

The Democrat
campaign
lifts off

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THE WEEK

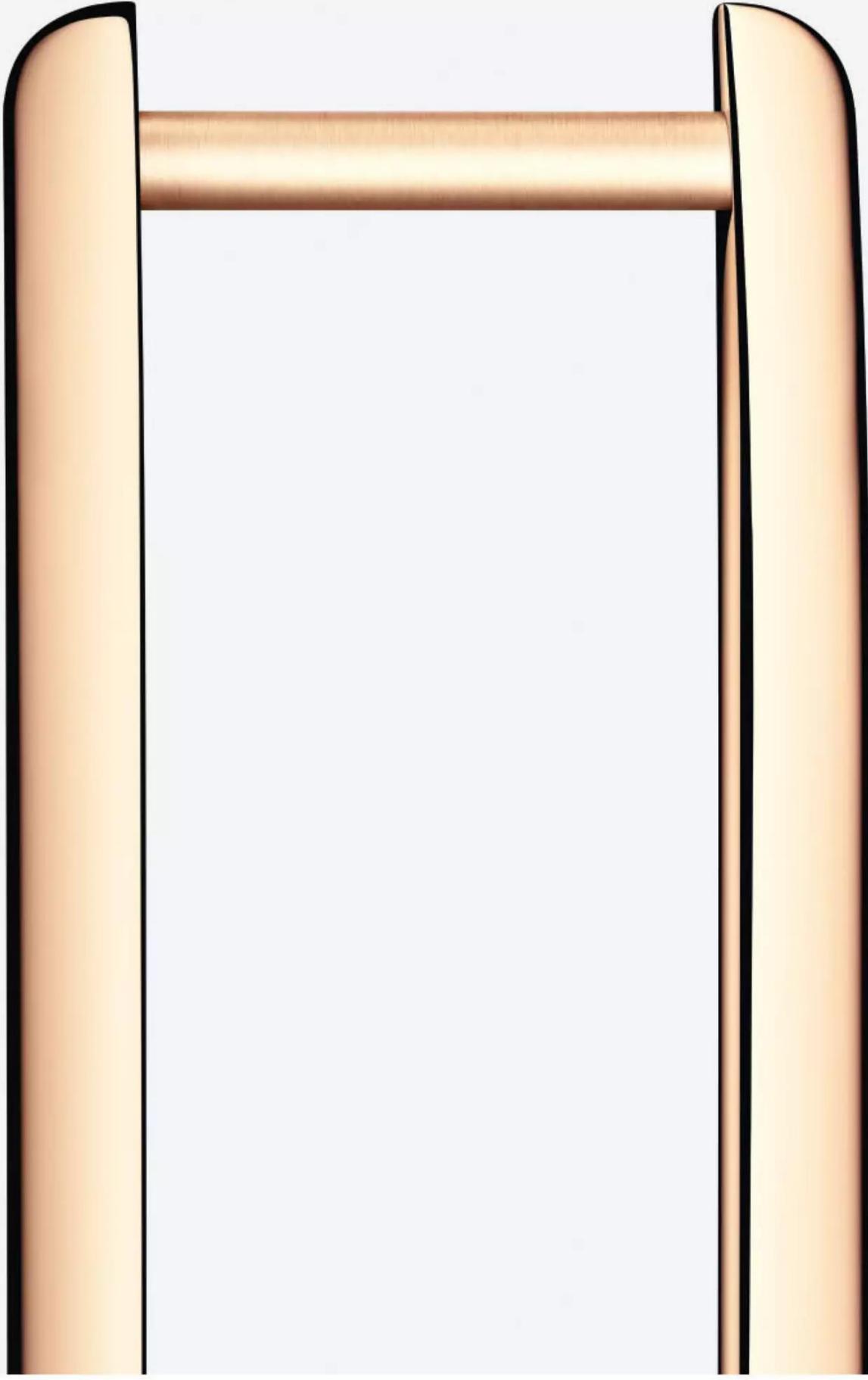
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THE BEST OF THE BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

The missing billions Can Reeves plug the gap?

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TANK AMÉRICAINE

Cartier

What happened

A £22bn “black hole”

Rachel Reeves accused the Tories this week of leaving an “unforgivable” £22bn “black hole” in the public finances, as she set out a series of spending cuts and warned that there will be tax rises in the Budget in October. One of the main cuts announced by the Chancellor was scrapping winter fuel payments for the ten million or so pensioners who don’t receive means-tested benefits. Others included cancelling new road schemes, such as the planned tunnel under Stonehenge and the Arundel bypass in Sussex; stopping “non-essential” Government spending on consultants; and reviewing many hospital building projects. She also announced plans to sell “surplus” public buildings and land.

Reeves’s predecessor as chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, accused her in turn of “trash-talking” the economy with a “cock-and-bull” story about the dire state of the public finances. He highlighted the fact that Reeves had chosen to increase public sector pay at a cost of £9bn, by accepting the recommendations of pay-review bodies and giving above-inflation rises of 5.5% to teachers and other workers. Labour has also offered junior doctors in England a two-year pay deal, worth 22% on average, in a bid to halt strike action.



Reeves: “faux indignation”?

What the editorials said

Spare us Reeves’s “faux indignation”, said the Daily Mail. She’d have us believe that Hunt lied about the state of Britain’s finances and that she has been stunned to discover the truth. What rot. She knew the situation. “The nation’s books are open to inspection and fully transparent.” Besides, even while “upbraiding the Tories for emptying the piggy bank”, she chose to fork out a massive new pay award to public sector workers. Don’t fall for her act. It’s a piece of political theatre designed to justify tax rises that Labour has been secretly planning all along.

The Chancellor’s outrage is to some degree confected, said the Evening Standard, but her spending audit did turn up some unknown liabilities. They include a £6.4bn overspend on asylum, and a £9bn contingency pot that “appears to have been spent several times over”. The Office for Budget Responsibility has launched a review into the preparation of its March forecast, on the grounds that it may have been misled by the Treasury. Opposition parties “can only discern so much about the public finances from the outside”, agreed The Independent. Now that she has the full picture, Reeves can set out the spending cuts and tax rises needed to put the public finances on a secure footing. She’s wise to “get these moves out of the way early”.

What happened

The Tory race begins

The list of the six candidates vying to lead the Tory Party was finalised this week, officially setting off a three-month campaign to succeed Rishi Sunak. They are: Kemi Badenoch, Priti Patel, James Cleverly, Tom Tugendhat, Robert Jenrick and Mel Stride. Each had to win the support of ten Tory MPs to secure a place on the ballot. Suella Braverman ruled herself out, saying that most Tory MPs disagree with her “diagnosis” of why the party lost the election – and with her “prescription” for how to win.

After a month of campaigning, Tory MPs will hold two votes on 4 September to narrow the field to four candidates. They’ll then whittle the shortlist down to a final two in October, before party members pick a winner, to be announced on 2 November. In a bid to limit infighting, the 1922 Committee of Tory MPs has warned candidates that they’ll get a “yellow card” and a formal rebuke if they brief the media against their rivals.



Badenoch: her race to lose?

What the editorials said

The Conservative Party is no stranger to leadership contests, said The Daily Telegraph: this is its fifth since 2016. The drawn-out timetable this time around has been criticised by some MPs, who wanted a new leader installed before Parliament returns in September, and who fear that a long contest will “expose factionalism in the party”, to the benefit of rivals such as Reform UK. They’re mistaken. The Tories need to have a robust debate about why they lost, and there’s no reason why it can’t be held in an atmosphere of “mutual respect”.

That may be optimistic, said The Independent: Badenoch, whose “combative approach” has earned her plenty of enemies in her party, has already accused an unnamed rival of issuing a “dirty dossier” about her. Others – namely Cleverly, the former home secretary, and Stride, the former work and pensions secretary – are now vying to be the “unity candidate”. Ultimately, however, all the contenders will end up “pandering” to Tory members – and history suggests that the most right-wing candidate on the ballot will win the run-off.

It wasn’t all bad

The number of plastic bags washed up on UK beaches has fallen by 80% since new rules came in obliging retailers to charge for them. Volunteers taking part in the Marine Conservation Society’s annual litter survey found an average of one bag for every 100 metres of coastline they surveyed last year, down from an average of five in 2014. Charges for single-use bags, which now range from 10p to 25p, were introduced in all four nations of the UK between 2011 and 2015.

Dogs have been enlisted to “act like wolves” to help rewild a stretch of degraded woodland in East Sussex. The project, run by the Railway Land Wildlife Trust in Lewes, equips local pet dogs with backpacks that have been pricked with holes and filled with the seeds of 23 woodland flowers, including bluebells, common spotted orchids and foxgloves. The idea is that as they roam around the plot, the dogs will spread the seeds to hard-to-access areas, mimicking the impact of wolves, who distributed seeds picked up in their fur, until they were driven to extinction in the UK in the 18th century.



The Flow Country – a vast expanse of blanket bog in the far north of Scotland – has been declared a world heritage site by Unesco, after an almost 40-year campaign. An area of deep peat, punctuated by bog pools, the Flow Country covers 2,000sq km and is thought to store 400 million tonnes of carbon, more than all of the UK’s forests and woodlands combined. It’s also an important habitat for upland birds, red deer, Scottish water voles and other species. It joins just 121 landscapes worldwide that have been awarded the designation.

COVER CARTOON: HOWARD MCWILLIAM

What the commentators said

We always knew that tough decisions were coming on spending and tax, said Paul Johnson in *The Times*. The Institute for Fiscal Studies accused both main parties before the election of a “conspiracy of silence”. Previous spending plans allowed for public sector pay rises of only about 2%. Given the recent squeeze on public pay, and the fact that pay is rising at closer to 5% or 6% in the private sector, “that was never going to be enough”. Such are the pressures on the public purse, the Tories were irresponsible in implementing £20bn tax cuts to national insurance. Reeves is right to raise a hue and cry about Labour’s fiscal inheritance, said Andrew Rawnsley in *The Observer*. As well as pinning blame on the Tories and preparing the ground for tax rises, it will help temper the expectations of her colleagues and the electorate.

“You cannot fault the politics” of the Chancellor’s statement, said Robert Shrimmsley in the *FT*. And some of her cuts, “such as restricting the boomer bung of winter fuel payments to only the poorest pensioners, were well targeted”. It’s a shame, though, that she scrapped the £1bn plan to cap individual adult social care costs. The two main parties have been promising for years to reform this sector, yet they keep dodging the challenge. The shelving of infrastructure projects needed to boost economic growth was also disappointing, said Tom McTague on *UnHerd*. In its short-term thinking, the move had “more than a whiff of early George Osborne about it”. Labour can’t afford to become known simply for “conserving the status quo, prudently”.

While claiming to be a truth-teller, Reeves is in fact perpetuating two big lies, said Matthew Lynn in *The Daily Telegraph*. The first is that the economy can be fixed with a few “tweaks” to spending and taxation. Government annual spending is at a record £1.2trn – against that total, the £22bn “black hole” amounts to a “rounding error”. The second is that the welfare state is “even remotely sustainable without major reforms”. We owe nearly 100% of GDP in debt and are still running a deficit of more than 3%, even though the economy is growing again. If Reeves were really being honest, she’d be telling the public that everything they’ve been told about the country’s ability to afford its public services has been “a deception”.

What the commentators said

The early stages of this Tory leadership contest have been “a festival of banality and platitude”, said Matthew D’Ancona in the *Evening Standard*. “So fair play to Suella Braverman” for providing some “much-needed entertainment”: in an “epic display of toy-throwing” this week, she complained that she had been branded too “mad, bad and dangerous” to have her “truths” heard. As for the six candidates who are in the race, only Badenoch has publicly acknowledged “the depth of her party’s predicament”; the rest seem to be in “varying states of denial”.

For now, their focus seems to be on distinguishing themselves from one another, said Anne McElvoy in *The i Paper*. Patel wants to be the candidate of the base – “the J.D. Vance of British Conservatism” – but may be undone by her patchy record as home secretary. Jenrick is the quintessential “Tory bloke” who takes a hard line on immigration; Cleverly and Tugendhat are pitching themselves as “moderates”; Stride hopes to be seen as a safe pair of hands.

But this is Badenoch’s race to lose, said Katy Balls in *The Spectator*. Her allies claim that she’d have won the leadership in 2022, but for the fact that MPs blocked her way to the run-off. Her big problem is that they may do so once again. Like her rivals, Badenoch will “pitch to the right” to appeal to Tory members, said *The Economist*. That may win a leadership race, but it’s unlikely to “propel the Tories back to power”. They “lost voters in every direction” at the last election, and although a “unite the Right” strategy could claw back Reform voters, it won’t win back Lib Dem ones. The winner of this contest has very little chance of becoming PM in any case, said Adam Boulton in *The i Paper*: the last time Labour won a landslide, the Tories cycled through four leaders before regaining power. No, the best that these candidates can hope for is the opportunity to influence how their party “reshapes and reforms itself”.

What next?

Labour is setting up a new arm’s length body, the Office for Value for Money, to monitor the effectiveness of public spending. It will be on a par with the Office for Budget Responsibility, which oversees fiscal statements. Reeves has also pledged to hold just one major fiscal event a year, starting with the Budget on 30 October, doing away with the current system of autumn and spring statements. This, she said, would deliver more certainty for markets and families.

Reeves reiterated that she wouldn’t raise VAT, national insurance or income tax in this Budget, as promised in Labour’s manifesto, but she didn’t rule out increasing inheritance tax, capital gains tax, or reforming tax relief on pensions.

What next?

Badenoch hit back at claims this week that she bullied civil servants while serving as business secretary. The *Guardian* reported that she had created an “intimidating atmosphere”, and that officials had held a “town hall” meeting to air concerns about the culture at work. But Badenoch has denied the allegations, and referred to herself as the victim of a “hit job”.

The four semi-finalists in the race will each give make-or-break speeches at the Tory Party conference, which is due to be take place in Birmingham from 29 September to 2 October.

THE WEEK

A familiar gripe in *The Week*’s offices, when August rolls around, is: where has the silly season gone? In decades gone by, when the Commons rose in late July, and MPs and captains of industry went

off to Devon and Tuscany, business of all kinds would grind to a halt – and hacks would have to fill the pages with something or other. Dubious shark sightings in Cornwall. The face of Jesus appearing in a piece of toast. Discussions of the rights and wrongs of politicians’ holiday locations. Was Tony Blair right to take his break in Barbados? Had he spent too much on his fancy swimming trunks? Nowadays, this just doesn’t seem to happen. Instead, the August news agenda is chock-a-block with big, significant items. Look at this week: a twisty, high-stakes US presidential election (*see page 6*). The assassination of Hamas’s political chief (*see page 9*). An embryonic revolution in Venezuela (*see page 8*). Even at home, where you might hope our traditions would be respected, a new Government is pushing on with the most significant policy platform since Brexit. Googling the classics of the silly season confirms the suspicion: they all seem to be at least ten years old. The lady who threw a cat in a bin (2010). Putin’s topless horse-riding photos (2009). Yvonne, the runaway cow (2011). Victor Meldrew found in space (2005). All came before the great news acceleration, which, for simplicity’s sake, I’m going to blame on X/Twitter (b.2006). It’s a great pity. The world goes round too fast anyway, and we all need a few weeks off.

Theo Tait

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Controversy of the week

“Kamalmania”

The first fortnight of Kamala Harris’s run for the presidency has been “a marvel for the Democrats and a jarring wake-up call for the Republicans”, said E.J. Dionne Jr in *The Washington Post*. The landslide victory that Donald Trump seemed sure of, with a doddering President Biden as his rival, suddenly appeared to vanish. For the Democrats, “the relief of starting the 2024 campaign all over again with an energetic candidate” filled them with a confidence, even a “joy”, that they had lacked all year. Donations surged, with a record-breaking haul of \$200m, said Joan E. Greve in *The Guardian*. So did voter registrations and volunteer sign-ups. Early polls suggested Harris had cut Trump’s six-point national lead in half. This week, a Bloomberg News/Morning Consult poll showed the vice-president leading her rival in six of seven battleground states – states that had “seemed irretrievably lost” to Trump – as she rode a wave of enthusiasm among young, black and Hispanic voters.



Harris: “something’s happening”

The liberal establishment is trying to turn Harris into an Obama-like phenomenon, said Ross Douthat in *The New York Times*. But it’s less “the audacity of hope” than “the audacity of desperation”: a sense that at this late hour the only way to stop Trump is by burying all doubts and presenting Harris as a “transformative candidate”. It’s absurd, really, not least because the Democrats have only just reversed a “disgraceful” attempt to prop Biden up “through one more campaign”, an attempt made not least because Harris was judged to be “an exceptionally *poor* candidate”. She’s still a dubious choice, a dyed-in-the-wool liberal Californian who is likely to rile many swing voters. “As a vice-president she has no notable successes.” She is vulnerable on immigration, for which she was given special responsibility by Biden. Her 2020 candidacy was a flop. But “in a society that worships the self, identity politics is a very powerful force”, said Freddy Gray in *The Spectator*. Millions of Americans want to believe in the idea of Harris, a mixed-race woman, delivering them from the horror of Trump. The question is: “Will Kamalmania last until the election is over?”

I had long thought Harris couldn’t beat Trump, said Peggy Noonan in *The Wall Street Journal*. “That’s wrong. She can.” The US is “a 50/50 country, each side gets 40 going in, you fight for the rest but it can always go either way”. And at this moment in time, “something’s happening”. Harris has not previously shown much competence on the national stage. “She is showing it now, and that is big news.” She has given excellent speeches, particularly at her first campaign rally in Milwaukee. Its theme was: “We’re not going back.” It’s a resonant message: we’re not going back to the old ways, to unfreedom, racism, sexism, abortion bans, “to Trumpian America”. Voters are responding. And if she can weather what is set to be a “vicious” campaign, then Harris could well be the next president.

Spirit of the age

British workers are seeking respite from their jobs by taking refuge in the loos, a survey has suggested. It found that 24% of workers admit to spending more time on the lavatory at work than they would at home, and that more than a quarter use this time “away from their desks” to check on their social media. The findings indicate that some people spend 104 hours a year in their work WCs.

For the first time since records began, a majority of British households do not have a landline phone. According to Ofcom’s annual technology tracker, just 47% of homes now have a landline, down from 54% last year and 84% a decade ago. While almost four-fifths of over-65s still have a landline, only 16% of those under 25 do.

Good week for:

Determination, after an Australian hockey player opted to have part of his finger amputated so that he could compete at the Paris Olympics. Matt Dawson broke his finger during training in Perth, and was told that if he had surgery to repair it, it could take months to recover – and he’d miss the Games. So instead, he shocked teammates by having the top of his digit removed.

Harry Edward, Britain’s first black Olympic medallist, who is to be commemorated with a blue plaque on his former home in Bloomsbury, central London. Born in Germany in 1898 to German and Dominican parents, the sprinter moved to England after being interned during the First World War, and represented Britain at the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp, winning two bronzes. He later emigrated to the US, where he campaigned for civil rights.

Princess Beatrice, who was named best-dressed person of 2024 by *Tatler* magazine. In the past, she has made negative headlines for her penchant for frumpy frock coats, unusual hats and avant-garde fascinators, but *Tatler* says that Beatrice, 35, has since become the “undisputed queen of sartorial savvy”.

Bad week for:

Summer holidays, with warnings that large stretches of the M1, M3, M4, M5, M6, M20, M25 and M27 are being subject to 50mph average speed checks to enable road works. Most are to fit emergency refuge areas on “all lane running” smart motorways.

French taxpayers, who learnt that the lavish banquet thrown for King Charles and Queen Camilla at Versailles during their state visit last year cost around €475,000.

Southport unrest

Hundreds of people, some of them masked, attacked a mosque in Southport, Merseyside, on Tuesday, hours after a peaceful vigil was held for three girls who were killed in a knife attack at a Taylor Swift-themed dance workshop on Monday. The mob set police vans on fire and hurled bricks and bottles at officers, 53 of whom were injured. Merseyside Police said it believed the far-right English Defence League had been involved in the unrest, and that it had been fuelled by false rumours on social media that the attacker was Muslim and a migrant.

The mother of seven-year-old Elsie Dot Stancombe, one of the children killed in the attack, issued a plea on Tuesday night for the violence to “please stop”. The other girls killed were Bebe King (pictured), six, and Alice Dasilva Aguiar, nine. Eight other children were injured, along with two adults. The 17-year-old suspect, who was born in Cardiff to Rwandan parents but lived five miles away, is in police custody.



Cancel culture law

The Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson, has delayed – and says she may repeal – a Conservative law designed to combat “cancel culture” at universities. Under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, which had been due to come into effect next week, universities, colleges and student unions would have been required actively to promote free speech on campus, or face sanctions by the regulator, including fines. Phillipson said she was aware of concerns that the measures risked being “burdensome” for universities, which already face a mounting financial crisis, and for the regulator, the Office for Students.

Paris

Heatwave: The €1.4bn effort to clean up the Seine in time for the Olympic Games seemed this week to have paid off... eventually. The downpours that marred Friday's opening ceremony overwhelmed Paris's sewers over the weekend and, on Monday, tests were again showing unsafe levels of E. coli. But the delayed swimming leg of the men's triathlon was finally able to go ahead on Wednesday – by which time competitors and spectators were being more troubled by extreme heat than rain. With temperatures reaching 36°C, tennis players were given extra breaks and BMX bikers competing in the Place de La Concorde were handed umbrellas to shelter under. On social media, Simone Biles – the gymnastics superstar who helped the US team to gold on Tuesday – fought back against online trolls who had criticised her appearance, pointing out that a long journey on a stiflingly hot bus had played havoc with her hair.

Paris

Rail sabotage: France's interior minister has suggested that far-left groups were behind the attacks that paralysed parts of the railway system on the eve of the Olympics' opening ceremony last week. Some 800,000 passengers had their journeys disrupted by the arsonists, who'd burnt through fibre-optic cables at three points on TGV lines. A fourth incident was prevented when rail workers stumbled on the saboteurs; they fled before they could be apprehended. This week, Gérald Darmanin said that the "very precise" attacks bore the "hallmarks of the far-left" – but suggested that they may have been "manipulated". One person, described as an "ultra-left militant", was arrested on Sunday. Police said they found universal keys and pliers in his car. In the early hours of Monday, a second attack targeted fibre-optic cables used by telecoms networks.

Frankfurt, Germany

Airport protests: Climate activists glued themselves to runways at two of Germany's biggest airports last week as part of a day of coordinated protests across Europe and North America. Demanding that the German government phase out the use of fossil fuels by 2030, members of the Letzte (Last) Generation group forced the cancellation of scores of flights at Frankfurt and Cologne-Bonn. Related groups targeted airports in Oslo, Vienna, Helsinki, London, Boston and Montreal, among other cities; and the groups have promised further "Oil Kills" protests in the coming weeks. In Germany, Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said the protests were "dangerous, stupid and criminal", and that the perpetrators must be "punished more severely". The government recently drafted legislation to make trespassing on airports an offence punishable by up to two years in jail.



