbled” subterranean spa, with a 22-metre pool and a hyperbaric chamber.

Suites cost from £1,800; the-emory.co.uk.

Actress best known for her performance in *The Shining*

Shelley Duvall
1949-2024

Rake thin, with wide eyes, “a Modigliani face and tremulous, broken-doll voice”, Shelley Duvall would

have been a striking screen presence at any point in cinema history, said Ryan Gilbey in *The Guardian*. Even so, it was fortunate that she began acting in the 1970s, when the “unorthodox and the eccentric” were briefly embraced by Hollywood; and luckier still that she fell into the orbit of the director Robert Altman, who spotted her talent and enfolded her in his “unofficial repertory company”. Duvall, he said, could “swing all sides of the pendulum: charming, silly, sophisticated, pathetic – even beautiful”. He cast her in seven of his films, including *McCabe and Mrs. Miller*, *Nashville* and *Thieves Like Us*, and helped turn her into one of the biggest stars of the decade.



Duvall: starred in seven Altman films

Yet it was for a film made by Stanley Kubrick that Duvall became best known, said *The New York Times*. In 1980's *The Shining*, adapted from Stephen King's book, she played Wendy Torrance, whose writer husband (Jack Nicholson) loses his mind when they move into a mountain hotel, to work as its off-season caretakers. The shoot was gruelling. Famously exacting, Kubrick insisted on 127 takes for the scene in which Wendy tries to fend off her raging husband with a baseball bat; she worked 12 to 16 hours a day for 13 months, and was required, she said, to cry “for at least nine of those months”. King, who hated the film, described Kubrick's Wendy as “one of the most misogynistic characters ever put on screen”, and likened her to a “screaming dishrag”. The critics were not initially kind about Duvall's performance. But since then, it has been re-evaluated as a “shockingly realistic portrait of a woman trapped in an abusive relationship”. As for Kubrick's extreme methods, these have been described as tantamount to abuse. Duvall said that she'd never put herself through a shoot like that again. On the other hand,

she said that Kubrick's demanding direction had helped her to reach the depths of Wendy's fear and horror; and that she'd not trade the experience “for anything”.

Shelley Duvall was brought up in Texas. Her father was a lawyer; her mother an estate agent. She grew up loving books and stories, but aspired to become a nutritionist. At college, however, she was horrified by an experiment involving vivisection, and dropped out. She was 20, and living in Houston, when she met some of the crew working on Altman's *Brewster McCLOUD*. They told the director about this captivating young woman, and he was so taken with her, he gave her a small role in the film. Over the next few years, the parts he gave her got bigger, and in 1977 Woody Allen cast her in *Annie Hall*. On set, she met Paul Simon, who had a cameo role in the film, and they began an affair. He broke off the relationship on the day she flew to England to film *The Shining*.

When that shoot finished, Altman – a more freewheeling director whom she adored – gave her an altogether lighter role as Olive Oyl in *Popeye*, opposite Robin Williams. The film was a flop, but her endearing and subtle performance was highly praised. Later in the decade, she threw herself into a new project, creating and presenting a children's TV anthology series called the *Faerie Tale Theatre*, which featured a host of big-name stars who'd agreed to appear for a fraction of their normal fee. After that, her acting career waned. Then her home in LA was destroyed in an earthquake. She moved back to Texas in the mid-1990s, and faded from view. In 2016, however, she made a dramatic reappearance on the TV talk show *Dr. Phil*. She seemed distressed, paranoid and incoherent, and he was accused of exploiting her fragile mental health. She made her final screen appearance in 2023. She is survived by the musician Dan Gilroy, her partner since 1989.

Publicity loving criminal who stole *The Scream*

Pål Enger
1967-2024

As a child, growing up on a rundown housing estate in Oslo, Pål Enger became obsessed by *The Scream*. He'd first seen Munch's 1893 masterpiece on a school trip to the country's National Gallery, said *The Times*, and he revisited it at least twice a week for years. The terrible, wordless anxiety on the figure's face reminded him, he said, of how his violent stepfather made him feel. He determined that one day he would steal the painting, and, in 1994 he did steal it – albeit at the second attempt.

On his first attempt, in 1988, he'd smashed the wrong window, and took Munch's *Love and Pain* instead. He was caught, and used his four years in jail to plan his next raid. He timed it to coincide with the opening of the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer in 1994, when police would be distracted, but the plan was in other respects basic: he hired two men to drive to the gallery, climb up a ladder, smash a window and seize the painting. They got in and out in 52 seconds, and left a note reading: “A thousand thanks for the poor security.” Although he had an alibi, police suspected he was behind the theft, and he taunted them by posing for pictures in front of the empty wall in the gallery, and announcing in a newspaper that his newborn son had “arrived with a Scream”. He wanted people to know he was behind the crime. “I always liked attention,” he said. “I wanted money



Enger: a professional footballer

and fame. But at that time I most wanted to show the world I could pull off something huge.”

His problem was that the heist was too huge: his exploits had put an unwelcome spotlight on Norway's criminal underworld, and he started to get threats from crime bosses. The painting was too hot to sell, so he tried to extract a ransom for its safe return – which led him into a trap set by Charles Hill, Scotland Yard's famous art detective. Posing as an American art dealer, Hill persuaded Enger that he was acting for the Getty Museum in LA, which would be prepared to pay the ransom, in return for the right to exhibit the painting. The handover took place at a summer house outside Oslo; the moment that Hill had satisfied himself that the painting was genuine, police moved in.

Enger was born in 1967, and fell into crime in his teens. He was a talented footballer, and turned professional, but the wages he was earning could not have afforded him the lifestyle he had adopted. To pay for his Porsche and designer clothes, he was raiding jewellery shops and blowing up ATMs. He was jailed for six years for stealing *The Scream*, but it didn't deter him. He spent the rest of his life in and out of jail (including for more art thefts). And he continued to enjoy his notoriety. He staged an exhibition of his own Munch-inspired paintings in 2011, and was delighted when a documentary was made about him in 2023.