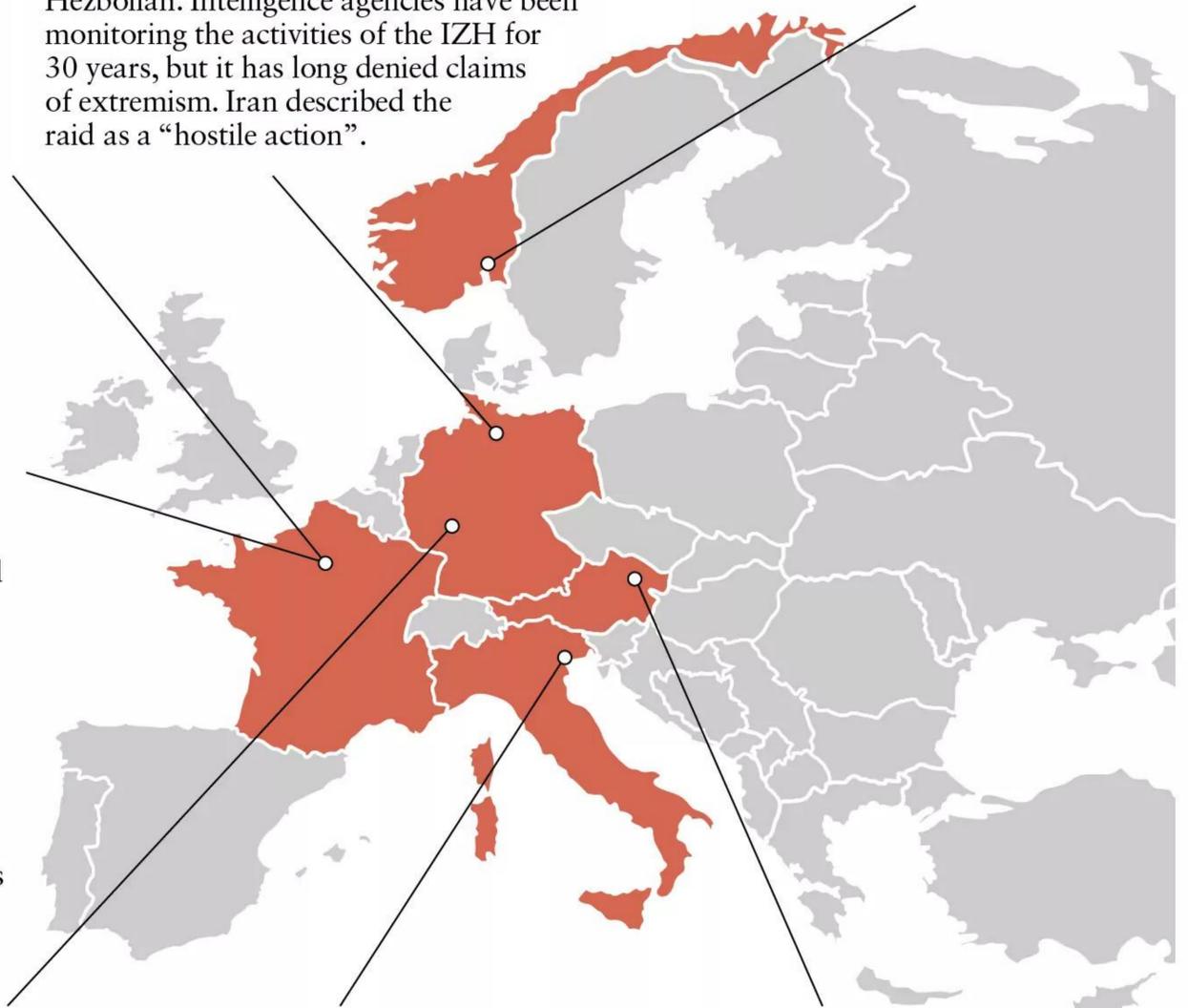
Hamburg, Germany

Mosque raid: Police wielding chainsaws and battering rams raided one of Germany's oldest mosques last week, as part of a crackdown on the Islamic Centre Hamburg (IZH),

the Shia organisation that runs it. Justifying closing the Blue Mosque, and various others run by the now-banned IZH, Berlin said that the group had been preaching "aggressive antisemitism", acts as a front for the Iranian regime, and has links to Hezbollah. Intelligence agencies have been monitoring the activities of the IZH for 30 years, but it has long denied claims of extremism. Iran described the raid as a "hostile action".

Oslo

Drugs gateway: Local officials in Norway have warned that smugglers are increasingly using the port of Oslo to smuggle cocaine and other drugs into Europe, in response to the tightening of customs controls in larger ports such as Antwerp. Mayor Anne Lindboe said this week that Oslo was being targeted by "hardened criminal gangs", and that its port hadn't the resources to combat them, with only one mobile scanner to check incoming containers. Union leaders have also called for reinforced customs checks: one described the amount of cocaine circulating the capital as "alarming, and increasing". Cocaine use has been growing among younger people in Norway; around 5% of under-30s say they have used it.



Venice, Italy

Uber boats: The waterways of Venice have been navigated by gondoliers for more than 1,000 years. But they say that their livelihoods are now under threat from the arrival of a new service:

Uber motorboat taxis. The firm started taking bookings in Venice via its app last week, giving people the chance to ride six-seater boats in the city, with fares starting at a hefty €120. The city's gondoliers have warned that the boats will clog Venice's busy waterways, take their customers, and add to swells that risk damaging their traditional wooden boats as well as Venice's historic buildings.

Sankt Pölten, Austria

Schnitzel bonus: A controversial scheme that provides subsidies to new restaurants that serve "traditional" cuisine has come into force in the state of Lower Austria. The local government (a conservative and far-right coalition) says the so-called "schnitzel bonus" was devised to protect the social fabric of local communities: one in three pubs in Lower Austria have closed since 2000 largely as a result of an exodus from rural areas. But critics argue that it is discriminatory, pointing out that restaurants serving Italian, Turkish and other cuisines also have a social function. The defence of Austria's *Leitkultur*, or "dominant culture", has become a rallying cry on the Right, and this year the country's chancellor, Karl Nehammer, of the People's Party, launched a "plan for Austria" in which he emphasised the need for immigrants to "accept our culture and adapt to our way of life".

Jasper, Canada

Fire devastation: A “monster” wildfire ripped through 89,000 acres of the largest national park in the Canadian Rockies last week and destroyed a third of the tourist town of Jasper, Alberta. The fire was started by a lightning strike, spread rapidly in strong winds and grew into the most severe fire to hit the pristine Jasper National Park in over a century. By the time it reached Jasper itself, fire crews were faced with a 100-metre-high “wall of flames”. Some 25,000 people were evacuated, and firefighters from as far afield as Mexico and Australia were flown into Alberta to help combat fires raging across the province. Cool, wet weather later helped slow the fire’s spread. Across the border, the Park Fire in northern California had, by Tuesday, set 380,000 acres alight. Allegedly started when a man pushed a burning car into a gully, it was tearing through 5,000 acres per hour at its peak.

Reno, Nevada

Succession fight: At the age of 93, Rupert Murdoch has become involved in a legal battle with three of his children over the future of his media empire, court documents have revealed. According to the terms of an irrevocable family trust, when Murdoch dies control of the business passes to his four oldest children. But last year, he filed a suit to change the trust’s terms so that his eldest son Lachlan remains in charge. He did so in Nevada, because it allows “trust decanting” – the altering of irrevocable trusts if done in good faith. The other three children are said to have been shocked by his actions, but when the case is heard in September, Murdoch will argue that only if Lachlan has full control will he be able to maintain the empire’s right-wing editorial stance – and thus preserve its commercial value for the benefit of all his heirs.

El Paso, Texas

Cartel bust: The notorious leader of Mexico’s Sinaloa Cartel was arrested in Texas last week – the culmination of a 35-year manhunt. Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada, who is believed to be in his 70s, was reportedly lured onto a plane bound for the US by Joaquín Guzmán López, the son of his jailed former partner-in-crime Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán. He was reportedly told they were going to a meeting in northern Mexico; instead, they flew to El Paso in the US, where Guzmán had allegedly been planning to surrender to the police – presumably in an attempt to strike a plea deal. The Sinaloa Cartel is reportedly the biggest supplier of drugs to the US; in recent years it has flooded the country with fentanyl, the synthetic opioid that kills some 70,000 Americans a year.

**Caracas**

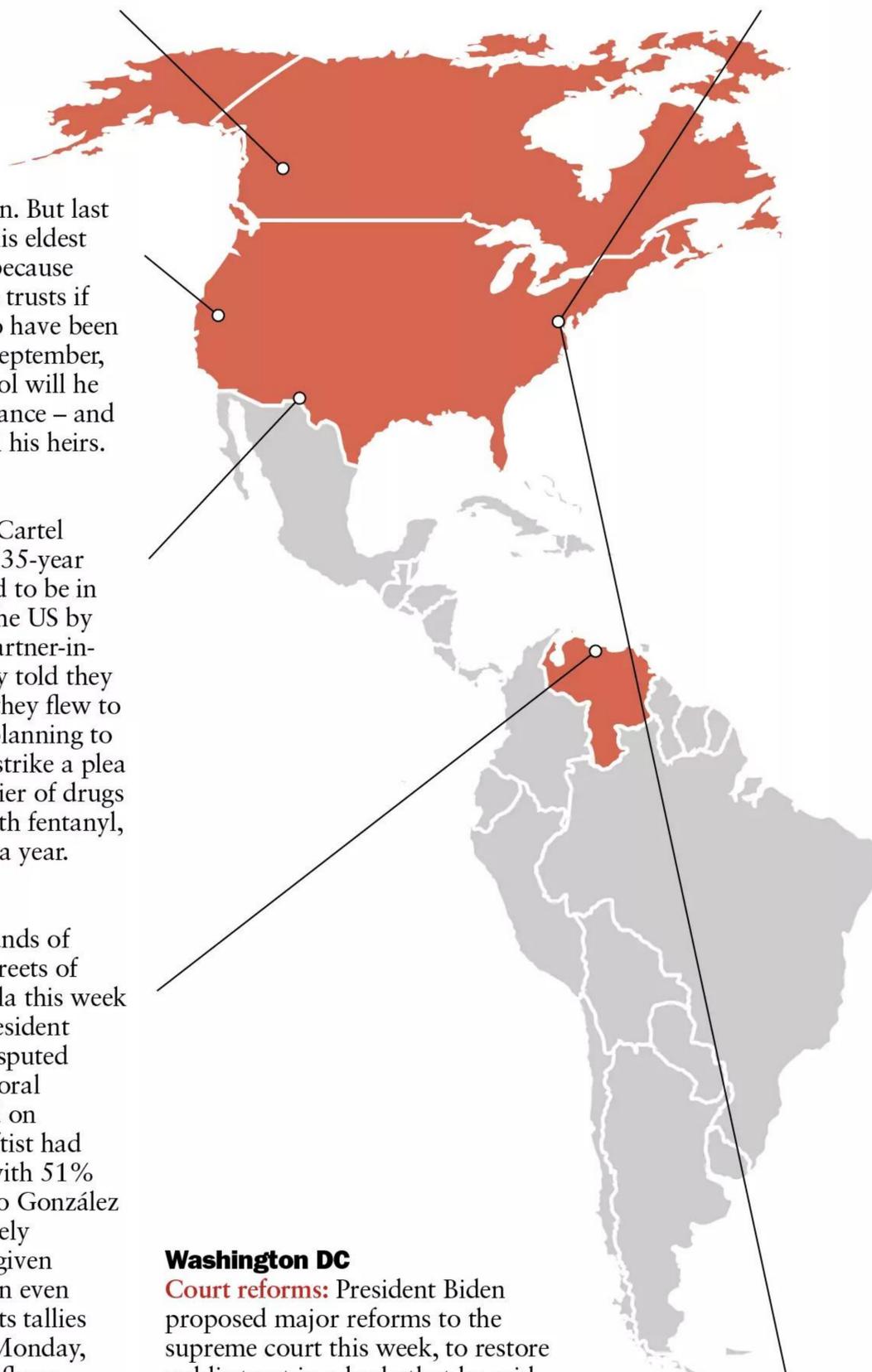
Poll protests: Thousands of people took to the streets of cities across Venezuela this week to protest against President Nicolás Maduro’s disputed re-election. The electoral commission declared on Monday that the Leftist had won his third term with 51%

of the vote, leaving the opposition candidate, Edmundo González Urrutia, trailing on 44%. But the opposition immediately denounced the result as fraudulent: opinion polls had given González a 20-point lead; an exit poll had given him an even wider margin of victory; and the opposition said that its tallies indicated that he had won with 73% of the vote. On Monday, protesters marched through Caracas towards the Miraflores presidential palace. Police used tear gas to disburse the crowds; and witnesses reported seeing men in plain clothes firing live ammunition at protesters. Elsewhere, posters of Maduro were torn down and cars were set alight. In the northwestern town of Coro, a statue of his predecessor and mentor Hugo Chávez was toppled. At least 16 people were reported to have died in the clashes. Maduro, who has presided over economic chaos that has led to the emigration of a quarter of Venezuela’s population, was congratulated by allies including Russia and Cuba; the UK and other countries expressed concern about “serious irregularities”.

**Washington DC**

Buyer’s remorse: Two weeks after being selected as Donald Trump’s running mate, J.D. Vance (pictured) has the worst poll ratings of any non-incumbent vice-presidential hopeful since 1980. The senator has faced intense criticism for his wooden speaking style, as well as for past remarks ranging from referring to Kamala Harris in 2021 as one of those “childless cat ladies who are miserable about their own lives”, to warning in 2016 that Trump is “America’s Hitler”.

Polls show that he still has the strong support of self-identifying MAGA Republicans, but non-MAGA ones are more divided.

**Washington DC**

Court reforms: President Biden proposed major reforms to the supreme court this week, to restore public trust in a body that he said had taken a series of “extreme” decisions. In 2022, the conservative-dominated court overturned the constitutional right to abortion; this year, it ruled that presidents had wide-ranging immunity for “official acts”. Biden’s proposals include removing life appointments – instead, new justices would be appointed every two years and serve 18-year terms. Biden also wants to introduce a code of ethics, requiring judges to disclose gifts and recuse themselves from cases in which they have financial or other interests. Republicans, who control the House of Representatives, have already vowed to block his plans.

Camp Sde Teiman, Israel

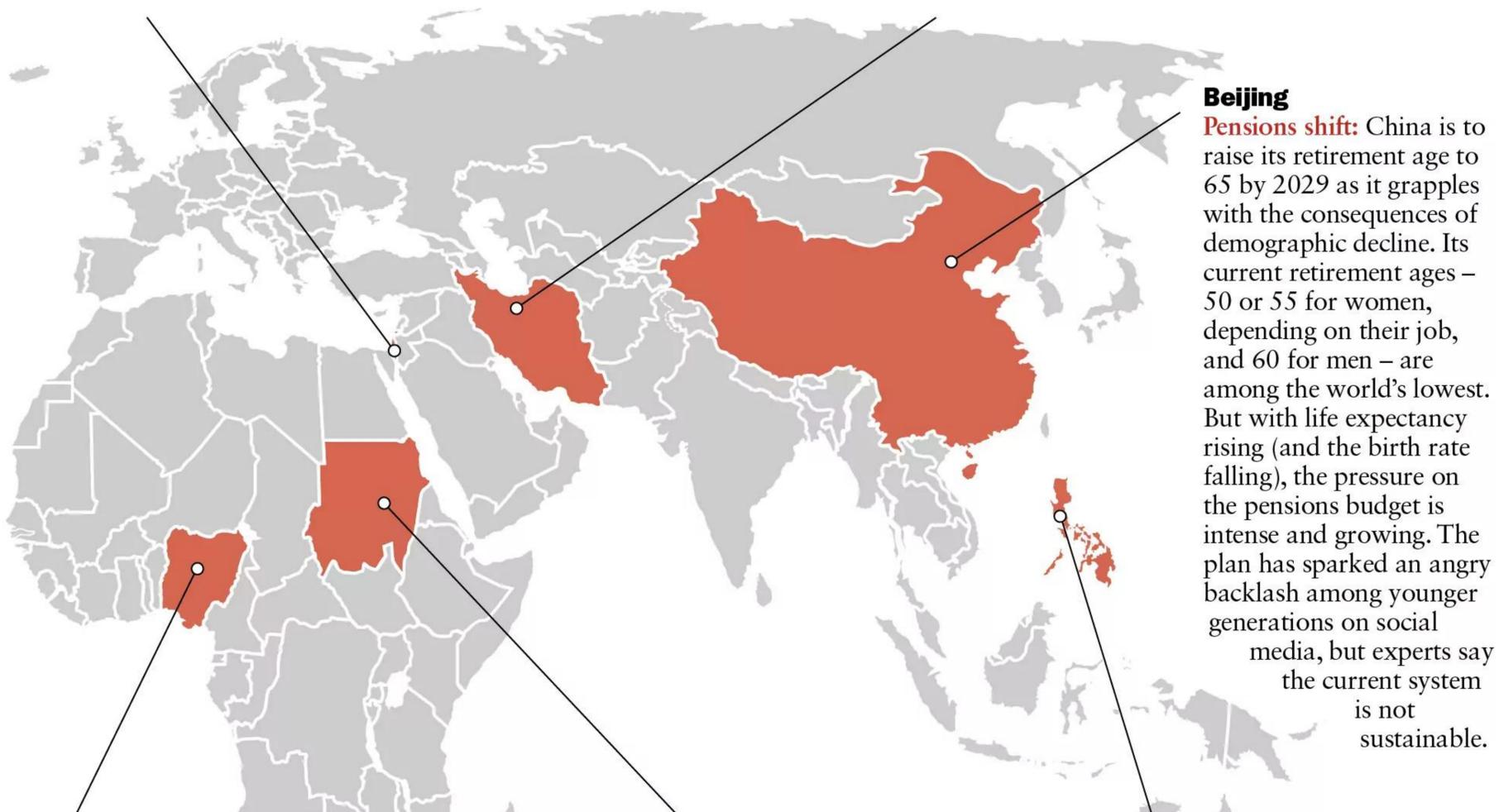
Soldiers arrested: At least nine Israeli reservists and soldiers were arrested last week on suspicion of beating and sexually abusing a Palestinian detainee at a military-run detention centre in the Negev desert – sparking protests by far-right Israeli nationalists, including MPs and ministers. On Monday, MPs were among scores of protesters who gathered outside the Sde Teiman facility and stormed through its gates; a second violent protest targeted a military base where those arrested were being held. According to Israeli media, the men are accused of sodomising the prisoner, inflicting injuries that required hospital treatment. But Bezalel Smotrich, Israel's finance minister, said they should be treated as heroes not villains, and Itamar Ben-Gvir, the national security minister, said their arrest was “shameful”.

Tehran

Massive escalation: Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei warned this week that Iran had a “duty” to avenge the assassination in Tehran of Hamas's political leader, intensifying fears of a wider regional conflict. Ismail Haniyeh (right), 62, was killed by an “airborne projectile” before dawn on Wednesday. Normally resident in Qatar, he had been in Tehran for the inauguration of President Masoud Pezeshkian. Israel has not commented, but it had vowed to kill him and other Hamas leaders. In April, three of Haniyeh's sons were killed in an Israeli strike in Gaza. Haniyeh was a negotiator in the Gaza ceasefire talks and was seen by many diplomats as moderate, relative to some of Hamas's senior members. The US said it had not been warned of the attack, which was condemned by Qatar, Jordan and others.



The assassination came a day after Israel claimed to have killed a senior leader of the Iran-backed militia group Hezbollah in a strike on Beirut. Israel said that Fuad Shukr was responsible for operations including the attack on Saturday that killed 12 children in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. The Lebanese government said the attack violated international law and accused Israel of a “criminal act” of aggression.



Beijing

Pensions shift: China is to raise its retirement age to 65 by 2029 as it grapples with the consequences of demographic decline. Its current retirement ages – 50 or 55 for women, and 60 for men – are among the world's lowest. But with life expectancy rising (and the birth rate falling), the pressure on the pensions budget is intense and growing. The plan has sparked an angry backlash among younger generations on social media, but experts say the current system is not sustainable.

Suleja, Nigeria

Protests begin: The Nigerian government was bracing itself this week for days of nationwide, youth-led protests against economic hardship and corruption. The #EndBadGovernance protest was scheduled to start on 1 August, and to run for ten days. Nigeria is facing its worst economic crisis in a generation; and with inflation at 34%, many say they can no longer afford the food they need to live. In the past fortnight or so, President Tinubu's government has doubled the minimum wage, and promised both a host of new jobs in the oil sector and to revive a fund that gave grants to young entrepreneurs, in a bid to avert the demonstrations, which are inspired by youth-led movements that have rocked governments in Kenya and elsewhere.



Khartoum

Mass rape: New evidence has emerged of sexual violence committed on a huge scale by Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). A report by Human Rights Watch, based on testimony from doctors, social workers and others, says that rebel soldiers raped and gang raped “countless” women and girls in rebel-held parts of Khartoum; others were forced into sexual slavery or marriage. Some victims have died as a result of their injuries. The Sudanese army is also accused of perpetrating a smaller number of sexual crimes, and both sides have attacked health workers.

Manila

Oil spill: The authorities in the Philippines were this week racing to drain the oil from a tanker that capsized and sank in Manila Bay during Typhoon Gaemi last week. Coastguards have warned that the *MT Terra Nova* is carrying close to 1.5 million litres of industrial fuel. As of this week, the oil seemed to be leaking from its engine, rather than its cargo tanker, but the spill was already stretching over several kilometres and there were fears that, if it was not contained, it would cause an environmental catastrophe and devastate the local fishing industry.

Neil Kinnock on Glenys

Neil Kinnock's wife Glenys was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2017, and died last December at the age of 79, says Decca Aitkenhead in *The Sunday Times*. At times, her decline was barely perceptible. Four years ago, he says, "if you had had a 20-minute conversation with her, she would have managed to sustain the fiction of being Glenys. But after she'd repeated herself three times, and not picked up on something you'd said, you'd think, bloody hell, she's drunk, or tired." Towards the end, their daughter, Rachel, sensed that Glenys had not got long; but "in a peculiar way, it's always sudden", he says. She died at home with Neil, her husband of 56 years, beside her. "I suppose there is such a thing as a satisfactory death, and Glenys sliding into sleep in her own bed was the best I could hope for," he says. "But selfishly, you always want one further lucid conversation. Just one. There is nothing you wouldn't give for that."

Lewis Goodall's lost accent

For as long as Lewis Goodall can remember, politics has been his all-consuming obsession, says Michael Segalov in *The Observer*. But in his youth in the 2000s, it wasn't ideology that shaped his outlook, but experience. "If you don't have much money, you have a deeply political childhood," he explains. The journalist and co-host of *The News Agents* podcast grew up in Longbridge, Birmingham, in a council house

that was "shocking for this century" and had no central heating upstairs. His father was a welder; his mother, who'd had him at 17, later retrained as a midwife. Yet at 35, there is little trace of his roots in his accent. "I'm ashamed of losing it," says Goodall, who became the first member of his family to go to university when he won a place at Oxford. "Maybe I felt I had to. What I want to say to working-class kids now is: 'Don't do what I did.'" But that advice leaves him conflicted. "Because at the same time, I don't think we can win. If I spoke now how I did as a kid, I'm pretty sure I wouldn't have got to this point in my career."

Omid Djalili's worst gig

The comedian Omid Djalili has worked steadily since he first made a splash at the Edinburgh Fringe in 1995, says Jack Rear in *The Daily Telegraph*. But he's had some rough gigs along the way. His worst, he reckons, was in 2000, when he did three nights at a venue in south London. "The first two nights I got standing ovations, but on the Saturday, they hated me." It got so bad that "people started throwing bread baskets and bottles and cans of beer. I had to leave by walking through the crowd and I went to shake some hands and people physically recoiled." The next day, he "was on a flight and I heard a guy behind me saying, 'That's the awful guy we saw last night.' I turned to him and said, 'I'm sorry, that was just a bad night,' and he said, 'Nope, you were shit.'"



The so-called godfather of competitive eating, Takeru "Tsunami" Kobayashi, can wolf down 69 hot dogs in ten minutes, says Chris Godfrey in *The Guardian*. His first venture into the sport (and it is increasingly accepted as one) came when he was 22, and devoured 16 bowls of ramen in one hour on Japanese TV. In the quarter-century since then, he has broken numerous records – for both volume (15-and-a-half pizzas in 12 minutes) and speed (60 bunless hot dogs in two minutes 35 seconds). At 46, he still has a lithe frame – he is 5ft 8in and says he weighs 68kg – and toned forearms. But he admits that his career has taken a physical toll: he has arthritis in his jaw from excessive chewing, and lower-back problems similar to those experienced by pregnant women. "I'm putting a lot of stress on my body, like any competitor in any sport," he says. "I know of three of my peers who are competitive eaters who have passed away between the ages of 20 and 50. So it is something that concerns me." Still, he has no regrets. "I was always aware of the risk that I could get cancer of the digestive system, whether it's my stomach or my throat," he says. "That's part of the attraction of this sport, I believe: to always be close to danger or to death. I never focused on the negative aspects, because once you do that you step on the brakes and don't try to test your limits."

Castaway of the week

This week's edition of Radio 4's Desert Island Discs featured the gardener and writer Sarah Raven

- 1 *See My Baby Jive* by Roy Wood, performed by Wizzard
- 2 *Dashing White Sergeant*, traditional, performed by Jimmy Shand
- 3 *Don't You (Forget About Me)* by Keith Forsey and Steve Schiff, performed by Simple Minds
- 4 *You Can Dance (If You Want To)* by Lorenzo Queen, K. Davis and L. Pinckney, performed by Go Go Lorenzo and the Davis Pinckney Project
- 5* *September* by Al McKay, Maurice White and Allee Willis, performed by Earth, Wind & Fire
- 6 *Can't Take My Eyes Off You* by Bob Crewe and Bob Gaudio, performed by Andy Williams
- 7 *Rocket Man* by Elton John and Bernie Taupin, performed by Elton John
- 8 *Spring 1* by Vivaldi and Max Richter, performed by Daniel Hope with the Konzerthausorchester Berlin (cond. André de Ridder)

Book: *Flowers of Crete* by John Fielding and Nicholas Turland

Luxury: linen sheets and a hot water bottle

* Choice if allowed only one record

Viewpoint:**A cheery transition**

"The best time to see a country's political culture is before or after an election. Almost uniquely, the UK, France and the US are all in this phase now. Britain's cheery transition of power reflects well on its politics. The UK has many forces keeping it sane. Hardly any Briton believes that God supports their preferred party. Almost everyone gets news from the BBC, meaning there's a shared reality. The nation's chief faultline, class, is only blurrily expressed in voting. Britain also has a monarch who is supposed to embody the nation. That leaves politicians as functionaries tasked with providing light entertainment while making sure that people can get doctors' appointments." *Simon Kuper in the Financial Times*

Farewell

Edna O'Brien, Irish novelist who wrote *The Country Girls*, died 27 July, aged 93.

Toumani Diabaté, Malian master of the kora, died 19 July, aged 58.

Lord Fellowes, Queen Elizabeth II's private secretary, died 29 July, aged 82.

Kim Sengupta, veteran foreign correspondent for *The Independent*, died c.30 July, aged 68.

Alexander Waugh, writer and journalist, died 22 July, aged 60.

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Project 2025: “a second American Revolution”?

A conservative plan for Donald Trump’s second term in office is making waves in the US

Why is Project 2025 in the news?

America’s biggest right-wing think-tank, The Heritage Foundation, set aside \$22m for Project 2025, a detailed blueprint for the next Republican presidency. It aims to provide “both a governing agenda and the right people in place, ready to carry this agenda out on day one of the next conservative administration”. Its 922-page main document, “Mandate for Leadership”, gives specific action plans for many parts of the federal government. This was actually published last April, to little fanfare. Now, though, with Trump the favourite to win the election, Project 2025 is receiving a lot of attention from the Democrats, the liberal media, and social media. It “offers a terrifying vision for America”, wrote one critic; on TikTok, it has been called “a far-right manifesto that would destroy the federal government as we know it”, and “a 1,000-page bucket list of extremist policies”.

What are the proposals?

The Mandate is a grab-bag of policies, including permanent, sweeping tax cuts; sharp limits on abortion; a ban on pornography; the rejection of transgender rights; the curtailment of clean-energy projects and promotion of fossil fuels; the removal of employment quotas for racial minorities; the use of the military to suppress crime and protest; and the mass internment and expulsion of illegal migrants. It advocates the abolition of federal agencies such as the Department of Education. It’s not one unified document: 38 writers contributed, and they’re divided on economic policy (some favour protectionism and others free trade). But they’re united in wanting to dismantle or take over the federal bureaucracy, and to put the Department of Justice and the FBI under the direct control of the president. The Heritage Foundation’s president, Kevin Roberts, called it a plan for “a second American Revolution” that would be “bloodless, if the Left allows it to be”.

Why do the authors deem this necessary?

In part it stems from a long-standing aversion to big government on the US Right, but it is also a reaction to Trump’s first term in office. His transition to power in 2016 is generally agreed to have been chaotic; Trump also believes that his plans were repeatedly thwarted by the liberal-leaning “deep state”. The New Yorker recently reported a former White House official saying: “Trump was constantly enraged that his cabinet wouldn’t break the law for him. He wanted the Department of Homeland Security to shoot migrants crossing the Rio Grande, the Defence Department to draw up plans to invade Mexico, and the Internal Revenue Service to audit his critics.” He also wanted to fire large numbers of federal workers to remove resistance to his agenda. The second time around, Trump is determined that there’ll be no such impediments.

So is Trump behind Project 2025?

On the face of it, no. After it started receiving negative press, he explicitly disavowed it, saying: “I know nothing



Donald Trump with Russell Vought in 2019

about Project 2025. I have no idea who is behind it.” He added that some of it was “absolutely ridiculous and abysmal”. However, the team that created it is, in fact, full of former senior Trump staffers, many of whom would be very influential if he returned to the White House. For instance, Russell Vought, a former Trump administration official who wrote a key chapter, doubles as the Republican Party’s policy director. And there is a lot of crossover between Project 2025’s aims, official Republican policy, and Trump’s own “Agenda 47”.

Which bits is Trump likely to adopt?

He is likely to ignore some proposals. Trump is against federal restrictions on abortions, as he is aware that the issue could cost him votes. On immigration,

however, Republican policy and Project 2025 are closely aligned: the party promises the “largest deportation programme in American history”. Trump has also repeatedly declared that he will take control of the administrative state. “Either the deep state destroys America or we destroy the deep state,” he said at a recent rally. In 2020, the Trump administration issued an executive order that stripped protections from civil servants perceived as disloyal to the president. Trump has also stated that he would use the FBI and the Justice Department to “go after” political rivals. So it’s not unreasonable to describe Project 2025 as a plausible plan for the next Trump administration, drawn up by the people who’d staff it. And the question of staffing may turn out to be critical.

Why is staffing important?

Trump has little interest in the granular detail of policy; he relies on staffers for that. And each incoming president has to fill around 4,000 government roles with political appointees. In his first term, Trump struggled to do this, causing parts of the government machine to break down. The Heritage Foundation’s team has tried to fix the problem by assembling a database of pre-vetted potential appointees, excluding, for example, anyone who blamed Trump for the Capitol riot in 2021. They also have plans to replace tens of thousands of civil servants with Trump loyalists, by reissuing Trump’s 2020 executive order (which Joe Biden rescinded). Paul Dans, the director of Project 2025, said the team was “systematically preparing to march into office and bring a new army – aligned, trained, and essentially weaponised conservatives ready to do battle against the deep state”.

Is all this affecting the election?

It is providing a rallying call for liberals. In Kamala Harris’s first statements as the leading Democratic candidate, she vowed to defeat two enemies: Donald Trump and “his extreme Project 2025 agenda”. Trump’s advisers acknowledge that the issue is hurting them. Paul Dans unexpectedly resigned this week, and the Trump campaign issued a warning to “any group trying to misrepresent their influence with President Trump and his campaign – it will not end well for you”.

The think-tank ecosystem

The Heritage Foundation isn’t merely a talking shop. Founded in 1973 as a conservative counterweight to liberal think-tanks such as the Brookings Institution, it became a major player in 1981, when its policy proposals were taken up by the Reagan administration, which implemented around 60% of them during its first year in office. The Foundation has offered policy blueprints to every Republican president since then. It claims that the Trump administration adopted 64% of the 334 policies it proposed. It also put together a database of trusted conservatives to serve under Trump. Several hundred were hired from this list, some 70 of whom were Foundation staff and alumni.

The Foundation sits in a larger ecosystem of conservative think-tanks, backed by corporate interests and right-wing billionaires, such as Charles and David Koch. Perhaps the most influential is the Conservative Partnership Institute, an umbrella organisation with a series of sub-groups. Many see it as the next Trump administration in waiting: key players include Mark Meadows, his former chief of staff, and his immigration adviser Stephen Miller. It has assisted in what The Nation called “the Maga takeover” of conservative institutions, and it played a central role in Project 2025.

An inquiry into the need for public inquiries

Samira Shackle

The Guardian

Believe it or not, says Samira Shackle, there are no fewer than 18 public inquiries sitting in Britain right now, looking into everything from Grenfell to Covid. But do they achieve anything? They used to, on occasion: the 2004 inquiry into the Soham murders led to tighter background checks for those working with children. Yet the more inquiries have proliferated – there are twice as many now as in 2017 – and the more complex, drawn out and costly they’ve become, the less effective they’ve been at delivering justice and reform. By the time the inquiry into the blood scandal reported this May, more than 3,000 victims had died. And when they do see the light of day, the findings are often not acted on. The patient-safety recommendations made by the inquiry into neglect at Stafford Hospital more than a decade ago are yet to be implemented. Campaigners now want an independent body to monitor how government responds to inquiries; but the real need is to stop having so many inquiries in the first place. Their overuse is undermining the very trust they’re supposed to restore.

Reeves is scaring off the golden geese

Robert Colvile

The Sunday Times

Thank goodness for the rich, says Robert Colvile. Without them, Britain’s finances really would be in trouble. New statistics show that the top 1% of earners pay a remarkable 28% of income tax. “That comes to £85bn, or roughly three times the amount paid by the entire bottom half of the workforce.” The trouble with relying on “golden geese”, though, is “they can always fly away” – and looming changes to our tax regime may prompt them to do just that. Labour is following Tory plans to phase out the non-dom visa status and its accompanying tax relief on non-UK income and gains. But that will only spur the flight of rich investors to more favourable visa regimes in other European countries. The consensus in the City is that the move is “a titanic act of self-harm”. It’s not the level of tax – many would accept paying more to stay in Britain – it’s that Labour appears to want non-doms to pay inheritance tax on all their assets, both in and outside the UK. As one high earner put it: “We can afford to live here. We just can’t afford to die here.” How all this squares with Rachel Reeves’s aim of driving up the rate of growth is anyone’s guess.

Make it worth building in my backyard

Liam Halligan

The Daily Telegraph

The problem with Nimbyism in this country, says Liam Halligan, is that it’s so rational. Consider what happens when a piece of farmland gets residential planning permission. Yes, it’s a bonanza for the lucky owners: the value of their land shoots up 100- or 200-fold. But for the local community, it brings only downsides. None of the money from the “planning uplift” is shared with the state to fund new schools or hospitals in the area, as happens in much of Europe: locals will be lucky to get a new playground. And having paid top dollar for the land, the developers, unsurprisingly, then build “small, low-quality, overpriced homes to protect their margins”. Labour, desperate to facilitate delivery of 1.5 million new homes over the next five years, rightly wants to reform this arrangement. Trouble is, it’s doing it all wrong. As I’ve long argued, landowners should be made to share the planning gain 50-50 with local authorities; but Labour “wants the state to take the lot”, a harsh approach that’s bound to invite endless legal challenges. The UK urgently needs more housing: sadly, Labour’s plan is a recipe for “bureaucratic gridlock”, not more houses.

Why the polls lost the last election

Daniel Finkelstein

The Times

In all the post-election commentary on Labour’s landslide, says Daniel Finkelstein, one hugely significant detail has largely escaped attention: how hopelessly the pollsters got it wrong. Pre-election polls had predicted Labour would win around 45% of the vote; it ended up being 34%. Imagine how different reporting on the election would have been if Labour’s much-touted 20-point lead over the Tories was only ever half that size. But this wasn’t a one-off: the pollsters were equally off-target in the elections of 1970, 1992 and 2015. What the industry fails to accept is that, whatever they tell pollsters, many people really have no idea how they’re actually going to vote. You can get far more accurate results, as the polling company Yonder has found, by asking people about their views – whether or not they thought the economy was on the right track, for instance – than by asking them which party they’ll back. The polling industry badly needs to recognise it has a problem, and take a fresh approach. And the media needs to put far less weight on fallible polls in its coverage.

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

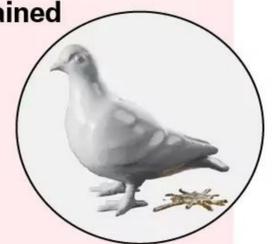
A postman in France who hoarded 13,000 letters, apparently so that he could clock off early, has been charged with breach of trust. The man, who has not been named, was supposed to be delivering post in L’Isle-d’Abeau near Lyon. Instead, he filled his garage with undelivered mail, where it was found by police who were investigating residents’ complaints about their erratic post. “I was overwhelmed by the work, which is huge. I’m speaking for all the postmen and women in France,” the *facteur* explained. “You don’t realise it, but it’s a huge job. You have to distribute, you have to distribute.”



Dublin’s waxwork museum has removed a figure of Sinéad O’Connor after it was criticised for being “hideous”. The late singer’s brother, John O’Connor, told RTÉ that he’d been shocked by the waxwork, which he said looked “nothing like her”. The figure was unveiled last week to mark the first anniversary of O’Connor’s death. “We have listened closely to the reactions and agree that the figure does not fully capture Sinéad’s unique presence and essence,” the museum said.

The Museum of London has changed its name to the London Museum, and unveiled its new logo, which features a white pigeon that has just done a sparkly gold poo. “The pigeon and splat speak to a historic place full of dualities,” the museum’s director explained

– they represent the capital’s ancient blend of “grit and glitter”.



The Secret Service: why did it fail to protect Trump?

The “single greatest operational failure” in decades. Those were the words that the Secret Service director Kimberly Cheatle used last week to describe her agency’s handling of the recent assassination attempt on Donald Trump. It was the only part of her testimony to a congressional hearing that lawmakers were happy to accept, said the **Star Tribune (Minneapolis)**. She otherwise succeeded in uniting them in exasperation with her stonewalling. They wanted to know why the shooter, Thomas Matthew Crooks, was able to perch atop a warehouse roof with an AR-15-style rifle less than 450 feet from Trump’s podium. They wanted to know why no one prevented Crooks shooting, given that a Secret Service sniper had noticed him 30 minutes earlier using a gun rangefinder, and even rally attendees had alerted police to a suspicious man, shouting, “He’s on the roof!”. Cheatle, who later resigned, couldn’t explain those failures. “What are you hiding, my friend?” demanded Republican Lisa McClain.



Cheatle: presiding over the agency’s greatest failure

a surveillance drone only hours before Trump’s speech, and was identified by local police as suspicious before the rally even began. Cheatle said the roof from which Crooks fired was left vacant because it was too “sloped” to access safely, yet it was in fact relatively flat. Did the Secret Service actually want Trump to be killed? Of course not, said Patrick B. O’Shea in **The Hill**. This was down to “complacency”, not conspiracy. We like to think of Secret Service agents as being the “best of the best”, but even professionals can “get sloppy”. It was a small rally in a small town in rural Pennsylvania – and they took their eye off the ball.

What indeed, asked Tristan Justice in **The Federalist**. It’s hard not to suspect foul play, given the string of extraordinary security lapses. Crooks was able to case out the area with

It’s not the first time they’ve slipped up, said **The Washington Post**. A knife-wielding intruder breached the White House in 2014, and an uninvited couple were able to crash one of Barack Obama’s state dinners. Agents hired sex workers during a presidential trip to Colombia in 2012. A bipartisan investigation described the agency as “in crisis” nearly a decade ago, highlighting understaffing and a lack of accountability. With three independent probes under way into the Crooks case, this may be a moment for a wider overhaul of the Secret Service.

Is Benjamin Netanyahu losing the US?

Joshua Keating

Vox

Benjamin Netanyahu broke Winston Churchill’s record last week by making a fourth address to a joint session of congress – an unprecedented honour for a foreign leader. The Israeli prime minister is a familiar presence in Washington DC, says Joshua Keating. He made his first speech to congress back in 1996 and has frequented Capitol Hill since serving as a diplomat in the early 1980s. For him, Washington once served “as a sort of relief valve”. It was a place where he could count on strong support, however embattled his position at home. But things felt different last week. Although the Israeli premier was accorded the usual formalities, he cut a rather forlorn, marginalised figure. Dozens of lawmakers, including around half of congress’s Democrats, skipped his address, which was devoted mostly to refuting criticism of Israel and contained little indication of any plan for ending the war in Gaza. Former house speaker Nancy Pelosi called it “by far the worst presentation of any foreign dignitary” invited to address congress. Netanyahu is used to being a controversial figure – his 2011 speech to congress, like this one, also attracted protest – but he “may have to get used to being an irrelevant one”. For it looks like the Israeli PM has finally lost America.

The threat of Kamala Harris’s laugh

Sophie Gilbert

The Atlantic

“Have you ever watched her laugh? She is crazy. You can tell a lot by a laugh... She is nuts.” So declared Donald Trump in a recent rally, talking of his presumptive White House rival. He’s not alone in criticising Kamala Harris’s laugh, says Sophie Gilbert. Other pundits on the Right have also latched on to it, suggesting that it’s weird, or a sign of mental imbalance. It’s a sadly predictable line of attack. Hillary Clinton’s laugh was likewise mocked when she ran for president. Indeed, throughout history, there’s a long tradition of men stigmatising public expressions of female mirth, associating them with a lack of social modesty, hysteria or madness. It’s a form of patriarchal control. In the late 19th century, as women became more politically active in the US, wild rumours suggested that some women who went to vaudeville shows or comic movies ended up laughing themselves to death. Under Taliban rule in Afghanistan, women have faced beatings after being seen laughing. In 2014, Turkey’s former deputy prime minister advised women not to laugh in public, lest they signal their “moral corruption”. The attempts to portray “laughing Kamala” as unhinged and dangerous are a wholly unoriginal smear. “Which is perhaps why, for now at least, they’re failing to stick.”

Nancy Pelosi and the art of power

Jessica Bennett

The New York Times

As we embark on another round of speculation about whether America is ready for a female president, says Jessica Bennett, it’s worth noting the extraordinary power already wielded by one woman: Nancy Pelosi. The veteran Democrat may have stepped down as house speaker, but at the age of 84 she’s still calling the shots. It was she who forced Joe Biden to drop out of the White House race. When the president initially insisted he wouldn’t, she went on his favourite morning TV show to say he needed to make a decision “because time is running short”. When he later assured her during a phone call that polling data suggested he could still win, she challenged him. “Put Donilon on the phone,” she reportedly demanded, asking for one of his advisers, Mike Donilon. “Show me what polls.” As Biden sought to cling on, Pelosi worked methodically behind the scenes to keep piling the pressure on him and his team. “Nancy made clear that they could do this the easy way or the hard way,” a Democrat insider told Politico. “She gave them three weeks of the easy way. It was about to be the hard way.” Can we all admit that there is something “supremely gratifying”, and inspiring, about watching a woman wield power in such an “unapologetically ruthless” manner?

Turmoil in Bangladesh: the fury over a quota system

A “bizarre national crisis” has shaken Bangladesh, said Sharmeen Murshid in the *Daily Star (Dhaka)*. It began when students staged protests demanding an end to an outdated quota system that requires 30% of civil service jobs to go to descendants of those who fought in the nation’s 1971 war of independence from Pakistan. The protests, though peaceful, were met with a wave of police brutality that left around 200 people dead and thousands injured. That led to violence spreading across this nation of 174 million people, so a nationwide curfew was enforced, with soldiers ordered to shoot on sight. In a few days, the chaos abated, but how on earth did “legitimate” protests trigger such an appallingly disproportionate response?



Sheikh Hasina: “characteristically ruthless”

The hated quota system was set up more than 50 years ago, by the then prime minister, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the present PM, said Salil Tripathi in *Foreign Policy (Washington)*. The idea was to reward veterans of that bloody war and their descendants – the people who formed the backbone of his own party, the Awami League (AL). But almost 50 years after Rahman was killed in the 1975 military coup, the system’s effects are being felt by the 400,000 young graduates who each year compete for the 3,000 or so much-coveted civil

service vacancies. The quota is widely seen as a way of entrenching the power of Rahman’s daughter, Sheikh Hasina, who has been PM for the past 15 years. She’s a compelling figure, said Mujib Mashal in *The New York Times*.

A secular Muslim given to wearing colourful saris, she has fought Islamic militancy, lifted millions out of poverty and somehow managed to keep on good terms with both India and China. But her rule has been marred by voter fraud, corruption and, most of all, her unwavering tendency to reward AL supporters while seeking vengeance against heirs of the 1975 coup plotters.

Her response to the protests was characteristically ruthless, said *The Economist*: she cut off the internet, and had some 61,000 people charged by the authorities. At least her government has now had the good sense to reduce the quota to 5%. But students’ grievances are about more than the quota. Almost every job for educated Bangladeshis “runs through the AL”, the student wing of which acts as a “murderous vigilante force” exercising sway over university life: it even controls the “distribution of scarce rooms for undergraduates”. The AL and Hasina will “probably survive for now”; but the damage to her party, and to her own standing, could yet prove “calamitous” in the long term.