Companies in the news ...and how they were assessed



Seven days in the Square Mile

US stock markets barely budged after the assassination attempt on the former president Donald Trump, bolstering the belief that Trump remains the frontrunner. Shares in gun companies, such as **Smith & Wesson**, jumped higher: Trump is expected to resist calls for tighter gun controls. But **Nasdaq** sank by more than 2% on Wednesday, echoing a global sell-off of chip stocks after Trump observed that Taiwan – key to the global chipmaking industry – should pay for its own defences. The US Fed was expected to duck cutting **interest rates** again at this month's meeting. Traders are betting that the first move will come in September. **China** reported a record trade surplus as its factories continued an export blitz.

In Britain, **the pound** hit a one-year high against the dollar after UK inflation figures for June came in slightly above expectations at 2% – prompting traders to reduce their bets that the BoE will lower rates in August. The economy has expanded by 1.5% since the start of 2024 – the best five-month performance since 2017.

Google-owner **Alphabet** said it was in advanced talks to buy the Israeli-US cybersecurity company **Wiz** for £17.7bn. **DMGT**, publisher of the Daily Mail, pulled out of the race to buy The Telegraph Group, owing to fears of a long and complex competition inquiry. **HSBC** announced its new CEO would be its finance chief Georges Elhedery, who will take up the role in September.

Trump Media & Technology Group: a post-shot surge

Shares in Donald Trump's Truth Social media company surged by nearly 37% in early morning trading in New York, following the assassination attempt on the Republican presidential candidate, said the FT. The price of bitcoin also jumped – reflecting the market's view of the “shortening odds on a second Trump presidency”. Trump is seen as the more “pro-crypto candidate”, having voiced enthusiasm for bitcoin mining; “his campaign has also accepted cryptocurrency payments, a first for a major US party”. Some of the shine later wore off Trump Media, which was taken public in March in a merger with a blank cheque company, on fears of “share dilution” after the company struck a “financing pact” with Yorkville Advisors, said Bloomberg. But the choice of former Silicon Valley venture capitalist J.D. Vance as running mate has further buoyed Trump's business credentials: “many in the startup world rejoiced”. Elon Musk called the move “a great choice”. Vance is “close to the libertarian wing of the tech industry”, with links to radical thinkers such as Peter Thiel, said DealBook in The New York Times. Vance is less enamoured with Big Tech, believing it to be “too powerful”, and has called in the past for Google to be broken up.

SoftBank/Graphcore: chippy takeaway

Masayoshi Son loves a British chip company, said Paul Sawers on TechCrunch. Having acquired the Cambridge-based chip designer Arm for £24bn in 2016, his SoftBank investment fund has returned for seconds – snapping up the Bristol-based AI chipmaker Graphcore, reportedly for a knockdown \$500m-\$600m, after getting the go-ahead from regulators. Once described as Britain's answer to Nvidia, Graphcore was valued at nearly \$3bn in 2020, and attracted big-name corporate and institutional investors such as Microsoft and Sequoia Capital. But the company failed to “hit the giddy heights many had hoped it could reach”. With losses growing, “an acquisition always seemed the most likely outcome”. There are worse bedfellows than SoftBank, which went on to float Arm in New York, where it is now valued at close to \$200bn. Graphcore co-founder and CEO Nigel Toon welcomed the move, saying would likely bring “billions in investment in AI to the UK”. But he warned that unless British pension funds start backing the sector themselves, the UK risks a tech “talent drain to the US”, said Dan Milmo in The Guardian. The fate of Arm, it seems, hasn't been the wake-up call it should have been.

JPMorgan: historic profit

The return of animal spirits to company boardrooms has had a marked effect on the fortunes of Wall Street's goliaths, said Louisa Clarence-Smith in The Times. Its largest bank, JPMorgan, has just recorded “the biggest quarterly profit in the history of American banking, fuelled by a global revival in corporate dealmaking”: it unveiled a profit of \$18.15bn in the three months to the end of June – up 25% on a year earlier and well ahead of expectations. JPM's boss, Jamie Dimon, nonetheless struck a cautious note, warning that the global political situation “remains complex and potentially the most dangerous since the Second World War”. Moreover, the market could be betting too heavily on a fall in inflation and interest rates. Still, JPM remains “a bellwether” for its sector. Citigroup's second-quarter figures “also beat analysts' estimates”.

Burberry: CEO checks out as shares plummet

The Hollywood actor Brad Pitt, who is making his new film *F1*, showed up at Silverstone for the British Grand Prix earlier this month sporting a full-on Burberry ensemble, including a £320 bucket hat, said Isabella Fish in The Times. But beyond the celebrity circuit, punters are less convinced: the “oh-so-British” brand has been suffering big declines in sales and profits. Matters came to a head this week when a profit warning, the scrapping of the dividend, and news of imminent redundancies forced the departure of CEO Jonathan Akeroyd after just two years in the job. Burberry's fortunes look as chequered as its famous scarves.



Brad Pitt at Silverstone

The shock sent shares down 16%, taking total losses this year to nearly 50%, said Alex Brummer in the Daily Mail. Akeroyd's strategy of moving into high fashion and charging “Sloane Street prices for products that no one wants” has not been a happy one. A slowdown in China, a key market,

hasn't helped either. “Investors may comfort themselves” that “fashion is volatile”, and that Burberry's brand power will see it through. Let's hope so. It would be bad for the company, and UK manufacturing, were it to be sold to a luxury conglomerate or to private equity.

Chance would be a fine thing, said Aimee Donnellan on Reuters Breakingviews. Even if the numbers stacked up, deep-pocketed buyers such as France's LVMH are after “higher-end luxury than Burberry offers”, and private equity is likely to be “wary”. Burberry's new CEO Joshua Schulman (who hails from Coach and Michael Kors) faces a daunting challenge, particularly if he sticks with Akeroyd's “cakeism” – pursuing “upmarket dreams” while trying to “reconnect with traditional fans”, said Lex in the FT. “Burberry's predicament shows just how painful falling between two stools can be.”

Issue of the week: tackling Britain's water companies

Ofwat has published its interim verdict on suppliers' five-year business plans. Is it a cop out?