HUNGARY

Brussels’ feeble attempt to slap down Budapest

Die Tageszeitung (Berlin)

How do you fix a problem like Viktor Orbán? Not the way Brussels is doing it, says Eric Bonse. The Hungarian PM has sown discord across Europe since Hungary assumed the EU Council presidency in July. The role of the president is to represent the European Parliament in its international relations; Orbán, however, is a Kremlin apologist who has vetoed sending aid to Kyiv: he supports policies completely at odds with those of Brussels and its foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, the vice-president of the European Commission. To Borrell’s fury, Orbán has gone on peace missions to Kyiv, Moscow and Beijing and met Donald Trump in Washington, so scuppering EU efforts to present a united front on Ukraine. And how has Brussels responded? With its own “boycott” of Hungary. EU ministers skipped a health summit in Budapest last week; Borrell has now moved a summit on the refugee crisis from Budapest to Brussels. How feeble. Europe’s leaders should have the guts to go to Budapest and confront Orbán, not hide from him. This makes Europe look yet more divided. As for Borrell, he should be doing just what Orbán has done: travel to Moscow, Beijing and Washington to explore options for peace. Being the EU’s top diplomat, that’s his job. “He has neglected it miserably.”

UKRAINE

Kyiv can give two fingers to J.D. Vance

The Kyiv Independent

Could Ukraine survive a J.D. Vance US vice-presidency? That’s the question being asked in Kyiv after Donald Trump announced Vance as his running mate, says Timothy Ash. And with reason. Vance, a fierce critic of military aid to Ukraine, has been “strident in his message” that Europe has freeloaded on US security for too long. “I gotta be honest with you,” he said in 2022, “I don’t really care what happens to Ukraine one way or another.” So if they do go on to win the election, Trump and he will probably try to force Kyiv into disastrous concessions to end the war Russia started. Could Ukraine resist? Well, possibly. “Despite what Vance et al might think”, the support for Kyiv from Europe and other allies (€102bn) has now well outstripped support from the US (€74bn). True, Washington has supplied Kyiv with hi-tech weapons; but if Europe wanted to purchase that equipment it’s unlikely the US would say no. Ukraine can anyway sustain itself well into 2025 and possibly beyond, bogging Russia down in a long, debilitating war. Don’t be surprised, then, if Kyiv opts to resist pressure to agree a peace deal with Putin. It well knows its best bet is to fight on and play for time.

RWANDA

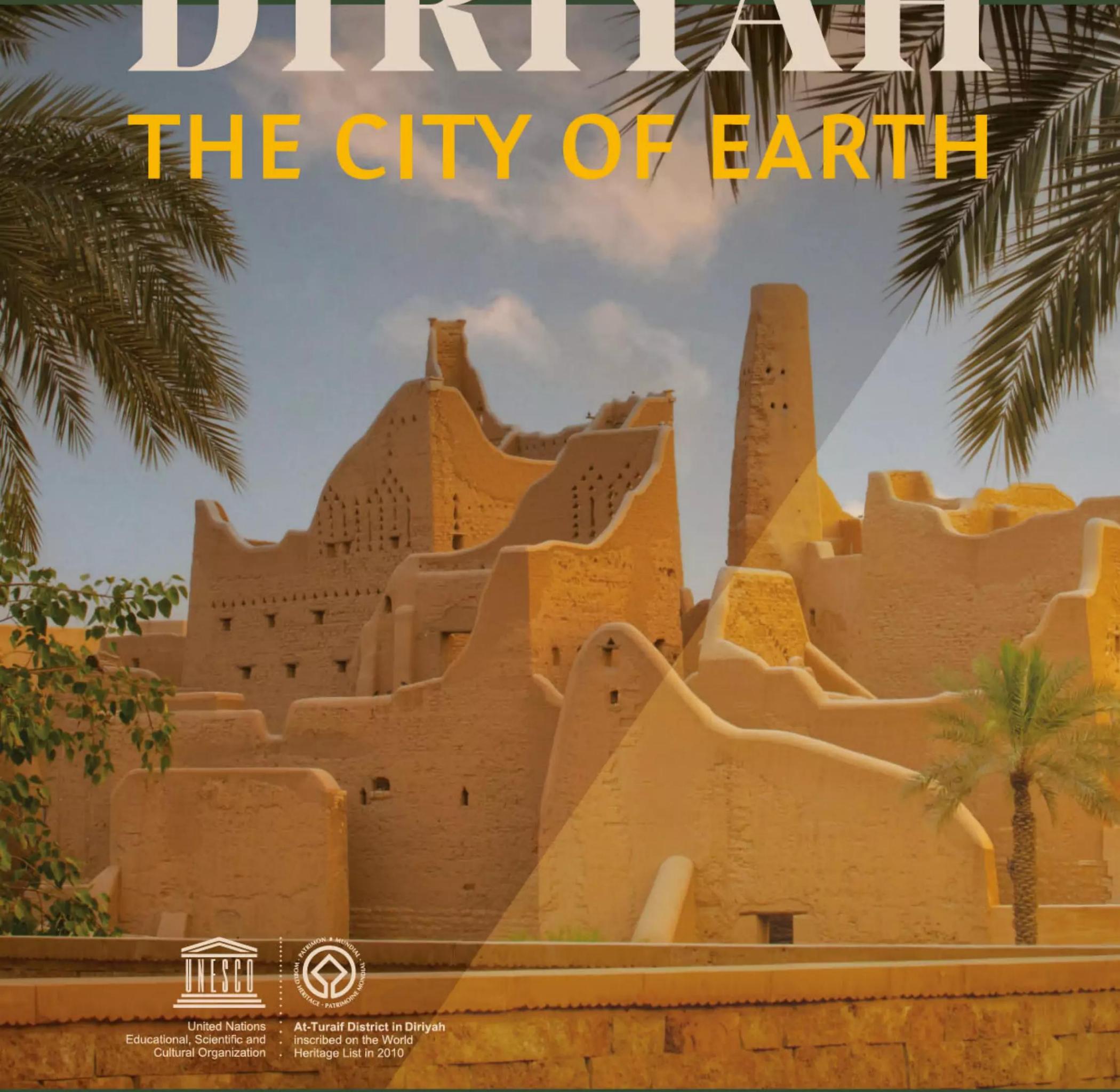
The darling of the West is really a demon

The Daily Maverick (Cape Town)

As an example of “Western hypocrisy”, the blind eye being turned to Paul Kagame’s “rogue” regime in Rwanda is hard to beat, says Natale Labia. In elections this month, the strongman claimed 99% of the vote, “a result that will surprise precisely no one” as he’d locked up any serious challengers. His backers credit him with rebuilding the country after the 1994 genocide; and, undoubtedly, astute marketing and the promotion of tourism have lent his regime “a veneer of respectability”. Visitors at luxury game lodges spend thousands of dollars to see mountain gorillas; Arsenal football shirts are adorned with “Visit Rwanda” branding. But as human rights groups will tell you, Kagame’s regime routinely kills, jails and harasses opponents both in and outside the country. It also fuels the conflict in neighbouring DRC, supplying anti-government rebels with arms in order to gain access to major reserves of gold and coltan (a key component in phones and electric vehicles). Kagame gets away with it by presenting himself as “a vital African chess piece in the global geopolitical circus”, a counterweight to Chinese and Russian influence across Africa. But to his embattled people, Kagame is not the solution that some in the West have been led to believe: he is the problem.

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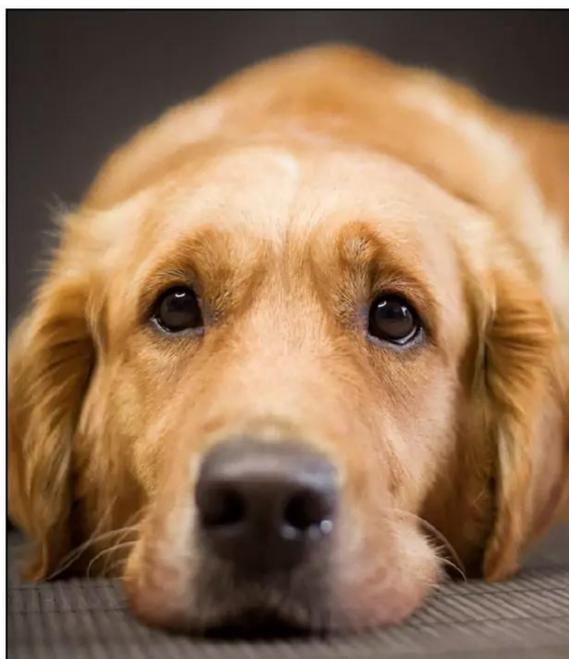
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What the scientists are saying...

Dogs feel their owners' stress

After a hard day at work, dog owners may be tempted to seek comfort from their pet. But while this may make the human feel better, it could leave their dog feeling worse. A new study has found that dogs can sniff out when people are stressed – and that it makes them feel more pessimistic. For the research, a team from the University of Bristol used trial and error to teach 18 pet dogs that when a food bowl was in one position, it would contain a treat, and when in another position, it would be empty. The researchers then placed the bowls in various spots between the two original positions and sat back to watch how the dogs behaved: running up to the bowl was taken to be a sign of optimism about the presence of food – and sauntering the opposite. The results showed that when the dogs were exposed to the breath and sweat of people who were feeling stressed, and the bowl was close to where they expected to find no food, they were slower to approach it than when they were exposed to odours collected from people who were relaxed, suggesting that the stress smell had lowered their sense of optimism about the likelihood of getting a treat.



Our moods affect their enthusiasm

Brazil's cocaine sharks

Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water... Sharks off the coast of Brazil have tested positive for cocaine. In the first tests of this kind, a Brazilian team found cocaine in the muscles and livers of all 13 sharpnose sharks in the study; and in concentrations that were up to 100 times higher than have previously been found in aquatic animals. The drug may have been washed down the drains of illicit drug labs or entered the sea in the excrement of drug users. It is also

possible that the sharks had somehow ingested the contents of bales of cocaine that had been dumped or lost at sea, but this is thought to be unlikely. As apex predators, their cocaine levels could have built up owing to eating contaminated fish. No research has been done into the impact of cocaine on shark health or behaviour, but previous studies have suggested that the drug has similar effects on animals as it has on humans, said study co-author Dr Enrico Mendes Saggiaro.

A desperate shortage of drugs

People with pancreatic cancer are being forced to reduce the size of their meals, owing to shortages of a drug that enables them to digest food and so maintain the healthy weight they need to tolerate treatment. Most of the 10,000 pancreatic cancer patients in England need pancreatic enzyme replacement therapy (Pert) to make up for the enzymes that their

pancreases would normally make. The drugs are also needed by thousands of people with cystic fibrosis. But the pancreatic enzymes they contain are extracted from pigs, and owing to the growing demand for lower-fat meat, supplies of these enzymes have dwindled. Bryony Thomas, 46, has survived almost five years since her cancer was diagnosed, making her more fortunate than most: more than half of patients die within three months. But she will always have to take Pert, in the form of a drug called Creon. She is supposed to take eight to 12 capsules with every meal; this year, however, her pharmacist has repeatedly struggled to fulfil her prescription. Some patients have resorted to scouring online pharmacies abroad, and once, Bryony ran so low she accepted supplies from another patient. Now, she is getting by by cutting her portion sizes by two thirds, so that she needs fewer pills. The worry of it is “all consuming”, she told The Times.

Trees absorb methane too

Researchers have discovered that bark absorbs methane, making the planting of trees and forests an even more important weapon in the fight against climate change than previously realised. Soil was thought to be the only terrestrial sink for methane – a greenhouse gas that is far more potent than carbon dioxide, and which has been responsible for about 30% of global warming since industrial times; but the new research, at Birmingham University, suggests that microbes in bark, or the wood itself, are removing the gas at a similar or greater scale. They calculate that this methane effect means that trees – which absorb carbon dioxide through photosynthesis – are 10% more beneficial to the climate than previously thought.

Bats are suffering in the wet summer

The washout summer is being blamed for an alarming surge in the number of bats being found malnourished and in poor health, reports The Guardian. Conservation groups across England have reported a sharp increase in reports of “starving” and “underweight” chiropterans, which need to be rescued and cared for by volunteers. “Some of our carers are looking after 20 bats,” said Jonathan Durward, of the Cambridgeshire Bat Group. “They are a lot thinner and lighter than they have been in previous years. Almost all are in poor condition, not just underweight.”



The brown long-eared bat: in decline

They are also seeing fewer bats this summer than normal. Most likely, all this is due to declines in the populations of the moths, butterflies and other insects that bats feed on, caused by decades of habitat loss and pesticide use, and exacerbated by recent weather conditions. “Any decline in insects can have a serious negative impact for all of the UK’s 17 breeding bat species, since they all feed on insects,” Dr Joe Nuñez-Mino of the Bat Conservation Trust told The Guardian. Last year, the trust found that UK populations of two bat species – the brown long-eared bat and the horseshoe bat – had declined 10% in just five years.

AI boosts cancer detection

An AI program has boosted cancer detection rates by more than 7% in a trial involving 35 GP practices in the east of England. The “C the Signs” AI tool analyses patients’ medical history, test results and treatments, along with their postcode, age and family history to determine if they are at higher risk of the disease. If it sees particular patterns, it prompts GPs to ask questions about possible symptoms and recommend tests and referrals. When it was fed data on 118,677 patients, it identified 7,056 out of the 7,295 who had received cancer diagnoses. And in the trial, the cancer detection rate at the practices that used it rose from 58.7% to 66%, while remaining static at other practices. “Our system has detected over 50 different types of cancers,” said Bea Bakshi, the doctor who created the platform. “The key thing is that it’s not only an earlier diagnosis, but a faster diagnosis.”

Paris 2024: how the city became a stage

As with most Olympic Games, the run-up to Paris 2024 was beset by controversy, said David Goldblatt on UnHerd. Critics challenged its much-vaunted green credentials; complained about the large-scale clearance of homeless people from the city centre; and moaned about the disruption to everyday life caused by the unprecedented security operation last week (18,000 troops on standby, snipers on rooftops, 45,000 armed police; facial recognition cameras everywhere; numerous roads fenced off; and a no-fly zone over Paris). Pro-Palestinian groups protested that, owing to its war in Gaza, Israel should be subject to the same bans as Russia and Belarus; Israel warned that Iran was plotting terrorist attacks aimed at Israeli athletes and spectators; and a Russian national was arrested on suspicion of plotting to destabilise the Games, said Flic Everett in *The Independent*. The sporting events got off to a bad start, when a pitch invasion caused the first football match of the Games to be suspended for hours. Then, hours before the opening ceremony, a series of coordinated arson attacks paralysed the rail network.

President Macron had called for a “truce” in his country’s political battles, said David Jones in the *Daily Mail*. With his ratings at a new low, and France stuck in political limbo as a result of his snap election, he was no doubt praying that the opening ceremony would serve as a distraction from internal strife, and restore a sense of national unity and pride. But while the event’s organisers had ticked all the obvious liberal boxes – the word “diversity” appears no fewer than 19 times in the explanatory document – they’d seemingly neglected a fundamental: the weather. Paris often gets rain in July, but on Friday it was torrential. The result was the unfortunate sight of Macron watching the spectacle from on high, in one of the few areas with a roof, while assembled spectators and athletes – as well as dignitaries and world leaders – got soaked to the skin, or shivered in inelegant see-through ponchos.

Every other Olympic opening ceremony has been held in a stadium. But the French opted to do things differently, by making the City of Light itself the stage – with the athletes parading not around an athletics track, but on boats down the Seine. The idea has been called hubristic, but it was also brilliant, said *The Washington Post*. How better to showcase France than by devising a series of tableaux highlighting its history and culture – from a headless Marie Antoinette dancing to heavy metal,



The City of Light: doing it differently

to the French-Malian singing sensation Aya Nakamura performing with the band of the Republican Guard – and staging them on the banks and bridges of the river that winds through its capital? The ceremony was consistent with the groundbreaking plan to use Paris’s existing infrastructure for this Games, rather than building new venues that risk becoming costly white elephants; it served as a bold statement about what it means to be French in the 21st century; and it was democratic, with space for 320,000 people to watch live.

The organisers are said to have wanted the event to have some of the humour of London 2012, when the late Queen seemed to arrive at the ceremony by parachute with James Bond. They clearly forgot her Diamond Jubilee flotilla on the Thames, when people had to be treated for hypothermia, said Carol Midgley in *The Times*. But there are other reasons for not doing such events outside. In a stadium, everything is contained; in the open, the energy dissipates. The sight of endless boats full of waving athletes in anoraks chugging down the muddy river palled very quickly; and the performances felt random and scattered.

Lady Gaga’s rendition of *Mon Truc en Plumes* would have been “banging” in a stadium; on the riverside, it looked a bit small. It was fully two hours before something “truly spectacular” appeared: an illuminated metal horse galloping “like a ghost” down the Seine.

“How better to showcase France than by devising a series of tableaux highlighting its history and culture?”

The ceremony had been rehearsed in secret for six months, said Barney Ronay in *The Guardian* – but there could be no dress rehearsal. The result was energetic, complex, silly, too long, too sombre, and too spread out. If at one point in that rain-drenched evening, it felt like not just the worst outdoor event ever but “the worst thing ever”, there were also some lovely moments: Axelle Saint-Cirel singing *La Marseillaise* on top of the Grand Palais; and Céline Dion, “halfway up the Eiffel Tower”, belting out a stunning rendition of Édith Piaf’s *Hymne à l’amour*. And let’s not forget the sight of the Olympic flag being delivered by a knight in shining armour, then, in a hilarious gaffe, hung the wrong way up. “It felt epic, as it always does.” But as the International Olympic Committee’s Thomas Bach delivered yet another generic speech, it also felt a bit like a “posh country wedding: all for the best, fingers crossed” and marching on across the wet grass – towards a Games that is making a brave stab at doing things differently.

Pick of the week's *Gossip*

On Boom Radio, Gyles Brandreth recalled enjoying a romantic moment with his wife on a beach in Jamaica, when they noticed that they were not alone. “Coming along the beach was a little bent wizened old woman,” he said. “She was teetering along the beach towards us and it wasn’t until she got right in front of us, this little old person, that we realised that it was actually Mick Jagger.”



The Tory leadership hopeful Tom Tugendhat’s campaign got off to a poor start, when social

media users spotted that its slogan created the acronym “TURD”. Set against an image of the Union flag, the slogan originally read: “Together we can, Unite the party. Rebuild trust. Defeat Labour.” By the next morning it had changed to: “Together we can, Unite the party. Rebuild Trust. Win back the country.” Tugendhat’s team insisted that such graphics are regularly altered early on in a campaign, and that the change had nothing to do with the ribbing he had received online.

The investigative journalist Paul Foot, who died 20 years ago last month, did not

embrace modern technology, wrote his son Tom Foot in the *Islington Tribune*. On having a fax machine installed in his study, he asked: “Yes, but how does the paper get down the wire?” The story reminded former ambassador Thorda Abbott-Watt of a similar incident at the Foreign Office. A senior colleague, she told *The Times*, decided to use a newly installed machine. He put two pieces of paper into it, heard an exciting whirring sound, then silence. “Where do the copies come out then?” he asked. His subordinates had to inform him that he’d put the documents into a shredder.

GB Energy: an £8bn gamble

“The new Labour Government has certainly hit the ground running,” said Callum McGoldrick on CapX. In the month since the election, it has unveiled a mass of policies, initiatives and quangos. These include Great British Energy, a new state-owned firm that Labour says will be “at the heart of this Government’s mission to make Britain a clean-energy superpower”. The company will invest in renewable energy projects alongside the private sector, helping to get them off the ground by, for instance, funding upfront development work such as the securing of planning consent and grid connections. The company is backed by £8.3bn of public money. The question now is whether it will prove to be an effective catalyst for change, or just an expensive gimmick.



Miliband: aiming to lower prices

GB Energy is a promising and welcome initiative, said *The Guardian*. The fact is, we’re failing to convert our economy to renewable energy fast enough through market mechanisms alone. The Climate Change Committee warned last month that, for the first time since the UK set itself carbon-reduction targets, the country was no longer on track to meet its goals. The time is right for a more interventionist approach, agreed George Eaton in *The New Statesman*. GB Energy may have a modest budget, but it

will harness other sources of funding. Its partnership with The Crown Estate, for instance, which has “a £15.5bn portfolio of land and seabed”, is “politically savvy” and should generate many benefits. Fed up with “the greed” of energy bosses, voters are well disposed to the idea of a publicly owned energy company. But they will judge the firm “on results”.

They’re likely to be disappointed on that front, said Ed Conway in *The Sunday Times*. Ed Miliband, the Energy Secretary, claims that GB Energy will help cut people’s bills, but it won’t do that as things stand. The UK is already ahead of most European nations

on solar and wind power, yet we pay more for energy than nearly every other country in the world. Why? Because the price of electricity in Britain is tied to the price of gas, which is currently high, and we pay green subsidies on top. Unless Labour overhauls how our wholesale-power markets work, bills won’t fall. The launch of GB Energy brings to mind the doomed efforts of past Labour governments “to command and control the economy through grandiose quangos such as the National Enterprise Board of the 1970s”, said Alex Brummer in *The Daily Mail*. We can all pray for the success of the firm and “the zero-carbon nirvana” envisioned by Miliband. “But I fear we are creating a taxpayer-funded white elephant.”

Wit & Wisdom

“There never was a child so lovely but his mother was glad to get him asleep.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson, quoted in Forbes

“If you want a happy ending, that depends, of course, on where you stop your story.”

Orson Welles, quoted on The Bulwark

“It’s much easier to make people cry than to make them laugh.”

Vivien Leigh, quoted in The Knowledge

“The British have a habit of always hanging the gold around an athlete’s neck too soon.”

Michael Johnson in The Times

“Desperation is sometimes as powerful an inspirer as genius.”

Benjamin Disraeli, quoted in The Jewish Chronicle

“When someone on social media tells you it’s raining, the traditional media’s job is to look out the window.”

Journalist Helen Lewis in The Atlantic

“Why should I use my indicators? It’s none of your business where I’m going.”

Letter to Viz magazine, quoted on X/Twitter

“Man is quite insane. He wouldn’t know how to create a maggot, and he creates gods by the dozen.”

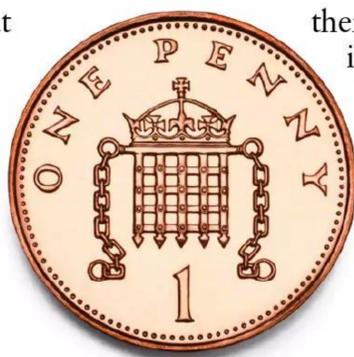
Montaigne, quoted in The San Francisco Chronicle

“A party without cake is really just a meeting.”

Julia Child, quoted on Ashland Source

Copper coins: are they doomed?

“The Great British penny could be at risk of being scrapped,” said Chris Matthews in *The Daily Mail*. This year, for the first time ever, the Treasury has placed no new orders at all for new coins from the Royal Mint, saying that the 27 billion already in circulation in the UK are sufficient. It does not expect to order any new 1p and 2p coins in the coming years, and officials are said to be considering “a range of scenarios” for the future of copper coins, as the UK increasingly becomes a cashless society. Many Britons reacted to the news with “howls of dismay”. Get rid of coppers, and with them many “greatly loved experiences” will be consigned to history: penny arcades, piggy banks, penny sweets.



there’s a “glut” of coppers, which inflation has made virtually worthless.

The cash management company Vaultex has 1,300 cages, each holding tens of thousands of coins, in its vaults, which nobody wants. The simplest solution might be to scrap the 2p coin; the smaller and less “pocket-destroying” 1p coin could easily do its job. The halfpenny, after all, was scrapped in 1984. There was grumbling then, but no one missed it. Copper coins are “a historical anomaly”, and eventually they will go.

Don’t panic, said Harry Wallop in *The Times*. Nothing has been decided yet, and the Royal Mint often pauses its coining machines. New 2p coins haven’t been made since 2021. Cash is still printed regularly, because torn and tatty notes need to be replaced. But coins, being made of copper-plated steel, “endure”. And because electronic money is taking over – last year cash was used for only 12% of all payments –

We will miss our coppers, said Matthew Lynn in *The Spectator*. Many people still rely on cash payments. And getting rid of 1p and 2p coins will “inevitably fuel inflation”. Retailers are reluctant to cross barriers such as 99p and £1.99. If pennies don’t exist, prices will be rounded up “to something far larger”. Besides, there’s a romance to coins, said *The Times*. “These intricate metal tokens, smoothed by time and trade, are vehicles for history, art and commerce.” A mudlarker can find a Roman coin buried on the Thames foreshore “and feel a flicker of magic. Somehow an expired debit card won’t hold the same charm.”

Statistics of the week

Police in England and Wales recorded 443,995 reported shoplifting offences in the year to March, 30% more than in the previous 12 months.

The Daily Telegraph

A third of the athletes in Team GB at this year’s Olympics were educated at private secondary schools.

The i Paper

The Olympics: a Games of “gulps and gasps”

Expect the unexpected: that was the message conveyed at the Paris Olympics almost as soon as the Games got under way, said Fiona Tomas in *The Sunday Telegraph*. Surprise results and shock headlines dominated Team GB's opening weekend. It had been two decades since Britain won a medal on the first day of the Games, but divers Scarlett Mew Jensen and Yasmin Harper set the tone when they leapfrogged onto the podium in the 3m springboard synchro to “audible gasps”. The British pair had been well out of contention for bronze; but then something completely unexpected happened: Australia's Anabelle Smith “slipped off the corner of her board and helplessly spun through the air”. And as Smith gave a silent, underwater scream, “Mew Jensen clapped a hand, adorned with Olympic-themed nail art, over her mouth”, said James Gheerbrant in *The Sunday Times*. The 22-year-old from Tower Hamlets had crashed out of the Tokyo Olympics and been “left reeling” by her coach's death shortly after. Three months ago, her own participation in Paris was threatened by a partial back fracture. Perhaps that's why she showed such empathy for the Aussies: “We're gutted for them,” she admitted.



Harper and Mew Jensen: an unexpected triumph

There were more gulps and gasps as Andy Murray took to the court for his last-ever tournament. The former Olympic champion and his doubles partner Dan Evans seemed overcome by the occasion, said Tumaini Carayol in *The Guardian*: “both players returned poorly and struggled to make clear-headed decisions”. A set and a break down in their first-round match against a scratch Japanese pair, “Murray became increasingly frustrated with how his last tournament was turning out”. He was clearly battling “his painful back and multiple other ailments”, said Andy Dunn in the *Daily Express*. Murray's mother Judy, in the stands, was even searching on her phone for an early flight home. But incredibly, in the deciding tie-break, the British pair saved five consecutive match points to steal a victory. “It summed up Murray's career,” said James Toney in *The i Paper*. “Stubborn, resilient and just plain brilliant, Andy Murray will simply not go away quietly.”

“Peaty, the seemingly invincible 29-year-old, looked vulnerable, beatable, human”

Just as determined to make one last comeback was Adam Peaty, whose performance in the men's 100m breaststroke final was “dragged from deep within”, said Martin Lipton in *The Sun*. The tattooed and seemingly invincible 29-year-old had taken a break from the sport to deal with alcoholism, depression and a relationship break-up. “It made him look vulnerable, beatable, human”, a problematic look for a man hoping to join Michael Phelps in winning the same event at three consecutive Games. Yet in the final 25m, he managed to pull away from his great rival, Qin Haiyang, who'd failed a drugs test three years ago but never served a ban. The real threat, though, turned out to be Italy's Nicolò Martinenghi in lane seven. “It was as if Peaty and Qin, swimming alongside each other in the middle of the pool, had been concentrating so hard on the other that they forgot about the Italian,” said Oliver Holt in the *Daily Mail*. Martinenghi seemed as astonished as everyone else that he touched the wall first: “it is hard to convey the sense of shock that reverberated around this 17,000-seat arena”.

But you could argue that the biggest shock of Team GB's Olympics took place before the Games even started, said Oliver Brown in *The Sunday Telegraph*. Dressage rider Charlotte Dujardin “was meant to be on a quest ... to become the most decorated British female Olympian in history. Instead, the very mention of her name draws a shudder.” The leaking of a video showing her repeatedly whipping a horse in training has cost her her place on the GB team, and may have “set fire” to her sport's future inclusion in the Games.

So it was a relief when the British eventing team retained their title, and in turn secured Team GB's first gold – Laura Collett cementing the victory in her final showjumping round. Collett later took bronze in the individual event. “Across three days of gruelling competition,” said Jim White in *The Daily Telegraph*, “Britain's team produced a performance as close to being flawless as it comes in a sport fraught with jeopardy.”

F1: Hamilton wins thanks to “two loaves of bread”

Pity George Russell, said Henry Clark in the *Daily Mail*: the British driver pulled off a “strategic masterstroke” to win the Belgian Grand Prix on Sunday, only to be disqualified two-and-a-half hours later. Russell had already sprayed the podium champagne when race stewards confirmed his car was underweight. “It wasn't until he was heading home on the long and winding roads through the depths of the Ardennes that his worst fears were confirmed.” His Mercedes had initially met the minimum-weight requirement, but only because its fuel tank hadn't been fully emptied.

The 26-year-old had surprised and impressed with his third-ever F1 victory, said Daniel Moxon in the *Daily Express*. As the Spa circuit had been “chewing up tyres all weekend”, the engineers



Russell: “the tyre whisperer”

had agreed that two tyre changes would be needed; so “eyebrows were raised” when Russell suggested switching to a single stop mid-race. But Russell trusted his gut, despite teammate Lewis Hamilton chasing him down hard in the final laps. “We've got so many sensors and data points on the car but ... sometimes you feel it,” said a still-celebrating Russell. His boss Toto Wolff called him “the tyre whisperer”.

The race was also inadvertently a victory for Max Verstappen: with his revised fourth place, the championship leader picked up vital points to extend his lead over Lando Norris. As for Hamilton, said Philip Duncan in *The Independent*, he was left with mixed feelings about victory, having edged into first “by the weight of two loaves of bread”.

Sporting headlines

Cricket Ben Stokes hit England's fastest-ever Test half-century to seal a 3-0 series win over West Indies.

Football Fifa has given a one-year ban to the head coach of Canada's women's Olympic football team, Bev Priestman, after her assistants were caught using spy drones to spy on a rival team's practice.

Olympics Tom Pidcock defied a fourth-lap puncture to retain his mountain bike title. Nathan Hales won gold in trap shooting. The men's 4x200m freestyle swimming team – James Guy, Tom Dean, Matt Richards and Duncan Scott – became the first British relay team to win consecutive golds.

Pick of the week's correspondence

Hypocrisy in the West

To *The Economist*

You ran a story on the meeting between Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, and Vladimir Putin, Russia's president. Just before the meeting, Russia launched missile strikes across Ukraine, including on a children's hospital. Every sincere person would condemn this brutal and unprovoked attack by Russia on a sovereign nation. You then said Mr Modi still went ahead with the meeting and gave Mr Putin a bear hug.

Yet how many times have Western leaders given bear hugs to Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, while Israeli forces bombed civilians, including children, in Gaza?

What we in India fail to comprehend is the double standards of the West, where Mr Putin is seen as a violent renegade, and rightly so, but Mr Netanyahu's constant violations of human rights in Palestine are not only excused, but supported and condoned. Bear-hugging Mr Netanyahu while condemning Mr Putin reeks of hypocrisy.

Saket Gokhale MP, Parliament of India

The limits of childbirth

To *The Times*

I was surprised to read Rosie Duffield's assertion that the two-child limit "is a feminist issue". As an inner London GP I see many women, from orthodox religious sects and others, who appear to have had no say in how many children they had. This is not feminism. Moreover, it has been found that more than four pregnancies expose women to problems at delivery, depression and other illnesses.

Rosemary Alexander, London

On whose authority?

To *The Times*

The British Museum states that Lord Elgin "acted with the full knowledge and permission of the legal authorities of the day" – viz, the Ottoman Empire. That is equivalent to a present-day purchase of artefacts from Crimea with permission from Russia. Without doubt, the marbles should be returned to Athens, where they belong.

David Lewis, Slinfold, West Sussex

Exchange of the week

Eco-protesters and the law

To *The Independent*

The prison sentences recently handed down to the Just Stop Oil protesters, whose actions created significant disruption to people's lives, were condemned by Chris Packham as "judicial thuggery". Packham also described climate change as the most serious existential threat ever faced by the human species, with no shortage of scientific evidence to support this claim.

Disruption to our lives may be the least of our concerns unless the man-made causes of climate change are addressed far more vigorously. The protesters were driven by a sense of urgent desperation, believing that only direct action would impel decision makers to act with the speed and conviction necessary to save this planet from an unprecedented disaster.

The majority of us must accept some responsibility. We are reluctant to alter the lives we take for granted, and push to the back of our minds the consequences of failing to act.

Governments must be far tougher. We must be helped, but also compelled, to change our lives and to understand why. While many condemn the protesters' actions, those now residing at His Majesty's pleasure may ultimately go down in history as heroes. Meanwhile, the rest of us need to wake up.

David Platts, Newark, Nottinghamshire

To *The Guardian*

Chris Packham argues that members of Just Stop Oil who broke the law don't belong in jail. In fact, that is the very place they do belong. It's quite extraordinary that there are people who believe that, as long as you believe your cause is righteous, you should face no consequences for your actions. This belief, that the law should only apply to those we find morally objectionable, is a dangerous slope.

There was an easy way for these people to avoid jail – it was via peaceful organising, respectful political agitation, and the ballot box. Instead, they chose to act in a way that broke the law, and that must have consequences.

Michael Daniell, Kingskerswell, Devon

To *The Guardian*

Climbing a motorway gantry causes no disruption to anyone. It is the closure of the motorway to allow a rescue and an arrest that causes the disruption. In my view, anyone climbing up can be left to come down (and face arrest) on their own. The motorway remains open. I suspect this form of protest would soon fall out of favour if this policy were followed.

Robert Nelson, London

Concrete for wind

To *The Daily Telegraph*

Re: the collateral damage caused by wind farms. My son, a civil engineer, is currently working on a tender for one in Australia. He calculates that it will require 40,000 trucks of concrete, 20,000 trucks of aggregate, 15,000 trucks of sand and an incalculable amount of water (in an area where most of these things are not abundant). Of course, diesel or petrol will also be needed. And that is just to make the bases.

Does anybody ever carry out an environmental cost-benefit analysis of these projects?

Elisabeth Hopkin, Bath

Wasting taxpayer money

To *The Daily Telegraph*

Yvette Cooper, the Home Secretary, claims that the £700m spent on the Rwanda policy was "the most shocking waste of taxpayers' money I have ever seen". In 2002 – when Ms Cooper was a junior minister – Tony Blair's government signed contracts for a new NHS patient-record IT system. In 2013 the whole thing was abandoned: a failure that cost a minimum of £12bn.

While I do not defend it, the futile Rwanda policy barely registers on the "waste of taxpayers' money" scale.

Graham Hoyle, Cradley, Herefordshire

Whipping horses

To *The Times*

I fail to understand how we can ban a woman from performing at the Olympics for flicking a horse's legs with a lunging whip during training in an effort to improve its performance, and yet we allow jockeys to beat their horse as hard as they can with a whip to improve its performance when it is exhausted in the closing stages of a race.

Paddy Davison, veterinary surgeon, Banwell, Somerset

HS2: a national shame

To *The Daily Telegraph*

The National Audit Office (NAO) has said that passengers should be discouraged from finally using HS2 to avoid overcrowding, as trains will be shorter and carry fewer passengers than existing ones, as a result of scrapping the northern leg to Manchester. The NAO has also said that there are no plans to link HS2's terminus at Old Oak Common with Euston Station, where it was originally planned to end.

It has further been revealed that work will continue on all nine planned platforms at Birmingham's Curzon Street station, although only three will be required.

This makes us the laughing stock of the engineering world.

Mike Fowler, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire

The search for answers

To *The Guardian*

It looks as if another public inquiry is needed to investigate the number and speed of current public inquiries.

Margaret Harris, London



"Rachel Reeves blamed the heatwave on a huge yellow ball of fiery gas left by the previous government"

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Review of reviews: Books

Book of the week

Coming of Age

by Lucy Foulkes

Bodley Head 240pp £22

The Week Bookshop £17.99

What does your “reminiscence bump” look like, asked David Shariatmadari in *The Guardian*. If that sounds “like a blow to the head with a touch of amnesia”, it is not – but it can still be painful. As the psychologist Lucy Foulkes explains in her new book, the term refers to the period during which adults report the “greatest number of important autobiographical memories”. It tends to start when we’re about ten and “peaks at 20, taking in a plethora of firsts”: first kiss, first love, first dabbings with drink or drugs, as well as bullying, break-ups and bereavements. And as Foulkes (pictured) shows, these “enduringly vivid” years “define the adults we become”. Our identities, she argues in *Coming of Age*, are shaped by the stories we tell about ourselves – and adolescence is when “this narration begins in earnest”. By turns funny, hair-raising and moving, the book is a “wise and revelatory” guide to the complexities of the teenage mind.

Any “parent of a newly minted teenager” is likely to feel especially grateful for this book, said Lucy Denyer in *The Daily*



Telegraph. For it suggests that all the “tricky”, anxiety-inducing behaviours that teenagers engage in are necessary stages on the road to adulthood. It is by experimenting with risk that teenagers learn to become independent. Their obsession with fitting in, infuriating as it may be, helps them to figure out how to find their tribe. Foulkes “expertly marshals clinical research”, and interlaces it with accounts from people who’ve spoken to her “about their formative years”, said Kate Womersley in *The Observer*. Her study will speak to adults still coming to terms with their adolescence, while perhaps also trying to guide their children through these “murky waters”. If it has a flaw, it is that it does not give enough consideration to the way the digital revolution has transformed the experience of being a teenager.

Foulkes is especially interesting on school cliques, which she sees as “complex systems worth studying on their own terms”, said Sophie McBain in *The New Statesman*. She draws a distinction between the supposedly “popular kids”, who are actually often “envied and disliked”, and those with “high sociometric popularity” – the often “decent” ones who are “liked by almost everyone”. The latter, she says, typically go on to succeed in life; the “cool kids”, not so much. This is a book that should have a wide readership. After all, we were all teenagers once, and as Foulkes argues, a better understanding of our own “awkward, in-between years” will help us become better adults.

No One Left

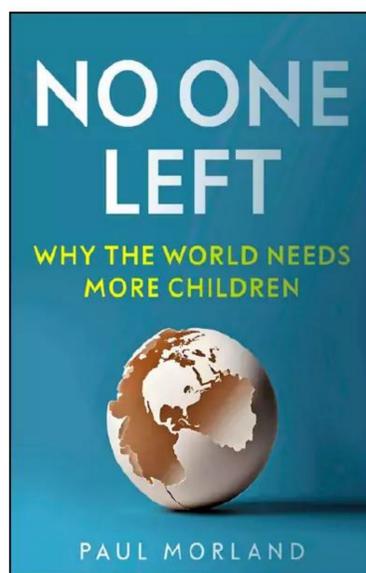
by Paul Morland

Forum 272pp £20

The Week Bookshop £15.99

“Hats off” to Paul Morland, said Tim Judah in the *FT*. He has written a “highly readable book” about a subject – demography – that often “triggers a glaze-over mechanism”. In *No One Left*, Morland lays out “everything we need to know” about global demographic trends, and argues that we should be seriously worried by the number of ageing and shrinking populations. In the UK, for instance, there were 600,000 people over 80 when the NHS was founded in 1948; now there are more than three million. We tend to worry that the planet is overcrowded, said David Willetts in *Literary Review*. But Morland’s “engaging survey” backs up the view that the “real crisis facing the world is that there will soon be too few people”. Most countries now have birth rates below replacement level – 2.1 children per woman – and some, notably South Korea, Italy and Japan, have rates “way below this”. Immigration can mask the impact of this shift, but substantial falls in population are almost inevitable. Japan’s, for instance, is on course to shrink by 40% by the end of the century. With a dwindling number of younger people to care for the elderly, public services will “come under intolerable pressure”.

It is unsurprising that when women have reproductive autonomy and are better educated, they opt to have fewer children, said Sophie McBain in *The Times*. And though this clearly creates problems, I’m wary of Morland’s proposed solution. He believes tax breaks for families and so on are not enough, and that the key is to create a “pro-natal culture”. But though he talks about equality between the sexes, he seems unaware of how much that asks of women in places like Britain, with poor maternity services and sky-high childcare costs. It is telling that his chapter called *How About Women?* is just six pages long.



Novel of the week

Passiontide

by Monique Roffey

Harvill Secker 368pp £18.99

The Week Bookshop £14.99

Monique Roffey’s “ambitious, poly-vocal new novel” is infused with “activist fervour”, said Marina Warner in *Literary Review*. On the fictional island of St Colibri – a “thinly veiled version of Trinidad” – the strangled body of Sora Tanaka, a Japanese steel-pan player, is found under a tree. As the local police begin their inept investigation, we seem to be in detective fiction territory, said Kit Fan in *The Guardian*. Yet the novel turns into a story of protest, as the island’s women, inspired by the Occupy movement in the US, camp out in the central square and bombard social media with the #AmINext hashtag. Fully showcasing Roffey’s talent for “world building”, *Passiontide* offers a “devastating critique” of male violence against women in the Caribbean.

This novel has its flaws, in particular a rather disorganised plot, said Kadish Morris in *The Observer*. But Roffey – winner of the 2020 Costa book of the year for *The Mermaid of Black Conch* – “does a fine job of depicting rebellion”. Her book captures the “grinding frustration” involved in fighting for change in a society that pays so little attention to violence against women.

THE WEEK Bookshop

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Opening times: Monday to Saturday 9am-5.30pm and Sunday 10am-4pm

Musical: *Oliver!*

Chichester Festival Theatre, until 7 Sep; Gielgud Theatre, London W1, from 14 Dec Run time: 2hrs 40mins ★★★★★

The pre-publicity for Cameron Mackintosh's latest revival of Lionel Bart's evergreen classic – this time both choreographed and co-directed by Matthew Bourne – spoke of a “revised” and “reimagined” version. Fans of *Oliver!* may have been alarmed, but it turns out they had nothing to fear, said Dominic Cavendish in *The Daily Telegraph*: the “big Twist” is simply that the show, which transfers to London in December, has an “intimacy and a quality of simplicity in keeping with the ‘poor theatre’ aesthetic” of the original 1960 designs, and Bart's own theatrical roots. There has been no skimping on spectacle. It's just that the spectacle has been squished, with the action taking place across “tight levels of stage”.



Mr Bumble with *Oliver*: “high-end, old-school entertainment”

This *Oliver!* is “a visual delight”, and shows some intriguing influences, said Matthew Hemley in *The Stage*. “The opening, all thunder and lightning outside the gothic gates of the workhouse, resembles a Tim Burton film”, and there's “more than a whiff of *Les Misérables*” to the impressive revolving stage, flanked by bridges. “It all works beautifully”, allowing for seamless changes between Fagin's den, with its drapes and coloured handkerchiefs, and the bustling streets and hidden alleyways of Dickensian London. The projections are “subtle and unintrusive”, and

“tremendous” lighting brings everything “vividly to life. It oozes atmosphere.”

The performances are top-notch, too, said Gareth Carr on *What's On Stage* – and “huge song and dance routines fill every square inch of stage space with rollicking fun and energy”. Simon Lipkin is an “impressively vigorous” Fagin – “part Shylock and bigger part Captain Jack Sparrow”. Shanay Holmes gives a “powerhouse performance” as Nancy. With “pitch-perfect” singing, the show certainly does justice to Bart's “divine” score, said Arifa Akbar in *The*

Guardian. I'd have liked to see a more radical reinvention of a story that revolves around child poverty and domestic violence; but still, this is “high-end”, old-school entertainment. If that is what you're after, it will not disappoint.

The week's other opening

The Gangs of New York *Storyhouse, Chester (01244-409113). Until 31 August*

A “prize for adventurous programming” should go to the open-air theatre in Grosvenor Park, Chester, for including this rousing vision of mid-19th century New York (based on the 1928 book, not the 2002 film) in its summer schedule (*Guardian*).

Podcasts... gripping series, and light relief for journeys

A “gripping” seven-part series from Wondery, **Hysterical** is about a “mass psychogenic illness” that affected girls at a high school in upstate New York in 2011, said Miranda Sawyer in *The Observer*. As is often the case with such outbreaks, it started with one person developing a “conversion disorder”, in which individuals develop physical symptoms, such as a limp, or a tic, that have no obvious cause; and before long numerous teenagers were “tic-ing and shouting, making noises and twitching”, as if they had Tourette's. “It's a fascinating story” of an episode that was at once “hugely public and strangely secret”. Host Dan Taberski is a charming presenter who makes this complex story “clear, intriguing and fun”. “The best writers pinpoint something you've felt for ages but haven't been able to articulate. This series is like that, every minute.”



Christine Mboma tells her story in *Tested: The Choice*

Enjoying the Paris Olympics? “Well, get ready for a new podcast to rain on your parade,” said Fiona Sturges in the FT. **State of Play: Summer Games**, a six-parter hosted by the Canadian journalist Andie Crossan, is not about the festival of sport taking place in France. Instead, it examines how hosting the Games can harm major cities by, for instance, “displacing citizens, flattening neighbourhoods” and leaving local authorities with spiralling debt problems. A second podcast, **Tested: The Choice**, tells a more

“intimate story” about the controversy surrounding a small number of elite female athletes who are no longer permitted to “race as women owing to their naturally high testosterone levels”. Presenter Rose Eveleth speaks to Christine Mboma, a sprinter and Olympic silver medallist from Namibia “who faces a difficult choice – to undertake hormone therapy, fight the existing regulations or give up the sport that she loves”.