"Water is a simple business," said The Times. "You supply it in clean form" and dispose of it responsibly when used. "To achieve this you must invest diligently in infrastructure: pipes, sewers and treatment works" – a task that Britain's water industry, aided and abetted by a weak regulator, has signally failed to achieve. "The sector, once a magnet for investors" who saw it as a "cash cow fed by a captive market of bill payers", is "staggering under the weight of debts accrued over the past two decades". Now the party is over, the industry is asking customers to pick up the tab. Bills will have to rise, but there "should be no question of the taxpayer coming to the rescue" with bailouts. "Socialism for the rich is unacceptable."

For years, Ofwat has been accused of being asleep at the wheel, said Ben Marlow in The Daily Telegraph. But with Thames Water "on the brink of collapse" and "public anger mounting", the regulator appears "to have woken up to the national scandal taking place before its eyes". Yes, it has sanctioned bill rises – but nowhere near the scale of those the industry was demanding. Bill payers face average increases of £19 annually over five years to 2030, or an average hike of 21%. That compares with a proposed rise of 90% (when inflation is factored in) demanded by "cash-



Public anger is "mounting"

strapped" Southern Water; and the 56% by Thames Water. Predictably, there were "howls of protest from suppliers" claiming the new deal "risks killing off investment". The regulator is also getting tough on sewage, said Ali Lyon on City AM. It has opened "enforcement cases" on four more companies, meaning it is "now investigating all 11 of England and Wales' water companies".

Ofwat has "waded through a torrent of controversy" and arrived at a draft ruling that has "probably done enough to balance the needs of consumers, investors and the environment", said Lex in the FT. Commendably, it is now "nudging" companies towards the

discipline of the stock market, which demands transparency and performance. "It is no coincidence" that listed companies, such as Pennon and Severn Trent, are "towards the top of the class" and typically less geared than their peers. Yet the crisis is far from over, said Matthew Brooker on Bloomberg: particularly for debt-laden Thames Water, which claims it only has enough cash to keep going until next May, and is still looking for an injection of fresh equity. "Good luck with that." Ofwat has put Thames into a "special oversight regime" that could result in its break-up and a hefty haircut for bond-holders. Either way, expect the "water torture" to "drip on for months".

New listings regime: what the experts think

● Bed of roses

Shares in Rosebank – a £50m cash shell – soared by 82% on their first day of trading in London last week, and then continued to rise on the promise of great things to come, said Patrick Hosking in The Times. Rosebank, run by former executives of the "factory turnaround group" Melrose, plans to deploy the same "buy, improve, sell" formula that made Melrose such a great bet for investors (delivering a 3,396% return since 2005). AJ Bell reported that investors were "clamouring to own a slice of the new business" – delivering juicy paper profits to early backers. There are echoes of the "Spac" (special purpose acquisition company) craze that swept the US a few years back: it's an exercise in blind faith. Still, the exuberance was a fitting backdrop to the arrival of new, more liberal, listing rules designed to start a London IPO renaissance.

● Relax/don't do it...

"Thud" is the best way to describe the hefty 500-page tome produced by the Financial Conduct Authority, said Jill Treanor in The Sunday Times. Among the notable innovations is the scrapping of the onerous "two-tier" system of rules for



Tulip Siddiq: growth mission

companies floating on the senior FTSE 100 index. Some investors complained that will remove important safeguards – notably the requirement to put big "related party transactions" to a shareholder vote. Another is watering down the rules on "dual-class share

structures" – enabling founders "to retain additional voting rights" and keep control of their businesses, which some think could encourage high-handedness. Controversial Spacs have also received a "welcome mat".

● Carrots and sticks

City Minister Tulip Siddiq described the reforms as "at the heart of our growth mission". They're certainly the most sweeping rule changes the City has seen in 30 years – and also a gamble, said Treanor. "The FCA admits it could be introducing new risk to the market." The problem with this US-style "buyer beware" investment culture, is that the freedoms aren't balanced with sanctions, said Alistair Osborne in The Times: there are plenty of carrots and not many sticks. "Unlike in America, Britain doesn't typically put dodgy plc executives in the clink" – the sort of threat "that encourages good behaviour". There may be trouble ahead.

Advice gap

Last July, the Financial Conduct Authority brought in new rules, known as the Consumer Duty, to improve standards for people looking for financial advice. Beware good intentions, said Moira O'Neill in FT Money. Research from The Lang Cat suggests numbers getting professional help have actually fallen (from 11% in 2023 to 9%) because advisers have responded to the extra regulatory cost by tightening their "client profiles". To qualify, you typically need £100,000 to invest; in 2019, £50,000 was enough for many. If a financial adviser is prepared to take you on with £50k now, be wary. "He or she might be 'bottom fishing' – maybe the business is struggling or the quality of advice is low."

Another reason for the thinning of the sector is that firms struggle to recruit. Almost half of independent financial advisers are over 50. "We need a younger, more inclusive and diverse generation of IFAs coming through," said Ross Easton of Scottish Widows. Meanwhile, more informal channels are picking up the slack, said Helen Kirrane on ThisIsMoney. A quarter of 18- to 34-year-olds now look to Reddit for financial advice; others follow "influencers" on TikTok. The risks of hype and fraud are clear. "There are some fantastic people giving really helpful information on social media – as well as some total muppets," said Holly Mackay of Boring Money. It is hard for the inexperienced to tell the difference.

The big bill for Miliband's North Sea raid

Oliver Shah

The Sunday Times

Ever since Shell sparked outrage in 1995, when it tried to scuttle the redundant Brent Spar oil-storage buoy off the west coast of Scotland, there has been a ban on the “at-sea burial of installations”, says Oliver Shah. Dismantling them on land costs perhaps ten times more and, under rules dating back to 1975, taxpayers pick up roughly half the cost. The North Sea Transition Authority reckons the Exchequer is on the hook for around £20bn. “That bill will start arriving a decade sooner than it might have done” if the new Energy Secretary, Ed Miliband, gets his way, and knee-caps the North Sea oil and gas industry with a swingeing rise in windfall taxes to fund the state-owned “clean” energy company, GB Energy. Not only will domestic oil supply be choked off, but we’ll have to pay for its removal. “In an era when chancellors scabble around for single-digit billions” of fiscal headroom, that £20bn counts. This story is worth watching not just because of the money, “but because it prefigures inevitable tensions” between “idealists” such as Miliband and “realists” such as Chancellor Rachel Reeves. “We must hope the latter camp wins out.”