August is traditionally the silly season for newspapers, said Patricia Nicol in *The Sunday Times*. For an audio equivalent, aimed squarely at families on long car journeys, I can warmly recommend **Harry Hill's “Are We**

There Yet?”. Each episode features Hill – who will be familiar to younger audiences as a co-host of *Junior Bake Off* – plus his ventriloquised “son” Garry and an AI bot called Sarah. Children send in voice messages of jokes, guest comedians embrace the silliness, and Hill sets challenges such as a “National Onion Lottery and (my favourite) making a sausage George Osborne”. Admittedly, the latter risks baffling youngsters, but “could make a parent chuckle as they queue for the Channel Tunnel”. Less silly, but funny and well worth a listen (on Radio 4 and Sounds) are **Geoff Norcott's Working Men's Club**, which “fondly pokes fun at male concerns”, and **Time of the Week**, a sharp satire of shows such as *Woman's Hour*.

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



The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare

2hrs (no rating)

Silly Guy Ritchie war film

★★★

Guy Ritchie has been churning out the action capers lately, but this latest one, available on Amazon Prime, finds his mood less “geezer-gangster”, more *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, said John Nugent in Empire. Based “*extremely loosely*” on a real-life wartime mission called Operation Postmaster – a British attempt in 1942 to sabotage a Nazi U-boat base on an island off the coast of West Africa – the film stars Henry Cavill as Major Gus March-Phillips, who led the mission, and the likes of Henry Golding and Alan Ritchson as his men. Cavill is “in fine fettle” here, and pitches “his proto-007 English charm to just the right level”; and Til Schweiger, as the chief Nazi baddie, “is eminently hissable”. Others, however, are “badly miscast”, including Rory Kinnear as a cartoonish Winston Churchill. “Part derring-do spycraft, part bullet-riddled action, part impish comedy”, this is a “very silly” film, which makes for “undemanding” viewing.

As history, “it’s mostly nonsense”, said Ben Macintyre in The Times. Operation Postmaster “was bloodless” and had “no strategic impact on the War”; here, the bodycount is vast and we are led to believe that the mission all but turned the War around. Still, “as entertainment it is great fun: *SAS Rogue Heroes* meets *The Dirty Dozen*” with extra explosions thrown in, plus “an attractive woman secret agent” (Eiza González) “who can shoot better than the men”. There is certainly a ripping “yarn” at the heart of this film, said Brian Viner in the Daily Mail, but it seemed to me that Ritchie has botched it. “The script is as lacklustre as the acting is clunky”, and once you realise “that every Nazi is a dimwit who can’t shoot straight”, all tension dissolves. I’d give the film a wide berth.



About Dry Grasses

3hrs 17mins (15)

Arthouse drama about a teacher in Eastern Anatolia

★★★★★

“As discouraging arthouse titles go, *About Dry Grasses* is a cracker,” said David Sexton in The New Statesman. Indeed, I’d put it on a par with the early Yasujiro Ozu film *I Was Born, But...* And the Turkish director Nuri Bilge Ceylan’s ninth feature ticks plenty of other arthouse boxes too: it is well over three hours long, for instance; and it is set in “one of the bleakest places ever” (a remote town in Eastern Anatolia that is blanketed in snow for six months of the year). The film follows the travails of a “disgruntled 30-something schoolteacher” (Deniz Celiloglu), who forms an inappropriate relationship with a 14-year-old pupil, and also pursues another teacher – not really because he fancies her but because he is jealous of her relationship with his housemate. This is “quintessential slow cinema” – the scenes are “protracted”, the camera “moves only when necessary”, there are “lengthy silences”. And it is “pretty much a masterpiece”. Thoroughly engaging and entirely convincing, it more than repays the time you put into it.

As the lights dimmed, I thought to myself that – given its running time – *About Dry Grasses* had better have “a great deal to say about dry grasses that is fascinating and insightful”, said Deborah Ross in The Spectator. In fact, dry grass only pops up in the last ten minutes. Yet I was never bored, and in fact found myself quite seduced by the film’s “cumulative” power. I’m afraid that for me it sat “not infrequently on the wrong side of the line between subtle and dull”, said Kyle Smith in The Wall Street Journal. The film’s protagonist is clearly meant to be “fascinatingly flawed”, but he’s just despicable; and in the end I found it all rather pretentious.



I Saw the TV Glow

1hr 40mins (15)

Moving horror-ish film

★★★★★

To call this a horror film “seems reductive”, said Wendy Ide in The Observer. “With its shapeshifting disquiet, *I Saw the TV Glow* is too languidly weird, too unmoored from genre conventions to be neatly categorised. But there’s not a frame in Jane Schoenbrun’s suffocating second feature that isn’t drenched in dread and unease.” Set in an American suburb in the 1990s, the story follows two misfit teens, Owen (Justice Smith) and Maddy (Brigitte Lundy-Paine), who are united in their love for a hokey, supernatural TV series called *The Pink Opaque*. On every episode, two girlfriends use their telepathic powers to fight the forces of evil. Two years go by, during which Maddy and Owen’s obsession with the show only grows – then Maddy, who is being abused by her stepfather, mysteriously vanishes. “The film has a trans/queer subtext, but it will speak to anyone who has ever felt uncomfortable in their own skin.”

Schoenbrun’s no-budget 2021 debut *We’re All Going to the World’s Fair* “made a brilliant impression”, said Peter Bradshaw in The Guardian. The director’s new film is “deeply scary, deeply strange and deeply sad” – a “claustrophobic, unwholesome” triumph that “deserves cult status”. “Visceral and intensely moving, this film feels like something you’d stumble across on TV in the small hours and never forget,” said Laura Venning in Empire. It is “deeply haunting” and has a very “distinctive style”, said Nick Howells in the Evening Standard. But it’s properly “gloomy”, right down to the miserable score. Some viewers may find it just too much of a “downer”.

Saucy!: an uproarious re-examination of the British sex comedy

“The 1970s sex comedy was a peculiarly British institution, fuelled by a mix of Victorian prudishness and the bawdy, end-of-pier tradition” that would also manifest itself in *The Benny Hill Show* and the *Carry On...* films, said Ed Power in The Irish Times. As we learn in the two-part Channel 4 documentary *Saucy! Secrets of the British Sex Comedy*, these low-budget flicks had huge popular appeal in their day. For instance, *Adventures of a Taxi Driver* – “a blizzard of bare bums and knob gags” – apparently made more at the UK box office in 1976 than Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver*. This documentary doesn’t really examine why this might have been the case, but it is enlightening and should entertain those who “find other people’s wobbly bits innately hilarious”.



Oo-er, missus

“The documentary is as gregarious and cheeky as the subject matter demands”, but it is not vacuous, and it allows those involved in making the films to give their take on the genre, said Rebecca Nicholson in The Guardian. Among the big questions addressed is whether the actresses were exploited – and the picture is mixed. Some say they were willing if not eager participants; others paint “a grimly familiar picture of casting couches and jobs for ‘favours’”. I’d have liked a “deeper exploration of why the British in particular are (as one contributor put it) ‘obsessed with giggling about sex’”, said Gerard Gilbert in The i Paper. Still, the documentary packs in a lot of information about “a largely (and some would say, rightly) forgotten slice of cinematic history”.

Exhibition of the week **Paris 1924: Sport, Art and the Body**

Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (01223-332900, fitzwilliam.cam.ac.uk). Until 3 November

As athletes from around the world gather in Paris for the 2024 Summer Olympics, the Fitzwilliam is staging a show that explores the artistic legacy of the Games the last time they were held in the French capital, exactly a century ago, said Laura Freeman in *The Times*. Back in 1924, Paris was the undisputed “artistic centre of Europe, if not the world”, and “for every athlete leaping further, hurdling higher and fighting tougher than any man or woman” ever had before, “there was an avant-garde artist breaking the boundaries... and every painterly rule in the book” – often using sport as their inspiration. The exhibition brings together paintings, sculptures and photographs, as well as archival films and fascinating ephemera to show how the 1924 Games engendered a remarkable meeting of traditional athletics and the European avant-garde, and helped to construct a new vision of modernity.

The show contains some “invigorating, memorable moments”, said Alastair Sooke in *The Daily Telegraph*: the sections devoted to social history, covering topics such as sport and gender, are particularly strong. Elsewhere, a number of “decent” pieces demonstrate the intertwined relationship between sport and modern art, notably Umberto Boccioni’s “famous” 1913 futurist figure: “supposedly inspired by a scurrying footballer, it looks like a burning faun, sprinting in agony”. We are also reminded that there was an Olympic category for art between 1912 and 1948 –



The Gymnast by George Grosz (c.1922)

but two canvases by the 1924 gold-medal winner Jean Jacoby are disappointingly “insipid”, and the same is alas true for a number of works on display here. Some exhibits “feel slight and scrappy”; while the memorabilia relating to the University of Cambridge athletes who competed – among them the sprinter Harold Abrahams – seems rather “parochial”.

I found the show “riveting”, said Laura Cumming in *The Observer*, not least because it highlights the stories of some remarkable individuals. A “fierce” bronze sculpture by Renée Sintenis depicts the Finnish runner Paavo Nurmi, who was born into poverty and left school at 12, but “was so gifted he won five gold medals in 1924”. Then there is a photograph of Lucy Morton, the Blackpool-raised daughter of a groom, “surging up for air” in the final moments of the 200m breaststroke, in which she took gold. Ten thousand people lined the streets to greet her when she went home. And the exhibition

“fizzes with surprises”: one moment, you might be looking at Alexander Calder’s wire sculpture of the American tennis player Helen Wills; the next, a steel-ridged boot that belonged to the great Uruguayan footballer José Leandro Andrade; or extraordinary paintings of figures in motion by the likes of Picasso and Robert Delaunay. These are just a few high points in an exhibition that is “a revelation from first to last”.

Where to buy...

The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery

Jamie Hawkesworth

at Huxley-Parlour

There is a long line of British artists who, consciously or not, have specialised in documenting their home country and turning scenes that might have been deemed parochial into something unknowable and excitingly foreign. Photographer Jamie Hawkesworth (b.1987) follows in this tradition. For more than a decade, he has been travelling around the UK capturing images of commonplace structures and views, as well as the people he encounters. This show, *The British Isles*, consists of a dozen of these photos. What’s immediately clear is that Hawkesworth is neither a documentary photographer, nor a latter-day Martin Parr. Instead, he endows his subject matter with a romantic, cinematic glow, recalling but not imitating the great American



Untitled from the series *The British Isles*

photographers of the 1970s. Through his eyes, a puddle on a pavement kerb becomes a beautiful abstraction, an off-the-shelf garden shed looms as proudly as the Great Pyramid of Giza. The quotidian has rarely looked so weird. Prices start from £4,150.

45 Maddox Street, London W1 (020-7434 4319). Until 10 August

How to see your art in the Tate

For budding artists who dream of seeing their work in a public gallery, your moment has arrived, said Nick Clark in the *Evening Standard* – thanks to Turner Prize-winner Oscar Murillo. For five weeks, he has taken over the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern for a project that invites visitors of all ages to pick up a brush and add their own strokes to a series of vast canvases. “It’s about unbound freedom and unbound connection to just letting go,” says the artist. Called *The Flooded Garden*, the piece is inspired by Monet’s paintings of his garden at Giverny, said Jonathan Jones in *The Guardian*. To get a sense of that, you need to go upstairs, and look down on the oval arena in which the piece takes place. Within it, it seems rather less harmonious – lots of families, lots of cartoonish images. Is this just interactive silliness? I think it might be; but then I take a brush, dip it into the thick acrylic paint, and get to work. Soon, I am captivated. “Paint is energy, it is life. Every kid knows that. Now I remember it, too.”





Best books... Alan Cumming

The award-winning actor picks his favourites. He and Forbes Masson are at the Edinburgh Book Festival on 10 August to celebrate their new book, *Victor & Barry's Kelvinside Compendium* (404 Ink £12.99); edbookfest.co.uk

After Leaving Mr Mackenzie

by Jean Rhys, 1931 (Penguin £9.99). Rhys was one of those amazing, tragic, ahead-of-her-time women and her life mirrored that of Julia, the main character in this book, which is a raging scream against the patriarchy and a biting critique of how women are viewed.

Shuggie Bain by Douglas Stuart, 2020 (Picador £9.99). Reading this book is an immersive experience – you emerge shattered and changed forever. Shuggie is a queer boy growing up in Glasgow's council estates. The only respite from the male toxicity and squalor he endures is his mother, Agnes, a drunk

siren whose messy love is a beacon in Shuggie's darkness.

The Trick Is To Keep Breathing

by Janice Galloway, 1989 (Vintage £9.99). Galloway is one of Scotland's finest writers and this was her debut, full of visceral pain and anguish, with the ironically named protagonist Joy trying to find the trick to continuing to live. I like books about people who are falling apart, told from inside the characters' broken mind. I guess I like exploring the dark side. And this one is dark gold.

Christopher and His Kind

by Christopher Isherwood, 1976 (Vintage £9.99). Isherwood has, inadvertently, had a huge

impact on my life, possibly more than any other writer. His *The Berlin Stories* were the basis for the musical *Cabaret*, which I've been in a few times. However, this is the unsanitised version of his life in Berlin at the end of the 1920s, just as Hitler was coming to prominence.

The Foghorn Echoes

by Danny Ramadan, 2022 (Canongate £9.99). "Treat your thoughts like hurt children. They haven't yet learnt how to handle pain." So says a wise ghost in this mesmerising story that spans time and mortal space, from war-torn childhood in Damascus to adult life in Vancouver's gaybourhood.

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

Whatever you make of the fuss about her, it's hard to deny that Barbie has been influential. Now **Barbie: The Exhibition** looks at the doll's 65-year evolution through the lens of design (Guardian). Until 23 February 2025, Design Museum, London W8 (designmuseum.org).

Head to the Dorfman for a "delightfully acted, ebullient production" of **The Hot Wing King**, Katori Hall's Pulitzer-winning drama exploring race and sexuality against the backdrop of a Tennessee cooking contest (Daily Telegraph). Until 14 September, National Theatre, London SE1 (nationaltheatre.org.uk).

Book now

Following a sold-out run in 2022, Northern Ballet's **Three Short Ballets** returns with a new piece by choreographer Kristen McNally. 6-14 September, Stanley & Audrey Burton Theatre, Leeds; then to London's Royal Opera House in January (northernballet.com).

Alan Bennett, Caroline Lucas and Michael Palin are among the speakers taking part in this year's



Jason Barnett in *The Hot Wing King*

Queen's Park Book Festival. 31

August-1 September, Queen's Park, London NW6 (queensparkbookfestival.co.uk).

The 60-year career of the British artist **Michael Craig-Martin** will be explored in this sweeping retrospective, featuring everything from his early experimental sculptures to his paintings of everyday objects, plus a new site-specific installation. 21 September-10 December, Royal Academy, London W1 (royalacademy.org.uk).

Television

Programmes

WW2: Women on the Frontline Series exploring the histories of women who played pivotal roles in WWII, including the dancer Josephine Baker. Sat 3 Aug, C4 19:00 (60mins).

Titanic in Colour Newly colourised vintage photos and footage reveal the full glory of the famous liner, and cast a fresh light on the people who built her. Sun 4 Aug, C4 20:00 (60mins).

Corridors of Power: Should America Police the World?

This eight-part docuseries about the US's role in international affairs opens with the Iranian hostage crisis and America's dealings with Iraq and Saddam Hussein. Tue 6 Aug, BBC4 22:00 (60mins).

Irvine Welsh's Crime

Second season of the crime drama based on Irvine Welsh's novel, starring Dougray Scott. Wed 7 and Thur 8 Aug, ITV1 21:00 (60mins each).

A Kanneh-Mason Playlist at the Proms

Virtuoso siblings Sheku and Braimah Kanneh-Mason are joined by Brazilian guitarist Plínio Fernandes for an evening of music that inspires them, from Brahms to Bob Marley. Fri 9 Aug, BBC4 20:00 (80mins).

Films

Wings of Desire (1987) Wim Wenders' fantasy drama about two angels watching over the people of divided Berlin. Tue 6 Aug, Film4 01:20 (125mins).

All the President's Men

(1976) Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman star as Woodward and Bernstein, the journalists who uncovered the Watergate scandal, in this classic political thriller. Sun 4 Aug, BBC2 22:30 (130mins).

New to streaming TV

Cowboy Cartel Four-part documentary series telling the unlikely story of an FBI agent who took down a drug cartel by following their links to horse racing. On Apple TV+.

The Instigators

Matt Damon and Casey Affleck star in a crime comedy about reluctant partners on the run after a failed heist. From 9 August on Apple TV+.

The Archers: what happened last week

Vince gets Elizabeth's advice on handling the bullying case, without revealing it's about Freddie. George helps Emma and Ed with a fallen tree, but they're mystified when he's reluctant to accept Brian's tip. Paul overhears Denise and Alistair talking about their relationship; he angrily confronts them and runs away. After a run-in with Alistair in the shop, Paul storms off. When Alistair arrives to explain himself, a furious Paul tells him he can shove his job. Elizabeth learns that Freddie was the bullying victim but Vince says it's all sorted. Fallon tells Emma she feels stuck at the Tea Room; Emma suggests she runs the new café at the EV station. Alistair begs Paul not to resign. Neil takes George to The Bull and speculates about Alice going to jail. George orders whisky shots, rambling that Neil shouldn't be proud of him. The next day, Pat advises a hungover George to be honest in court. Denise comes clean to Paul and he learns that others knew about the affair. At the vet, he says he's not leaving – but he'll only communicate about work; if that's a problem, they can leave.

One-of-a-kind houses



◀ **London:** Battersea Church Road, Battersea SW11. A Victorian townhouse combining gothic revival and Palladian tropes, featuring trompe-l'œil doors that reveal hidden rooms. 5 beds (2 en suite), family bath, kitchen, 2 receps, terrace, garden. £2.2m; The Modern House (020-3795 5920).

▼ **Kent:** Alderden Old Manor, Sandhurst. Grand Tudor house with earlier origins and a wealth of period features, including a fine Jacobean overmantel with pilasters and angels. 6 beds, 4 baths, kitchen/breakfast room, 4 receps, garden, gym, garage. £1.95m; Inigo (020-3687 3071).



◀ **Buckinghamshire:** Crafton Lodge Road, Mentmore. A picturesque lodge house on the edge of the Mentmore Estate set on a plot of approx. one acre, with mature box and cherry laurel hedging, and a number of oak trees. This Grade II house is attributed to the architect George Devey and is a fine early example of Arts and Crafts architecture. 2 beds, family bath, kitchen, 2 receps, garden, outbuildings, parking. £850,000; Inigo (020-3687 3071).



▲ **Cornwall:** Old Kiln, Rock. This modern house, built in the 1970s, has stunning views over the Camel Estuary. 3 beds, shower, family bath, kitchen, recep, sun room, garden, garage, boat store. OIEO £4.5m; JB Estates (01208-862601).

▶ **Warwickshire:** The Mill, Rowington. Built in 1780, this converted mill offers captivating views of the adjacent countryside. 4 beds (2 en suite), shower, kitchen, 3 receps, garden, workshop/garage. £1.899m; Hamptons (01789-868312).





▲ **Norfolk:** The Round House, Snettisham. A Grade II hexagonal house built in 1750 and featured in Pevsner. Main suite, 3 further beds (2 en suite), family bath, kitchen/breakfast room, 3 receps, garden, parking. £695,000; Bedfords (01328-730500).

◀ **Pembrokeshire:** Lancych Mansion, Boncath. This unique Grade II estate is set in 15 acres of delightful grounds by the River Cych. Main suite, 6 further beds (5 en suite), shower, kitchen, 4 receps, 3-bed cottage, garden, outbuildings, parking. £1.5m; Country Living (01437-616101).



▶ **East Sussex:** Ripe Lane, Lewes. Built c.1640, this Grade II* house retains many original details, such as “witches’ marks” to ward off evil spirits. 4 beds (2 en suite), study/bed 5, family bath, kitchen/breakfast room, library, 3 receps, garden, garage workshop. £1.95m; Inigo (020-3687 3071).



▲ **Warwickshire:** Finwood Road, Rowington. Grade II post-medieval manor house, with abundant character but in need of full modernisation and refurbishment. 5 beds, family bath, kitchen/breakfast room, 2 receps, garden, parking. £750,000; Knight Frank (01789-206951).



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The rise of grocery store tourism

The “hot new travel trend on TikTok” involves neither museums nor beaches, said Stacey Leasca in Food & Wine. Instead, users are flocking to videos of TikTokers wandering around foreign supermarkets and commenting on their wares. I have to admit, I get the appeal, said Cathy Adams in The Sunday Times. What really draws me back to France is not lovely hotels with views of the Eiffel Tower, but the chance to “mooch around a giant Monoprix”. Just the thought of the products on offer – The *rémoulade!* The cheese counter! – makes me weak at the knees. And foreign supermarkets can tell you something about a country. The miniature trolleys you can find in supermarkets in Poland and elsewhere struck me as being a sign of a culture that “likes children”. Similarly, the vast boxes of breakfast cereals packed with E numbers found on the shelves of stores in the US reveal something about American attitudes to nutrition. To my mind, the best supermarkets are to be found in East Asia. In Kyoto, my husband and I, having failed to find a bar, once “spent an entire evening out sitting in a FamilyMart with cans of cold saké and microwaved gyoza” – and most enjoyable it was too.

Michelin's hotel awards

The Michelin Guide recently opened a “new chapter” in its history, by launching a “three-tier designation system” for hotels, said Hannah Meltzer in The Daily Telegraph. Michelin “keys” function much



“The hot new travel trend”

like the coveted stars it gives to restaurants. The keys are bestowed on only the most outstanding hotels in its guides, based on criteria including quality of service, interior design and character: one key indicates somewhere “very special”; two is a mark of “an exceptional stay”; three keys are reserved for the “extraordinary” places. Michelin unveiled its selection for France in April (24 hotels earned three keys, including the Ritz Paris), followed by the US, Spain and Japan; the UK selection is expected soon. Hotels, of course, already have star ratings, said Sean Thomas in The Spectator. But whereas these indicate only

the “rough level of facilities”, Michelin is aiming to be “much more precise”. And therein lies the danger. In my job as a luxury-travel writer, I eat a lot of Michelin-starred food, and generally find it “prissy, fussy and elaborate”. Will a similar sterility now affect the hotel sector, as it strives to please the Michelin inspectors, with their “rigid Cartesian rules”? The great joy of hotels, even more than restaurants, is that they can be “good in truly different ways”: some of the most “amazing” ones I’ve visited have been extremely humble. Imposing a rigid “key-star system” on such “human variety” strikes me as a bad idea.