The Olympic model needs to change

Matthew Lynn

The Sunday Telegraph

“The economic case for staging the Olympics has always been shaky,” says Matthew Lynn – many of the supposed long-term economic benefits used to justify the outlay on infrastructure “never materialise”. Still, even before the Games open this month, it’s already clear that Paris is facing “a catastrophic financial flop”. Already one of the most visited cities in the world, with about 44 million visitors a year, it doesn’t need Olympic exposure to fill its hotel rooms. Indeed, many who might have visited are staying away – meaning that “Paris’s hotels are having a worse summer than usual”. Even corporate sponsorship is struggling: LVMH’s Bernard Arnault had to step in at the last moment to ensure the organising committee met its \$1.2bn target. And, “with grim inevitability”, French public sector workers are threatening strikes. Paris’s travails show that “the travelling jamboree of staging the event in a different city every four years is becoming more and more untenable”. Giving the Olympics “a permanent home” would be cheaper, easier and “less open to corruption and extravagance”. Somewhere in Greece is the “obvious location”.

It’s hard to interpret tech bubbles...

Richard Waters

Financial Times

A truism when it comes to tech bubbles is that “it’s often difficult to see one when you are inside it”, says Richard Waters. “Each individual spending or investment decision can seem rational, even if the net effect looks extreme” – and, after a bubble has burst, it can take years to work out whether it was “just the product of hype, or the precursor to an even bigger tech boom ahead”. This is worth pondering as US tech companies enter their latest earnings season amid “a distinct giddiness” in their Wall Street valuations. Although the investment boom surrounding generative AI has been “all too visible”, it will take time for all that new capacity to be put to productive use by the industry’s customers. And we don’t really know what form those applications will take. “For many people, discovering ChatGPT brought a frisson of interest” but, unlike the iPhone or Google’s search box, “it hasn’t changed their digital lives”. Eventually, all this investment “has to earn a return”. We are probably not at that point yet, but “Wall Street’s patience is about to be put to the test”.

...so Tony Blair should stop hyping AI

Parmy Olson

Bloomberg

The world is “mired in confusion about how useful the AI boom really is” – and Tony Blair isn’t helping, says Parmy Olson. The former Labour PM’s “consultancy-style institute” has been fanning the hype by “making unhelpful claims” about what artificial intelligence can actually do. Speaking at a conference hosted by his Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, he urged the new UK Government to embrace AI as “the biggest technological revolution since the Industrial Revolution” – predicting that 40% of public-sector work could be done by intelligent computers. On what evidence? His claim came from a “dubious source”: ChatGPT. Blair’s consultancy-speak and platitudes might be harmless enough were it not for the potential real-world consequences. Why, for instance, would a university graduate become an administrator with the NHS if an authoritative figure like themselves is predicting that nearly half the current tasks will soon be automated? Blair’s guidance on AI should come with plenty of caveats – and lots of “due diligence”.

City profiles

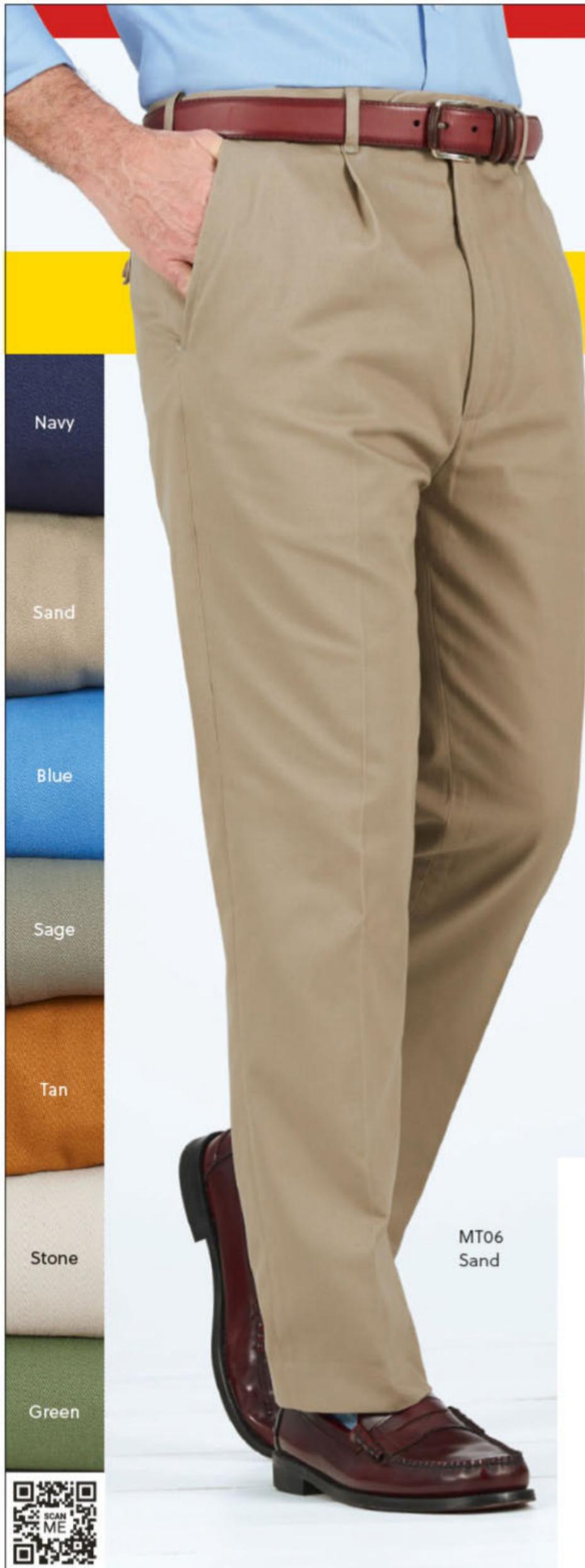
Donald Tang

Since moving to the US aged 17, with \$20 in his pocket, Donald Tang has been “a dish washer, an investment banker and a media mogul”, said the FT. But his latest role, as executive chairman of the \$60bn fast-fashion group Shein, has propelled him onto the global stage. Described as “charismatic and intelligent”, Tang is “the face” of Shein, whose founder, Sky Xu, shuns the limelight. “A sharp dresser partial to snakeskin shoes”, he’s often seen with his dog, Saatchi. The Labour Government has indicated it supports Shein’s blockbuster London float, but the listing is contingent on approval from Beijing, where Tang’s efforts to “de-Chinafy” the group haven’t gone down well. If the IPO fails to materialise, this “master of reinvention” could soon be plotting his next venture.