The joys of pickled peaches

“Pickled peaches elevate any meal,” says Tom Hunt in The Guardian. They’re lovely on a green salad; go brilliantly with cheese (especially creamy burrata); are great alongside pork in a Sunday roast; and are also delicious straight from the jar. They’re not cheap to buy, so if you have some peaches lying around, it’s worth making your own. For two peaches, combine 170ml of cider, white wine or rice vinegar in a small saucepan with 85g honey, maple syrup or sugar, and add aromatics (e.g. cinnamon, black peppercorns, mustard seeds). Heat the pan until the liquid begins to steam and any sugar dissolves. Remove the stones and cut the peaches into wedges (you can leave the skin on), then put them in a sterilised 500ml pickling jar and pour over the hot liquid, to cover. Screw on the lid, leave to cool, and refrigerate. Use within three weeks.

Recipe of the week: homemade “Nutella”

Shop-bought Nutella can be perfectly acceptable, says Ruby Bhogal. But have you ever tried making it yourself? If not, you really should give it a go: the freshness and depth of flavour of homemade “Nutella” simply hits new levels of yum. And it’s super-easy – whether you make the dairy or plant-based version. Store in a jar in the fridge for up to two weeks once it’s ready, or keep it in a sealed jar in your cupboard for up to a month.

Makes: 600g

250g blanched hazelnuts 50g milk chocolate, melted, or plant-based dark chocolate, melted 1 tsp vanilla bean paste
25g cocoa powder, sifted 75g icing sugar, sifted good pinch of sea salt milk of your choice (optional)

- First, preheat the oven to 180°C fan/200°C/gas mark 6.
- Place the blanched hazelnuts onto a baking tray and pop in the oven for 5 minutes. Give the tray a bit of a jiggle to move the hazelnuts around, then roast for another 5 minutes. We want the hazelnuts to be a light golden-brown colour – roasting them will intensify the flavour and just make the hazelnuts even more... hazelnutty.
- Once the nuts have been roasted, put them into a food processor and blitz until the oils have been released and the hazelnuts have blended to a creamy consistency. You want to really work through the bitty stage so the hazelnuts become



velvety smooth, so give it time and patience.

- Add the melted chocolate, vanilla bean paste, cocoa powder, icing sugar and salt and blend again until smooth. If you want a looser mix, add in a few tbsp of milk and mix, otherwise transfer the homemade “Nutella” to a jar.
- Keep in the fridge for up to 2 weeks. When you want to use it, let it sit at room temperature for a while or warm it in the microwave in 5-second bursts to loosen.
- Spread this stuff over toast, use it as a cake-filler, smush it onto unbaked dough, pipe it into doughnuts, dunk your biscuits into it, fold it through buttercream – whatever you do with it, it is spoon-dippingly good.

Taken from One Bake Two Ways: Fifty bakes with an all-plant option every time by Ruby Bhogal, published by Pavilion Books at £26. Photography by Matt Russell. To buy from The Week Bookshop for £20.99 (incl. p&p), call 020-3176 3835 or visit theweekbookshop.co.uk.

New cars: what the critics say



Ford Explorer
Price: from £39,875

The Daily Telegraph

Ford has been a “slow-burner” on electric vehicles (EVs), but the Explorer is the first of two cars based on the Volkswagen MEB electric platform. A “handsome contender” in the crowded EV market, the entry-level Explorer will be rear-drive, with a 52kWh battery, a 239-mile range and a 168bhp motor, available at the end of the year. For now, the options are a 77kWh rear-drive or 79kWh all-wheel-drive.

Auto Express

There are two trim levels, but this electric SUV has decent equipment as standard: 19-inch alloys, heated front seats, wireless charging and lots of safety kit. An “enjoyable steer”, it rides pretty well in town and on motorways and, thanks to Ford’s “suspension wizardry”, it absorbs bumps well and keeps body roll controlled. The steering is a little light at higher speeds, but it is pretty fun in the corners.

Autocar

The Explorer has a “bold and distinctive” exterior, but the interior is “a tad staid”. It is “functional rather than attractive” and, though comfy, you’ll find some cheap hard plastics. The 14.6-inch touchscreen that dominates the dashboard has clear graphics and can be tilted, but is a bit fiddly and frustrating to use. Still, there’s plenty of room for five adults and the boot is a decent 470 litres.

The best... blenders

◀ **KitchenAid Blender K400**

Simple but effective, this 1200W blender has five speeds and four different modes for crushing ice, making smoothies and more. It is quick, if a bit noisy. The 1.4-litre glass jug goes in the dishwasher, as does the lid, which has a removable cap so you can add ingredients while blending (from £246; kitchenaid.co.uk).

▶ **Nutribullet 900 Series** With a 900W motor, this latest Nutribullet is 50% more powerful than the previous model, and just as versatile, though it shouldn’t be used for crushing ice. It comes with two dishwasher-friendly cups – 900ml and 680ml – but has just one speed (£90; nutribullet.co.uk).

◀ **Ninja Blender with Auto-IQ**

This single-serving blender comes with two dishwasher-safe 700ml cups, with no-spill lids for drinking on the go. It has a powerful 1000W motor, which can tackle ice, and three modes: blend, max blend and pulse (£80; ninjakitchen.co.uk).

▶ **Smeg HBF22 hand blender**

A “brilliant hand blender”, this has a powerful 700W motor, variable speed control and a turbo function. It comes with a 1.4-litre jug with a sealable lid, but can be used in a saucepan or bowl. A potato masher and whisk attachment are included, along with a mini-chopper (£150; amazon.co.uk).

▲ **Sage 3X Blicer Pro**

A blender and juicer in one, this is “top-notch”, with a 1,000W motor, clever Cold Spin Technology and ten speeds, plus several programmes. It is loud, but efficient, and the 1.5-litre blender jug is easy to clean (£390; sageappliances.com).

SOURCE: THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Tips... how to make your lawn greener

- Mow less frequently to allow wildflowers to grow; the longer grass will hold onto moisture and be more resistant to drought.
- Robotic mowers work well, but don’t run them at night, when they can harm hedgehogs, which are nocturnal.
- Hand weed using a hori hori knife to remove deep roots. Most lawns will grow well without chemical fertilisers, but if yours needs a boost, try a liquid seaweed feed every four to six weeks until late summer. Don’t apply before heavy rain.
- Poor drainage or shade will encourage moss, which can be removed by scarifying with a spring tine rake. Aerate the soil with a fork at 15cm intervals, or try an aerator.
- Don’t worry if the lawn turns brown in dry weather. It will green up when it rains.
- Edge a lawn to smarten it up, and maintain it with shears. Use the turf removed to plug bare patches. For larger areas, sow lawn seed. Keep moist until the seed has germinated and cover with horticultural fleece to protect it from birds.

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY TIMES

THE WEEK 3 August 2024

And for those who have everything...



Decathlon’s new range of Yulex100 wetsuits are made from 100% certified natural rubber – a more sustainable and carbon-friendly alternative to neoprene, which is usually made from petroleum. **from £20; decathlon.co.uk**

SOURCE: EVENING STANDARD

Where to find... kitchen knives favoured by chefs

Global knives, made from a single piece of light stainless steel with no joints, to stop blisters, are favoured by Meera Sodha and Rachel Roddy (from £110; globalknives.uk). Yotam Ottolenghi and Itamar Srulovich swear by **Victorinox** knives, which are easy to work with and maintain. A chef’s knife and a paring knife are key, and Philip Khoury loves the bread knife too (victorinox.com). Andi Oliver and Paul Ainsworth rate **HexClad** knives – “beautifully made, great looking, incredibly sharp and perfectly weighted” (from £50; hexclad.co.uk). **Spence Blades**’s knives are “a joy to use”, says José Pizarro: a paring knife, a boning knife and a chef’s knife will be your “friends for ever” (from £175; spenceblades.com). Tim Hayward and Mitch Tonks suggest buying the best **Santoku** knife you can afford. These Japanese utility knives are light and easy to keep sharp. Ideally, try one in a shop to ensure it’s comfortable and balanced (from £34; japaneseknifecompany.com).

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN

This week's dream: a lush island in the Bay of Naples

With its towering white cliffs, azure seas and ever-shifting flock of superyachts, the Italian island of Capri is “the ultimate stop on today’s Grand Selfie Tour”. But there’s also another big island in the Bay of Naples, with less “glitz” and more “wild charm”, and in my book, it’s the pick of the pair, says Stephanie Rafanelli in Condé Nast Traveller. At 18 square miles, Ischia is four times the size of its neighbour – a place “to get lost in, not be seen”. The Emperor Augustus swapped it for Capri with the rulers of Neapolis (as Naples was then known), turning the smaller island into his private paradise – and while Capri (however stunning its looks today) feels like a “relic”, Ischia remains a chunk of the “real Italy”, a “palpably living, breathing, life-giving place”.

A “complex volcano” that last erupted in 1302, Ischia rises to the “hikeable” 2,589ft peak of Mount Epomeo, and is peppered with hot springs, thermal aquifers and fumaroles (volcanic vents). Ischia’s “fecund” volcanic soil and subtropical microclimate make



The Mezzatorre hotel has an outdoor salt pool “fanned by pines”

it extraordinarily lush, with “wisteria, angel’s trumpets and bougainvillea” cascading around its “steep, single-lane” roads. There’s also an impressive array of “boutique” vineyards, and spas “for every taste” – from public parks with thermal springs to “smart design hotels” such as the Mezzatorre, which opened in 2019 and has a seafront wellness centre and an outdoor salt pool “fanned by pines”. Inland, the “rustic” Fonte delle Ninfe Nitrodi is thought to be the world’s oldest spa, dating back to the days of Magna Graecia.

Tourism took off on Ischia in the 1950s, and producers began using it as a film location. The director Luchino Visconti hosted salons at his home here, and Burton and Taylor came here to shoot scenes for *Cleopatra*. But ordinary life still flourishes on the island’s streets (where pensioners congregate on benches and local boys launch into spontaneous football games) – as it does on the neighbouring island of Procida, a tiny place “as pretty as a sweet shop” that has changed little since the 1960s.

Getting the flavour of...



Exploring the wadis of Oman

Combining hiking and swimming with a few more challenging activities (climbing, abseiling, diving and so on), water trekking is an increasingly popular outdoor pursuit. I tried it on a three-day adventure in Oman, says Igor Ramírez García-Peralta in the Financial Times, exploring a different wadi (river valley) each day with a local guide. The trailheads felt remote, yet were surprisingly accessible, and the drives to them through the mountains were lovely. In the wadis, we passed “monumental” rock formations (pictured), swam in “crystal clear” pools, dived off rocks and – most thrilling of all – abseiled 16 metres down a waterfall “with the rush of water crashing against our faces”. The landscape is beautiful and felt to me refreshingly “untamed”, and the array of activities was strangely “liberating” – like becoming an “all-terrain amphibian” in a childhood daydream. *The trip costs from £2,800 for two, excluding flights (cyr-adventures.com).*

Cycling in delightful Lower Silesia

With its “bucolic”, gently rolling landscape and unspoilt medieval towns, the Polish region of Lower Silesia makes for a wonderfully “tranquil” cycling holiday, says Mary Lussiana in Country & Town House. On a five-day trip with The Slow Cyclist, guests stay in two beautifully renovated farmhouses, and explore areas including the Bóbr river valley and the foothills of the Karkonosze Mountains on “sleek” e-bikes. Highlights include lunch at a winery (where a table is set up amid the vines), and a visit to the castle of Siedlec, known for its 14th century frescoes depicting the tale of Sir Lancelot. The route passes along gravel tracks, forest paths and “tiny lanes covered by arching avenues of lime trees”, and offers beautiful views of distant peaks and of meadows that are rich in wildflowers in the spring. *The trip costs from £2,390pp (theslowcyclist.com).*

A gourmet getaway near Calais

In France, 189 hotels have been awarded the Michelin Guides’ new key awards – including the Château de Beaulieu, which has two keys, and a two-Michelin-star restaurant. Located an hour’s drive from Lille or Calais, it’s a great place for a weekend break, says Nina Caplan in The Sunday Times. A 17th century building with a modern extension, the hotel has “snazzy” decor, and 28 spacious rooms. The restaurant – under chef-patron Christophe Dufossé – occupies a “glass box” in its beautiful grounds, and uses produce from the kitchen garden. The food is “wonderful”, and there’s much to see nearby, including the pretty medieval town of Saint-Omer, home to another fine restaurant, Bacôve, with one Michelin star. *Double rooms cost from £220 b&b (lechateaubeaulieu.fr).*

Hotel of the week



New Park Manor Brockenhurst, Hampshire

Set in the heart of the New Forest, with “woodland walks from the doorstep”, the recently revamped New Park Manor is one of the UK’s most family friendly hotels, says Helen Ochyra in The Times. A godsend for “frazzled parents”, it has a range of delights for children including indoor and outdoor pools, a cinema room, arcade games and a playground. Staff are “endlessly patient”, and for two hours a day there is free childcare in the Ofsted-registered Four Bears Den. The 25 rooms have playful decor (including chalkboards), and there’s a spa and two restaurants, one adults-only.

Doubles from £165 b&b; luxuryfamilyhotels.co.uk.

Designer of razors, cameras and the InterCity 125

Sir Kenneth Grange
1929-2024

Sir Kenneth Grange came of age at around the time of the Festival of Britain, said *The Times*, “and the emergence of mass-produced televisions, washing machines, refrigerators and vacuum cleaners, all needing sleek design to make them as attractive as possible”. Rejecting the traditional “we have always done it this way” approach, he sought to produce goods that were stylish, functional, durable and affordable. And they came “thick and fast”, said *Wallpaper* magazine: cameras for Kodak, mixers for Kenwood, “pens for Parker, razors for Wilkinson Sword, irons for Morphy Richards, lighters for Ronson”, lights for Anglepoise. There was a point in the 1970s when if it “was made in Britain and you could hold it – comfortably – in your hand”, chances are it had been designed by Kenneth Grange. But in a career that spanned six decades, he also designed an array of objects that you could never hold in your hand, from coin-operated parking meters, bus shelters and TX1 London taxis to the InterCity 125, with its aerodynamic nose cone. The 125 was his proudest achievement. “If I’m standing on a platform and in comes my train, I puff up my chest and I feel pretty good,” he said.

Kenneth Grange was born in east London in 1929, the son of Hilda, a machinist, and Harry, a policeman, and grew up in what he called a “good old-fashioned house, a bacon and eggs kind of house”, with a three-piece suite and flowery wallpaper. “You didn’t eat terribly well, but you didn’t eat badly, and life was pretty good for a kid,” he recalled of his childhood. This was an era when if something broke, you didn’t throw it away – you fixed it. “Inevitably, as a small boy I must have started to learn how things were made, as I was in the process of repairing them. Understanding how things are made has been a preoccupation of mine ever since.” Aged 14, he won a scholarship to Willesden



Grange: worked 80 hours a week

School of Art, and when the time came to choose between fine art and commercial art he chose the latter because, he said, “I needed the money”. During National Service, he worked as a technical illustrator for the Royal Engineers, which led to a job as an architect’s assistant, said *The Daily Telegraph*. At the modernist practice Arcon, he was dazzled by its white walls and colourful doors, a world away from the browns and creams of his childhood home. Having gained access to international design magazines, he started to design things himself, and founded his own design practice in 1958.

The postwar period was a buoyant time for British manufacturing; the mass production of consumer goods was restarting and, in 1944, the Labour government had set up the Council of Industrial Design to introduce manufacturers to designers. Grange liked to suggest that it was being the cheapest designer on their list that won him his first big job, designing Britain’s

first parking meter for Venner. A year later, in 1959, he was able to present his design for a kitchen mixer to Ken Wood, of Kenwood. Grange’s Kenwood Chef came out in 1960 and delighted a generation of home cooks. Around the same time, Kodak hired him to design a new camera, the Brownie 44A. Later, he produced the Instamatic 133 (1968) and the Pocket Instamatic (1972).

In 1972, he co-founded what became the world’s largest independent design consultancy, Pentagram. He worked 80-hour weeks, and had, he said, a “selfish” addiction to work that had made him hard to live with. His first two marriages ended in divorce. In 1984, he married Apryl Swift, who survives him. He was still working in his 80s. “I like finding solutions to things,” he said. “The best jobs are where you run up against one problem after another. I’m never daunted. Sooner or later, I know I’m going to resolve how to make the bloody thing.”

Blues musician who mentored a generation of rock stars

John Mayall
1933-2024

John Mayall, who has died aged 90, was known as the “godfather of British blues”. During his middle-class childhood in postwar Cheadle Hulme, he’d found resonance in a sound pioneered decades earlier on the plantations of the Mississippi Delta and in the tenements of Chicago’s South Side. By the time he put British blues on the map, in the mid-1960s, the genre had fallen into decline in America, said *The Times*, overtaken by pop and soul. Mayall, and the white blues rockers whose careers he mentored (and whose fame ultimately eclipsed his), “breathed new life” into the blues, then sent it back across the Atlantic. In so doing, they helped revive the careers of such legendary bluesmen as John Lee Hooker and Muddy Waters.

Born in Macclesfield, he was the son of Beryl and Murray, who played guitar and had a collection of 78s by the likes of Lead Belly and Louis Armstrong. Inspired by these, Mayall learnt to play the ukulele, piano, guitar and harmonica. He formed his first band at art school in Manchester, then, during National Service in Korea, he learnt more about the blues via contact with black US servicemen and Forces radio. Back in Manchester, he worked as a graphic designer by day, and played with his own band by night (while living in a treehouse in his parents’ garden). In 1963, he moved to London and formed the Bluesbreakers. He was already



Mayall: lived in a treehouse

30, and married to his wife Pamela, with whom he had four children (one of them adopted).

In 1965 he hired Eric Clapton, who was 20 and had just left The Yardbirds, said *The Guardian*. In 1966, they produced “the most momentous album in British blues” – *Blues Breakers with Eric Clapton*. Clapton then left to form Cream, and was replaced by the 19-year-old Peter Green. When he left, and formed Fleetwood Mac with two other members of Mayall’s “blues academy” – Mick Fleetwood and John McVie – he was replaced by Mick Taylor, then 17, who later joined the Rolling Stones. Jack Bruce of Cream was among the other musicians who did stints with the Bluesbreakers, sitting up all night in a Transit van as they drove home from gigs while

their leader – a teacherly figure who was anti-drugs and didn’t drink – slept on a bed he’d had built in the back.

His focus on his music took a toll on his family and, in the late 1960s, his marriage ended and he moved to California. He had spent his life imbibing US culture, and “it just felt right”, he said. He collaborated with a range of American musicians, continued to tour, and recorded more than 50 albums in all. For his 70th birthday, he returned to Manchester to perform once again with Clapton. Paying tribute last week, “Slowhand” said that Mayall had been his “surrogate father”; he “taught me all I really know”.



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Don't forget to protect your digital assets

Cyber security is an often overlooked but vital part of staying safe and protecting your assets both on and offline. It pays to invest in protection.

Cybercrime is becoming one of the world's most pressing and damaging crimes. At NFU Mutual, we understand the risks and challenges of dealing with cybercrime, and potential cyber incidents could be a lot to handle – especially those without a background in technology.

However, it's something we all need to understand. As the world becomes increasingly technologically focused, it's even more important to understand the risks of cybercrime and what you can do to protect yourself against unforeseen developments.

Unseen risk

Protecting yourself against cybercrime starts by understanding that it is a "people problem, not a technology problem," says Matt Cullina, head of global cyber insurance business for CyberScout, a TransUnion brand and providers of the NFU Mutual Bespoke Cyber Assistance Helpline.

Cybercriminals often start by trying to convince people to give them access to accounts or account details. The approaches used can vary, but they always have the same goal: to get people to reveal personal or sensitive information. Once they get hold of the information, they often work to manipulate you into doing what they want. At NFU Mutual, we understand that these situations may put people in challenging situations, which can make it difficult to discuss with those around you.

However, the first step in protecting yourself is being aware of the risks and

knowing the tactics criminals use in the first place.

The most common method criminals use to gain access to personal details or accounts is by sending links. These are often sent in emails from companies you might already have some association with. However, the links won't take you to the well-known website. Instead, they could take you to a separate site set up by criminals with the sole purpose of stealing information.

This might seem like a fairly straightforward attack that's fairly easy to avoid, and it can be if you know what you're looking for.

Always keep an eye out for links from sources you're not familiar with or not expecting. Double-check senders' addresses. An email address might seem like it's from an official sender, but it's easy to make one address look like another. Have they replaced an 'l' with an '1'? These simple changes are enough to steal your details without you even knowing it.

Spending a few seconds to check whether a message or the link it contains looks legitimate can make all the difference.

Matt says: "If your bank sends you a text telling you to change your password ASAP, take just a little longer to check it. Your bank is never going to pressure you like that."

Digital protection

Another simple way to protect yourself online is to add an extra layer of digital security, including multifactor authentication, such as text messages or calls to your mobile to check if it's really you signing into an account. An authentication app can also be a second verification method to prove who you are. "Don't just say no, as it's a hassle," Matt suggests. Finally, Matt reminds people that they shouldn't be afraid to ask questions and seek advice.

"Most people don't know where to turn, but NFU Mutual Bespoke Home Insurance

customers can reach out to CyberScout if they think they have been the victim of an incident. We offer help and advice as part of their policy."

But regardless of whether NFU Mutual customers believe that they have been a victim of cybercrime or not, CyberScout are happy to help with cyber advice of any kind, included as standard as part of a NFU Mutual Bespoke Home Insurance policy. It's clear that many people would value extra help staying safe online. NFU Mutual's research showed that 37% of High-Net-Worth individuals would like more support on cyber security.

Personal Cyber cover is included as standard with NFU Mutual Bespoke Home Insurance. With dedicated support and cover up to £50,000 a year should you fall victim to cybercrime, plus access to a 24/7 Cyber Assistance Helpline 363 days a year.

NFU Mutual Bespoke Home Insurance is specially designed to cover high-value homes with contents over £150,000. It provides one of the highest quality offerings in the market and is rated 5 Star for High Net Worth Home Insurance by leading financial information, ratings and fintech business Defaqto.

For more information about NFU Mutual Bespoke Home Insurance, visit nfumutual.co.uk/bespokehome or call 0808 303 7471.

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



Seven days in the Square Mile

The **FTSE 100** and **FTSE 250** indices continued to surge, ahead of a key interest rate-setting meeting at the Bank of England. In the run-up, traders upped the odds of an August cut. Britain's main share indices, sterling and the prices of two- and ten-year gilts, all ended July in positive territory; some assets are on course for their best performance this year. Markets have largely shrugged off Rachel Reeves's claim that there's a £22bn hole in the **public finances**.

US markets remained volatile as investors took the temperature of AI investments. **Microsoft's** stock tumbled after revenues in its Azure Cloud Services division disappointed. Shares in **Nvidia** also fell again: the AI chipmaker has now lost 26% of its value since shares peaked in mid-June, putting the stock officially in a bear market. The **Bank of Japan** raised the country's interest rate for the second time since 2007 – to “around 0.25%” from “around 0% to 0.1%”.