Zoe Hamburger



McDonald’s new chief restaurant officer in the UK and Ireland admits “people do a bit of a double take” on meeting her, said Oliver Gill in *The Sunday Times*. Her name, after all, is “perhaps the ultimate example of nominative determinism”. Hamburger, 39, arrives in Britain from the US as the burger chain prepares to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its first UK restaurant, which opened in Woolwich in southeast London. It’s her first executive role for the Golden Arches but she has worked “in and around McDonald’s” for her entire career, first as a PR consultant. As a prize-winning graduate of the company’s Hamburger University, she is steeped in the culture and laughs off her surname. “What can I say? I guess some things are meant to be.”



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Who's tipping what

The week's best shares

Bloomsbury Publishing

The Times

A powerful combination of romance, fantasy and dedicated TikTokers is boosting the *Harry Potter* publisher. Highly cash-generative, with improving margins in its digital-focused academic and professional arm. Buy. 664p.

Build-A-Bear Workshop

The Times

The stuff-your-own teddy bear outfit is seeing new-found success thanks to partnerships with brands such as Pokémon and Disney. Shares, which fell after revenues slipped, are "too cheap, given growth potential". Buy. \$25.33.

Bunzl

The Times

"Boring is beautiful" for this distributor of packaging, cleaning services and personal protection kit to the food, grocery and safety sectors. Shares have wobbled, but it has a history of maintaining growth and divis. Buy. £31.16.

Glencore

The Daily Telegraph

The mining giant is set to capitalise on the net-zero aim given its focus on copper, nickel and cobalt – commodities used in renewable infrastructure and EVs. Shares are down, but volatility shouldn't dim long-term prospects. Buy. 476.05p.

LondonMetric Property

The Mail on Sunday

The "trusted" landlord's 580 UK properties are rented to blue chips, including Alton Towers and Primark, private hospitals, discount stores and supermarkets. The LXi merger was a "smart move". Rental income is up 20%. Buy. 201p.

Ralph Lauren

Investors' Chronicle

Sponsorship of the US Olympic team cements Ralph Lauren's position as the all-American brand, as it focuses on young female buyers. Price rises and direct to consumer sales are offsetting marketing costs and boosting margins. Buy. \$177.

Directors' dealings

Serica



Despite the energy industry's gloom about Labour's plans to bring in higher taxes and block North Sea development, Serica has reiterated production guidance and has plenty of cash. New boss Chris Cox, who was at Spirit Energy, has bought shares worth £596,372.

SOURCE: INVESTORS' CHRONICLE

...and some to hold, avoid or sell

Celebrus Technologies

Investors' Chronicle

Rebranding has boosted the analytics specialist (formerly called D4t4), which helps firms collect data for marketing and fraud prevention. The pipeline is strong, but steady growth is needed. Hold. 248p.

Cordiant Digital Infrastructure

The Mail on Sunday

This tech infrastructure specialist owns essential assets for modern life – mobile phone towers, cables and data centres – in Europe and the US. Well-run and growing. Ripe for rebound after a disappointing run. Yields 5%. Hold. 76p.

Costco Wholesale Corp.

The Times

The no-frills global warehouse retail chain, which sells groceries, household appliances and more, is thriving thanks to formidable scale, careful cost control and membership fees. Valuation reflects growth prospects. Hold. \$846.59.

JD Sports Fashion

The Times

The retailer, which tapped into the "athleisure" demand, has yet to recover from its January shock profit warning. Tough competition and reliance on Nike is worrying, but diversified revenues are reassuring. Hold. 113.65p.

Knights Group Holdings

Investors' Chronicle

The legal services group has reported double-digit growth, fuelled by higher fees. It should continue to climb amid improving residential property and corporate M&A markets. Hold. 136p.

Smith & Nephew

The Daily Telegraph

The orthopaedic implants, sports medicine and advanced wound management products specialist has had "a shocker". But there are hopes that the Swedish activist investor Cevian can improve performance and boost margins. Hold. £10.62.

Form guide

Shares tipped 12 weeks ago

Best tip

Marks & Spencer Group
The Daily Telegraph
up 24.78% to 308.2p

Worst tip

Next 15 Group
The Times
down 5.91% to 828p

Market view

"The Chump trade."

Rabobank analysts suggest there's no such thing as a clean narrative on US market movements. Quoted on FT.com

Market summary

Key numbers for investors

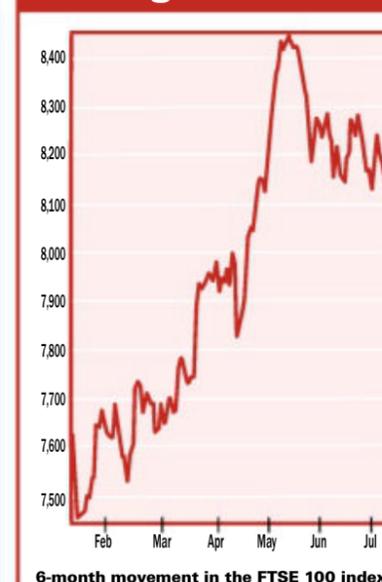
	16 July 2024	Week before	Change (%)
FTSE 100	8164.90	8139.81	0.31%
FTSE All-share UK	4482.44	4452.61	0.67%
Dow Jones	40721.97	39303.34	3.61%
NASDAQ	18464.27	18451.07	0.07%
Nikkei 225	41275.08	41580.17	-0.73%
Hang Seng	17727.98	17523.23	1.17%
Gold	2421.25	2376.65	1.88%
Brent Crude Oil	83.97	85.33	-1.59%
DIVIDEND YIELD (FTSE 100)	3.58%	3.62%	
UK 10-year gilts yield	4.15	4.26	
US 10-year Treasuries	4.18	4.32	
UK ECONOMIC DATA			
Latest CPI (yoy)	2.0% (Jun)	2.0% (May)	
Latest RPI (yoy)	2.9% (Jun)	3.0% (May)	
Halifax house price (yoy)	1.6% (Jun)	1.5% (May)	
£1 STERLING:	\$1.300 €1.191 ¥204.377		Bitcoin \$64,445.00

Best and worst performing shares

WEEK'S CHANGE, FTSE 100 STOCKS		
RISES	Price	% change
Ashtead	5438.00	+8.10
Rightmove	580.60	+7.80
Fresnillo	625.00	+6.70
Kingfisher	274.40	+6.60
Howden Joinery	938.00	+6.60
FALLS		
Burberry	704.60	-17.80
United Utilities	997.00	-4.30
Glencore	458.55	-3.70
Severn Trent	2473.00	-3.50
Anglo American	2309.50	-2.90
FTSE 250 RISER & FALLER		
SSP	179.20	+14.60
Trustpilot	208.50	-11.30

Source: FT (not adjusted for dividends). Prices on 16 July (pm)

Following the Footsie



How fried chicken took over the British high street

The nation has spoken... and it's gone clucking mad for fried chicken. To find out how it became our favourite fast food, Harry Wallop visited the street with more chicken shops than any other

A Friday in Streatham, south London. Three colleagues taking a break from their work at a video production company have popped out to grab lunch at Morley's, a fried chicken restaurant. "It was my birthday yesterday and I had a few drinks, so I feel like it's justified," Sarah MacKenzie laughs. Why the need to explain her choice? Placing her order over the counter for a £5.29 chicken burger meal with chips and a soft drink – her first lunch as a 36-year-old – she says she knows "dirty chicken shops" have certain "grotty" connotations.

The shop has enough seating for just 12 people and is nearly full with GCSE pupils having just finished an exam, plus a mother with a baby in a buggy and two young men who have come from the mosque after Friday prayers. The atmosphere is unmistakably ebullient – unusually for London, strangers are talking to each other. "You always meet people in a chicken shop and know you'll get good banter," says MacKenzie, who is from Glasgow but has lived in London for three years. "It was a culture shock when I came here. After a night out, I was, like, where's the chippie? Where's the kebab shop? Everything was a chicken shop."

This corner of southwest London has an embarrassment of chicken shops. Morley's is one of 12 on Streatham High Road – the most of any single street in London. Streatham High Road then runs straight into London Road, terminating in Croydon, a thoroughfare with a further 17 chicken shops. This means that, without turning left or right, you can walk for 3.8 miles and pass an astonishing 29 chicken shops including Chicken World, Chicken Cottage, two KFCs, Nando's, Chicken Maxx, Chicken Valley, Mr Peri's and three separate Morley's. Other corners of the country boast an even greater concentration of poultry purveyors: Huddersfield has one chicken shop for every 976 residents; in Blackpool it is one for every 897.

In the 12 months to May, Brits spent £4.58bn on chicken in fast food outlets according to Kantar, a research firm that tracks the spending of 30,000 families in the country. This is the equivalent of £70 for every person in Britain. For many, these figures are a damning indictment of the state of Britain's high streets. Fried chicken has been blamed variously for lowering the tone of town centres, facilitating gang violence and exacerbating Britain's obesity problem. But while the numbers of fish and chip shops are in decline, chicken shops, especially the slicker chains, are expanding fast. In the past six years, two American brands have



In the year to May, Brits spent £4.58bn on chicken in fast food outlets

entered the UK market: Wingstop and Popeyes, both aiming to open about 350 restaurants each. Popeyes has 37 shops, plus a large business on Deliveroo, and is on track to post an annual turnover of £150m despite having been here for only two-and-a-half years.

"Fried chicken is very zeitgeisty. It's very now," says Jenny Packwood, the chief corporate affairs officer for KFC Europe, the company that started this trend when it opened its first restaurant in the UK, in Preston, in 1965. There are now 1,035 KFCs in the UK and Ireland, making it the largest of all the chicken chains. "It tastes amazing. It's also incredibly democratic meat," Packwood adds.

"Everyone eats chicken. It's very accessible, it's affordable."

"Accessible" and "democratic" are two words many people in the industry use to explain the growth of this meat. Because to understand the rise of fried chicken, you need to first understand how chicken itself has been transformed from a luxury product into an everyday protein – not just in the UK, but worldwide. Back in 1961, when records began, global production of poultry meat totalled a mere 7.5 million tonnes – a fraction of that of pork and beef, each responsible for about 25 million tonnes. In

1998 poultry overtook beef and it hit almost 118 million tonnes in 2019, overtaking pork for the first time, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation. Chicken is now the world's number-one meat.

"In 1961, global poultry production was a fraction of that of pork and beef. Now, chicken is the world's number-one meat"

The trend has been driven by a mixture of religion, culture, health and, principally, economics. Chicken has become, in relative terms, dramatically cheaper – thanks in part to the Chicken of Tomorrow contest organised by the US Department of Agriculture in 1948. This was an attempt to breed a bird that could, on an ounce-per-dollar basis, compete with pork and beef. Previously, chickens had been farmed primarily to lay eggs. The Chicken of Tomorrow contest had a profound effect on the poultry industry – creating a bigger, cheaper and more profitable bird with larger breasts and one that could be slaughtered after six weeks rather than 12. Nearly all the chicken we eat in Britain today is sourced from two breeding companies, Aviagen and Cobb, whose breeding methods and fast-growing birds owe their origins to this contest.

Many of the independent chicken shops offer one piece of fried chicken for £1.40 or a chicken burger for £2.50 – food that pocket money can stretch to – but even at that low price it is still

profitable. At Morley's, a Chicken Steak Burger costs £2.29. Chloe Mayaki, 16, has come in with her cousin, Hannah, after finishing one of her GCSEs.

"Everywhere you go is so expensive nowadays, but this keeps low prices. Everybody can afford this," she says.

I spend a couple of hours working in the kitchen at this branch. Just two people work here on minimum wage per shift and the cooking process is very simple. The raw chicken comes in large bags, already butchered into wings or legs. The pieces first get dunked into a basin of water, then a tub of plain flour, then into the water again, and finally into a breading mix, which is a mixture of flour with spices, including white pepper, paprika, mustard and dried onion powder. Each piece of chicken is turned in the breading mix ten times (at Popeyes they boast about tossing it 20 times). Fifteen breaded pieces are loaded onto a rack, which I have to drop into a pressure cooker full of oil. The lid is screwed on tightly, I push a button and, after just five-and-a-half minutes at 180°C, the wings are done.

The pressure cooker – an appliance popularised by "Colonel" Harland Sanders, originally from Indiana, the founder of KFC – is what allows this to qualify as "fast" food, radically cutting the cooking time. It also increases succulence, according to fans of the process, creating steam inside the breaded exterior. One of those fans is Shan Selvendran, the owner of Morley's, whose kitchens use the same Henny Penny pressure cookers as KFC. Selvendran is the chicken king of south London, the man probably more than any other responsible for making junk food cool, courting both music producers and students to hang out in his shops.



Harry Wallop earns his wings at Morley's, Streatham

Youth Select Committee, investigating knife crime, heard evidence that so-called "chicken shop gangs" were recruiting young people with the offer of free chicken and putting them to work in return, acting as lookouts or as part of their drug operations. A poster campaign was launched, telling children: "There's no such thing as free chicken!"

The year before, 15-year-old Jay Hughes – unconnected to any gang – was fatally stabbed outside a Morley's in Bellingham, southeast London, by a 17-year-old gang member. The link between violent crime and cheap venues where young people like to hang out won't go away. In 2022 three men were stabbed at Wngz, a chicken shop in Poplar, east London. This year, a 16-year-old was stabbed at Pepe's Piri Piri in Colchester, Essex.

The outlet Wingstop has embraced the positive associations of rap music, fried chicken and black youth culture. Founded in Texas, Wingstop was brought over to the UK by Tom Grogan, 33, from Birmingham, Herman Sahota, 34, from Luton – both big fans of American rap, especially Rick Ross, the larger-than-life musician and record producer behind the hit *Hustlin'* – and Saul Lewin, 47. They met working as west London property developers in 2016. "I was in the Mayfair office listening to Rick Ross in my headphones and he mentions this brand called Wingstop," Grogan says. Intrigued, he googled it and discovered that Ross was a franchisee. Grogan emailed Wingstop's head office and wrote: "Hey, I'm Tom from Mayfair. We'd love to bring your brand to Europe." He had never even tried the food.

They flew to Dallas, secured the rights and opened the first British Wingstop in 2018.

"Everywhere you go is so expensive nowadays, but this keeps low prices," says Chloe, 16. "Everybody can afford this"

After my shift, we chat in the restaurant. Aged 37, he is nattily dressed: a polo-neck, pocket square and chinos, but he shows me the labels to prove nothing is designer – they are from Next, Zara and H&M. He is quietly spoken and keen to stress that, despite Morley's success, he and the business are very much "part of the community". "I deliberately set up my headquarters near Lewisham market [in southeast London] because I love big brands coming to see me. I wanted them to have to walk through the market to see what Lewisham is, what the culture is."

Morley's was founded in 1985 in Sydenham, southeast London, by Selvendran's father, Indran. There are now 105 branches, mostly in London, but with outlets in Birmingham and Milton Keynes. Selvendran took over the company in 2009, when his father died. The chain was given a huge boost by the rapper Stormzy in 2017, when it featured in the music video for *Big for Your Boots*. Also good for business is the British comedian Amelia Dimoldenberg, whose popular *Chicken Shop Date* series on YouTube has featured her interviewing everyone from Jennifer Lawrence to Paul Mescal over spicy wings.

For Selvendran, Morley's is less a fast food outlet, more a social hub for young people. As we chat, a customer overhears us and approaches the table. "Oh my God. Are you the owner of Morley's?" He nods slightly bashfully. "This is like meeting a celebrity," she gushes. "Yeah. So when we come in and say 'bossman', you're not..." she dissolves into giggles. Bossman, slang for "chicken shop manager", is such a common phrase used by customers that Morley's has launched a Bossman Burger (£4.29) using a Morley's Fried Chicken Sauce developed by Heinz – proof that chicken shops have gained a certain cachet even within vast multinational brands. They have also, however, been tainted by their association with gangs and violence. In 2019, the

There are now 45 Wingstops. All the chicken is halal-certified. "It's crucial. Muslim is the fastest-growing demographic in the UK," Sahota says. The Muslim population more than doubled from 1.5 million to almost four million between the 2001 and 2021 censuses. Morley's used not to be halal, because of pork ribs on the menu, but in 2016 it started to rapidly convert its outlets. Now 96 of the 105 are halal. "If you're a Muslim student you can't go to a pub but you can go to a chicken shop," Selvendran says. Even KFC has started to convert some of its branches, with 215 – including those in Streatham – now being halal. Some of the chicken bosses point out halal meat is more expensive than standard poultry, but it's an investment worth making. None, however, is prepared to stretch to free-range meat. (According to the British Poultry Council, less than 3% of all poultry we consume in the UK is free range.)

Selvendran of Morley's is sceptical of his rivals' attempts to position themselves as anything other than unhealthy fast food (at KFC they have cut down the calorie content in some recipes, stopped selling full-sugar fizzy drinks and stopped salting fries). He laughs when I ask if Morley's would consider salads. "You know what? We have had it in a few shops, and people have come in and said, 'What's that nonsense? I haven't come in to have a salad.'" Most customers I query either shrug or say it is an occasional treat. The poor reputation of chicken shops is not just because of their lack of nutrition but the fact that they attract lots of teenagers. But at nearly all the outlets I visit in south London, the atmosphere is friendly, never threatening. "Youngsters, schoolkids, students – it's a place they can call theirs," Selvendran says. "I mean, where else can kids go? At least a chicken shop is accessible, is welcoming, is affordable."

A longer version of this article appeared in The Sunday Times
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THE WEEK CROSSWORD 1423

Two Connell Guides and three Week-branded items will be given to the sender of the first correct solution to the crossword and the clue of the week opened on Monday 29 July. Send it to The Week Crossword 1423, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR, or email the completed grid/listed solutions to crossword@theweek.co.uk. **Tim Moorey (timmoorey.com)**



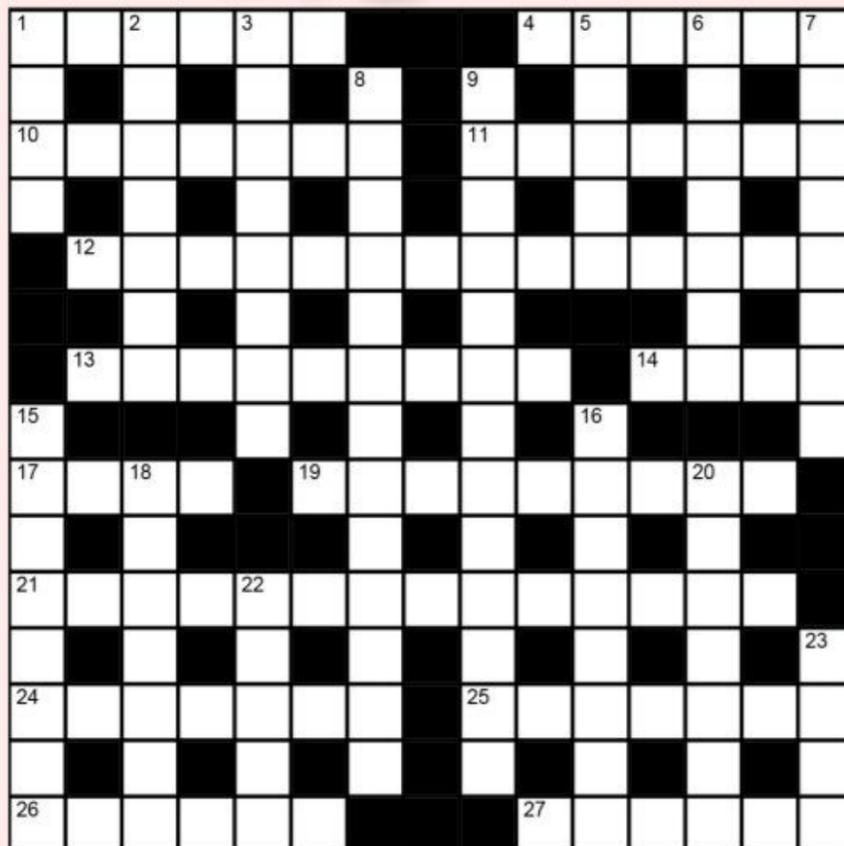
This week's winner will receive Week-branded items including a notebook, coffee mug and tote bag, as well as two Connell Guides (connellguides.com).

ACROSS

- 1 IT expert breaking the ice (6)
- 4 What's left of lunch? Goodness! (6)
- 10 Children's author managed to an extent (7)
- 11 Trainees sent in wrongly to catch Republican (7)
- 12 Nick is apt to follow Mishal's lead (14)
- 13 Those unlikely to write memoirs? (9)
- 14 Shout in dance heard (4)
- 17 Doctor Johnson's written about constant racket (4)
- 19 Large number you once found on beach (9)
- 21 Finished article on say, Tesco is disorganised (3,4,3,4)
- 24 Ruler's traditional dress in Thailand not available (7)
- 25 Ragged lady say, in comprehensive recalled (7)
- 26 Nurse in Guys is terrific (6)
- 27 Balls more than once written about computer stuff (6)

DOWN

- 1 Green type of accountant (4)
- 2 OK with company (7)
- 3 Strong admirer of one party cheers (8)
- 5 Blade that can be reversed (5)
- 6 Wine spoils a young fellow briefly (7)
- 7 Kind, like a senior nurse? (8)
- 8 Harp section about right even primarily for dancing (13)
- 9 Hacking that could be trouble for NHS? (3,2,8)
- 15 Grasses to spare criminal - leader in Sun (8)
- 16 Service veteran misrepresented (8)
- 18 Listening eagerly one trainee with king succeeded (3,4)
- 20 Doctor allowed to conceal operation is a drip (7)
- 22 Love to stop failing singer (5)
- 23 Awful housing long bare (4)



Name _____
 Address _____
 _____ Tel no _____
 Clue of the week answer: _____

Clue of the week: Sex, according to Roman church? (4)
Twin, The Independent

Solution to Crossword 1421

ACROSS: 1 Streets ahead 8 Expos 9 Ginger nut 11 In earnest 12 Adieu 13 Atelier 15 Opposed 17 Ann 18 Erratum 20 Serener 22 Squat 24 Astronaut 26 Nail-biter 27 Ameer 28 Incandescent

DOWN: 1 Supreme 2 Restraint 3 Eagle 4 Sanctions 5 Hyena 6 Aunties 7 Delicatessen 10 Thunderstorm 14 Ramparted 16 Parsonage 19 Reunion 21 Nearest 23 Tabla 25 Terms

Clue of the week: Surprisingly moral and creditable politician (7,8)
Solution: LIBERAL DEMOCRAT (anag)

The winner of 1421 is Roger Naylor from Knaresborough

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Sudoku 965 (difficult)

Fill in all the squares so that each row, column and each of the 3x3 squares contains all the digits from 1 to 9

Solution to Sudoku 964

3	6	1	7	2	4	5	9	8
2	9	4	5	1	8	3	6	7
8	7	5	9	6	3	2	1	4
4	2	7	8	9	1	6	5	3
6	3	8	4	5	2	9	7	1
5	1	9	6	3	7	8	4	2
1	8	6	3	7	5	4	2	9
7	5	3	2	4	9	1	8	6
9	4	2	1	8	6	7	3	5



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Charity of the week

the migraine trust
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