Boeing, the troubled US plane-maker, named aerospace industry veteran Robert K. “Kelly” Ortberg as its new boss, replacing Dave Calhoun. Drinks giant **Diageo** saw its first decline in global sales since the pandemic, blaming an “extraordinary” consumer environment. **Centrica** reported that its profits had been hit hard by the energy price cap drop, halving in the first half of this year to £1.04bn. The new Government axed plans for a “Tell Sid”-style public sale of **NatWest** shares, claiming it could have cost taxpayers as much as £450m.

Royal Mail/Evri: delivering deals

How is the “Czech Sphinx” Daniel Kretínský progressing in his quest to bag Royal Mail? In a word, slowly, said Alex Brummer in *The Mail on Sunday*. With questions from MPs, investors and unions mounting, the £3.6bn deal agreed by International Distribution Services (IDS), Royal Mail's owner, is still very much up in the air. Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds is expected to invoke powers under the National Security and Investment Act to “call in” the deal before Parliament goes into recess. Meanwhile, a shareholder rebellion is mounting. Big City investors representing more than a fifth of IDS shares plan to vote against the £3.70-a-share offer – on grounds that it “seriously undervalues Royal Mail” if the regulator, Ofcom, recommends changes to the Universal Service Obligation (guaranteeing fixed-price delivery six days a week), which Royal Mail claims is “a drag on its loss-making business”. Kretínský's frustration at the delay will be compounded by a beefed-up challenger, said Hannah Boland in *The Daily Telegraph*. Last week, the US buyout giant Apollo snapped up UK parcels rival Evri (formerly Hermes) for £2.7bn – in a move “expected to hand Evri fresh firepower to take on Royal Mail”.

St James's Place: Lazarus act

There's nothing like confounding the doomsters with an unexpected recovery, said Elliot Gulliver-Needham in *City AM*. Shares in Britain's largest wealth manager, the scandal-rocked St James's Place, shot up by nearly 25% on Tuesday after it reported that inflows from clients so far this year (at £1.9bn) had taken assets under management to a record £181.9bn. “I thought you were dead,” was the reaction of many analysts. The firm had certainly been in trouble: “beaten and battered by the market”, shares had lost more than two-thirds of their value and they hit “a decade low” in April, plummeting out of the FTSE 100. The drop was exacerbated by a fees scandal: thousands of clients claimed they hadn't been provided with an annual review of their finances, despite paying for one – prompting many to ask whether St James's Place could survive. “That narrative” has now “completely flipped”. The market “probably overreacted to the fees furore”, said *Investors' Chronicle*. Even so, top marks for crisis management. The outfit can thank its loyal customers, and the “bold” approach of CEO Mark FitzPatrick, for its Lazarus act.

Stellantis/Maserati: gilded albatross?

The lesson of the post-pandemic consumer boom is that, at some point, “depleted wallets snap shut”, said Lex in the *FT*. Ryanair has signalled the end of “revenge travel”; luxury groups are “fraying at the seams”; and “the auto sector is suffering a veritable car crash”. The latest to feel the heat is Stellantis, the multinational carmaker formed when “Peugeot and Fiat Chrysler were rammed together” in 2021, which is “struggling to sell cars”, particularly in the US, its biggest market. It is now bent on rooting out underperforming marques and even considering putting its trophy Italian sports-car brand, Maserati, up for sale after shipments halved, triggering a €349m writedown, said *The Daily Telegraph*. Some would welcome the divestment. “Stellantis has struggled to make money with the luxury brand,” said *Automotive News Europe*. Why not give someone else the chance? The best candidate to restore Maserati's vroom would be its former garage-mate Ferrari, which has gone from strength to strength since becoming independent.

Revolut: licensed to thrill?

“A (British) bank is born,” said Leonard Kehnscherper on Bloomberg. After a frustrating “three-year wait for a nod”, Revolut has “finally secured a UK banking licence”, a vital step in its stated ambition to become a global banking “super-app”. The move means that the London-based fintech – co-founded by CEO Nik Storonsky in 2015 to offer cheap foreign exchange services – will be able to offer loans, overdrafts and savings products to its nine million UK customers, joining the likes of Monzo, Starling and Atom. Crucially, customer deposits up to £85,000 will be backed by the UK's financial services compensation scheme.



Storonsky: “hyper-focused”

At Revolut's Canary Wharf HQ, neon signs exhort staff to “get shit done”. Yet the startup's “rocky journey” to fully fledged bank has been slow, said the *FT*. Even the arrival of City grandee Martin Gilbert failed at first to do the trick. Regulators had concerns about accounting problems, Revolut's

ownership structure and its hard-charging culture. Russia-born Storonsky (a former Lehman Brothers trader, who took UK citizenship in 2004), is “hyper-focused on turning out superior products”, but his “temperamental and volatile” style is a worry.

The licence will “help support a valuation” of up to \$45bn in Revolut's planned sale of existing shares, said the *FT* – making it the UK's “third-most valuable bank”. “Many will hope a blockbuster listing follows,” said Jill Treanor in *The Sunday Times*. But the real significance of UK regulatory approval is the “leverage” it gives when persuading regulators elsewhere, particularly the US (where Revolut has one million customers), to follow suit. Revolut, which made £438m in profit last year on £1.8bn of revenues, reckons it will hit revenues of \$9bn in 2026. That's a punchy prediction. But at least it will have watchdogs on its side.

Issue of the week: the US tech rout

AI is costing an awful lot of money, in exchange for an uncertain return. Faith is beginning to falter

It's been "a cruel summer" for Big Tech stocks, said Hardika Singh in *The Wall Street Journal*. The "Magnificent Seven" group of tech titans has shed \$1.52trn in market value in the past three weeks – "the biggest drop over such a stretch on record". All it took last week to inflict the worst daily battering of the tech-heavy Nasdaq index since 2022 were some disappointing earnings from Alphabet and Tesla. Analysts give two reasons for the rout. The first is the promise of rate cuts, which have prompted investors to trim their bets on market leaders and rush into shares of smaller companies deemed "likely to benefit more from lower borrowing costs". Yet alongside this "great rotation" is the second: a nagging fear about the durability of the AI boom. Right now, the market seems disinclined to place much trust in it.



Meta's Mark Zuckerberg: splurging on AI

markets". These firms have all gone with the "AI narrative" by making big commitments to increase capital spending. Were they to "walk back their commitments, even in the most gentle, qualified ways", the impact would be immediately felt by Nvidia and other chip stocks, which have been the other crucial support for markets. "This is about as big a tail risk as investors in US stocks face right now."

There's no sign of that yet, said *The Economist*. On the contrary, Alphabet's boss, Sundar Pichai, still insists that "the risk of under-investing" in AI is "dramatically greater than the risk of over-investing". Yet the sums involved are "eye-popping". New Street Research predicts that Alphabet, Amazon, Meta and Microsoft will together splurge \$104bn on AI data centres this year. On some estimates, "the total AI-data-centre binge" could reach \$1.4trn. Meanwhile, the threats are ramping up: one is the heavy reliance on Nvidia; another is the availability of power. The biggest threat of all, however, "would come from waning demand". In June, Goldman Sachs and Sequoia published reports "questioning the benefits of current generative-AI tools", and thus the wisdom of the spending bonanza. "AI tools need to improve quickly and businesses need to adopt them en masse." The stakes for many companies are getting "uncomfortably high".

These declines represent "an orderly reduction in expectations", which is good news for the market overall, said Robert Armstrong on FT.com. "Too much had been riding on too few stocks." Even after recent falls, shares in Mag 7 stocks such as Apple and Microsoft are still trading at "meaty premiums" to their long-term average price/earnings valuations. These are "awesome companies", but "their star status" is already priced in "and any serious misstep will overturn a lot of furniture throughout the

UK rate cuts: what the experts think

● Old Lady's puzzle

Talk about a finely balanced call, said Kate Beioley on FT.com. The Bank of England's decision on whether to cut interest rates for the first time since 2020, from their 16-year high of 5.25%, was "on a knife edge" ahead of the Monetary Policy Committee's meeting this week. With the committee torn between those wanting to seize the opening, and those warning that services inflation – a key gauge of domestic pricing pressures – is still too high, the BoE's governor, Andrew Bailey, was tipped to cast the decisive vote.



Offering a five-year fix at 3.99%

● Stirring the market

Some in the mortgage market weren't hanging around to find out, said Chris Dorrell in *City AM*. Last week, Nationwide became "the first large lender" to offer a five-year fix at an interest rate below 4% – in the teeth of BoE data showing that mortgage approvals have slipped to their lowest level since January. The market has been "struggling to build on the momentum seen at the turn of the year, when hopes of early rate cuts fuelled a mortgage price war". Nationwide's 3.99% deal will offer "hope" to some, said Rachel Mortimer in *The Times* –

even if, to quote David Hollingworth of broker L&C Mortgages, "we are not expecting a rush by lenders to join the sub-4% brigade yet". But there are plenty of householders still in the financial woods. Mortgage borrowers are largely split into two camps: those coming to the end of a two-year deal taken out when rates surged in 2022; and those coming off five-year deals locked in when rates were as low as 1%. "The first group will be relieved at the prospect of cheaper repayments – the second face an alarming price jump."

● Buy-to-lose

For many in the once-buoyant buy-to-let sector, the damage is already done, said Melissa Lawford in *The Daily Telegraph*. Financial headwinds – including higher mortgage rates, higher taxes and increased red tape – have combined to whack Britain's "mom and pop" private landlord sector. Individual investors are steering clear, said Charlie Bryant, boss of property listings website Zoopla. In their place will come "pension funds and private equity firms" seeking to capitalise on the lucrative "build-to-rent" sector encouraged by Keir Starmer's Government. It's the end of an investment era.

"Jargon monoxide"

"My Government's legislative programme will be mission-led," declared an ermine-clad King Charles from his gilded throne at the state opening of Parliament. We're so inured to "corporate twaddle" that the royal descent into "management speak" went largely unremarked, said Pilita Clark in the FT. The worst examples are rightly mocked. For instance, Mondelez – maker of Oreo biscuits – recently unveiled a new approach to marketing, called "humaning". "We are no longer marketing to consumers, but creating connections with humans," the snack giant said in a press release that prompted "immediate and widespread ridicule". It's an instance of what Stanford professors Bob Sutton and Huggy Rao call "jargon monoxide": "empty and misleading communication that is meaningless to both bullshitter and bullshittee".

But office jargon will always be with us: people will always need to grab low-hanging fruit, move the needle and think outside the box. Such terms make us "feel more secure, more of an insider and more able to tell someone something pronto". Among a raft of new buzzwords doing the rounds are:

"Negatron": an eternal pessimist (replacing "perma-bear").

"Faulty tasker": one who multitasks so much they make a mess of everything.

"Meanderthal": a tedious person who takes forever to get to the point.

Trump's empty dollar threat...

Katie Martin

Financial Times

Donald Trump's latest pronouncements on the "tremendous burden" placed upon US companies by the strong dollar have "rekindled a familiar conversation", says Katie Martin. If Trump were to win power, would he try to weaken the world's dominant reserve currency? "The short answer is no, or at least not without trashing the economy." But the greenback's role as "the glue that holds global trade and investment together" means "fund managers have little choice" but to take Trump's "salvo" seriously. If he does choose this path, it won't be easy. Deutsche Bank analyst George Saravelos has calculated that the dollar "would have to drop by a lot to matter" – possibly by 40%, to close the trade deficit. That seems like "a substantial financial stability risk even for an ambitious new administration"; he might need to "crash" the US economy to do it. The good news is that the issue may be resolving itself anyway. The dollar has dropped back against the yen, quite by coincidence, as Japanese rates rise and there are signs of "softer" US inflation. With luck, "this should ensure we won't see this ill-fated natural experiment in the wild".

...and his embrace of crypto

Lionel Laurent

Bloomberg

"Financial bubbles are inherently political," says Lionel Laurent. So no one should be surprised about crypto's latest comeback, "with Donald Trump leading the charge". At a recent event, headed "Make Bitcoin Great Again", he vowed to fire the securities regulator, Gary Gensler, in favour of a more pro-crypto official. When Trump was president, he rightly worried about the volatility and destabilising impact of crypto. But on the campaign trail, "bigging up bitcoin and selling tacky NFTs" is a way of reaching out to crypto's largely male user base, and "angling for dollars". "It's the ultimate grift." Trump's "pro-crypto" political action committees (PACs) have already raised \$170m. "This renewed sloshing of crypto into politics should worry voters and regulators." When a market with lax oversight "inevitably turns and exposes fraud" and malfeasance, the costs always fall on "punters lower down the ladder". We shouldn't overstate the role of crypto in politics: there are bigger industries with deeper pockets also exerting pressure. "Still, given the choice between less or more crypto in politics, the former clearly looks preferable."

Our fetish for a lost industrial past

Ben Wright

The Daily Telegraph

A new report shows that Britain has fallen to 12th in the global league table of manufacturers – which should be a "seismic wake-up call" for the Government, according to its authors at Make UK. You can't blame a lobby group for lobbying, says Ben Wright, "but it would be a mistake to fetishise manufacturing" in the pursuit of "a lost industrial past". The sector has undoubtedly had a tough time recently. Brexit brought years of uncertainty, the pandemic cut global supply chains, and the Ukraine War prompted a huge energy spike. The last government, meanwhile, "cycled through different industrial strategies even faster than it did prime ministers". Even so, the real lesson of recent years is how robust UK manufacturing has been. OECD figures show "gross value added" per British manufacturing job rose by 37.3% from 2007 to 2021, compared with an average of 12.1% among rich countries. The sector may be a smaller part of the economy than it was – this is true across the West – but it's more productive and jobs have held steady. That's something to celebrate.

Britain's pensions muddle

Martin Vander Weyer

The Spectator

Rachel Reeves makes it sound so easy, says Martin Vander Weyer in *The Spectator*. If the new Government's "pensions review" succeeds in "unleashing the full investment might" of the £360bn Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), "we'd have a public investment fund to rival those of the Netherlands and Singapore". But rounding up that cash won't be easy. "The LGPS is currently held in no fewer than 87 separate funds", collectively clocking up £2bn of annual fees and costs. "Imagine all the town hall fiefdoms and masonic stitch-ups that will have to be taken apart to convert that lot into Reeves's 'engine for UK growth'." Even then, "a huge clash looms" over whether "a state-directed drive of UK pension monies into domestic investment" would really produce richer returns than the "globalised, lower-risk portfolios" pension trustees tend to prefer. If not, "millions of workers will have to be pushed to save more for their own retirement". Obviously, one wishes the Chancellor all the best on pensions. "But 'reviews' are mere smoke signals: delivery will take decades, if not for ever."

City profile

David "Spotty" Rowland

The multimillionaire property tycoon turned financier – who once persuaded his friend, Prince Andrew, to unveil a bronze statue of him at his palatial house in Guernsey – has run into a spot of trouble on the Continent, said Ben Martin in *The Times*. EU regulators are "poised to revoke" the operating licence of Banque Havilland, the Luxembourg-based private bank owned by Rowland, blocking it from functioning in Europe. The exact reason remains unclear, but it comes amid heightened scrutiny of clients and processes. Last year, the UK Financial Conduct Authority provisionally fined the bank £10m for acting "without integrity" over an alleged "plan to try and devalue the Qatari currency".



The son of a scrap-metal dealer, Rowland, 79, was a precocious entrepreneur who became a property millionaire in his early 20s. He was dubbed "Spotty" owing to his relative youth and bad skin, and the nickname stuck. A big Tory donor, he founded Banque Havilland in 2009 from the remnants of Kaupthing, the collapsed Icelandic lender, naming it after his Guernsey estate. Rowland has been close to the Duke of York for decades, occasionally riding to his financial rescue, said *The Daily Telegraph*. In 2017, he reportedly paid off a £1.5m loan for the Duke, later securing "a front-row seat at the 2018 wedding of Princess Eugenie". Rowland has eight children from two marriages, said *The Times*, at least two of whom have followed him into banking. Edmund, former CEO of Banque Havilland's closed London branch, is challenging "a ban from working in financial services".

Who's tipping what

The week's best shares

1Spatial

The Mail on Sunday
1Spatial's traffic management software is a boon for utilities, transport contractors and local authorities dealing with roadworks – in Europe and the US. Shares have doubled since 2021; there should be more to go. Buy. 70p.

3i Group

The Times
The UK private equity group's £22bn portfolio – mostly invested in "value" consumer brands – has delivered a 24% total return, helped by a €1bn payout from Dutch discounter Action. The "steep premium" reflects quality. Buy. £29.98.

Accesso Technology Group

The Mail on Sunday
This digital ticketing firm is profiting as sites go hi tech: customers include Legoland, Disney World, the Egyptian pyramids and ski resorts. "Firing on all cylinders." Shares – whacked by Covid – should respond. Buy. £7.

ITV

Investors' Chronicle
Total ad revenues climbed by 10% in the first half, helped by the Euros and "the improved outlook" for advertising. Although "historically strong", production has slowed, but the broadcaster is "thriving" from a profit perspective. Buy. 80.8p.

Kingfisher

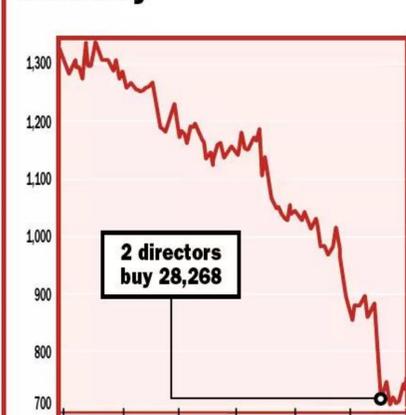
The Daily Telegraph
The Screwfix and B&Q owner has maintained a "solid" balance sheet, despite difficult retail conditions, and is well placed to capitalise on rising demand. Shareholder payouts could rise at a brisk pace as profits grow. Buy. 277p.

PulteGroup

The Daily Telegraph
America's third-largest housebuilder has had a roller-coaster ride, but big investors are betting on upside to come, with rate cuts the catalyst. Given "significant undersupply", the outlook is positive. Buy. \$129.99.

Directors' dealings

Burberry



After a punishing period for the luxury fashion group – shares plunged 20% on a profit warning – the board seems convinced better times are ahead. Chair Gerry Murphy and CFO Catherine Ferry spent £145,013 and £59,546 respectively.

SOURCE: INVESTORS' CHRONICLE

...and some to hold, avoid or sell

Alphabet

The Times
The Google owner is spending big on AI with an uncertain payback, while sales growth in its core ad business slows. An encouraging 29% rise in cloud computing revenues should help support heavy investment. Hold. \$174.45.

Jet2

The Daily Telegraph
The airline and package holiday specialist's "bargain basement" shares bely record passenger numbers, a 24% annual revenue jump, and an improving consumer outlook. Sound finances and investing in new aircraft. Hold. £13.69.

Lloyds Banking Group

Sharecast
RBC Capital has downgraded the bank from "outperform" to "sector perform" after shares hit their 60p target. "We have run out of runway in valuation terms." The FCA review of motor finance remains a risk. Hold. 60.66p.

Arbuthnot Latham

Investors' Chronicle
Paying higher interest rates on £3bn of fixed deposit accounts has hurt the bank, but wealth management inflows are up 15%. Shares, which lack free-float liquidity, "aren't an accurate gauge of prospects or sentiment". Hold. 956p.

Lockheed Martin

The Times
40% of the vast US defence group's revenues derive from aeronautics. Shares are at a 50-year high, yet are "good value" given aggressive global defence spending and pent-up demand for the F-35 fighter jet. Hold. \$523.

Reckitt Benckiser Group

Investors' Chronicle
The troubled consumer goods giant is doubling down on "high growth, high margin powerbrands". Shares have plunged to an 11-year low on fears of litigation over infant formula. Could attract takeover interest. Hold. £45.09.

Form guide

Shares tipped 12 weeks ago

Best tip

Spectra Systems
The Mail on Sunday
up 24.42% to 270p

Worst tip

Domino's Pizza Group
The Sunday Times
up 0.93% to 325p

Market view

"If the Fed does not signal a September rate cut, markets could get a bit ugly given recent tech weakness."

Tom Essaye of The Sevens Report on concerns that the AI frenzy might have gone too far. Quoted on Bloomberg

Market summary

Key numbers for investors

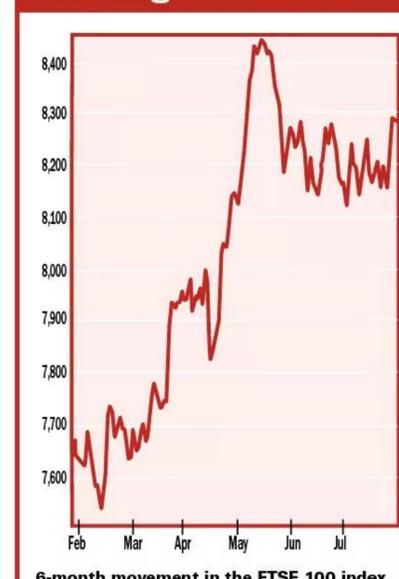
	30 July 2024	Week before	Change (%)
FTSE 100	8274.41	8167.37	1.31%
FTSE All-share UK	4539.49	4479.49	1.34%
Dow Jones	40563.36	40510.45	0.13%
NASDAQ	17116.04	18091.12	-5.39%
Nikkei 225	38525.95	39594.39	-2.70%
Hang Seng	17002.91	17469.36	-2.67%
Gold	2391.10	2392.70	-0.07%
Brent Crude Oil	78.00	80.67	-3.31%
DIVIDEND YIELD (FTSE 100)	3.57%	3.59%	
UK 10-year gilts yield	4.16	4.23	
US 10-year Treasuries	4.16	4.23	
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:	\$1.283 €1.186 ¥194.872	Bitcoin \$66,263.46	

Best and worst performing shares

WEEK'S CHANGE, FTSE 100 STOCKS		
RISES	Price	% change
JD Sports Fashion	129.50	+8.10
NatWest Group	366.70	+7.90
Intertek	5005.00	+7.40
Easyjet	458.80	+7.30
BAT	2760.00	+6.80
FALLS		
Entain	564.00	-14.40
Pershing Square	3780.00	-10.20
Centrica	132.10	-6.80
Reckitt Benckiser	4152.00	-5.80
Convatec	237.20	-5.50
FTSE 250 RISER & FALLER		
Ascential	572.00	+28.00
Carnival	1228.00	-9.70

Source: FT (not adjusted for dividends). Prices on 30 July (pm)

Following the Footsie





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“They tried to make us Russians”: the children Putin stole

Thousands of Ukrainian youngsters have been abducted and indoctrinated to become “mini soldiers”. At a summer camp helping those who have been rescued from Russia, Christina Lamb meets some of the children

When Russian soldiers told 14-year-old Vova Petukhov that he and his younger brother Sasha had 30 minutes to pack to move to Russia, he thought he would not see Ukraine again. “We were thinking then we would never come home,” he said. The boys, whose mother had died a few months before the war, were among 200 children stranded at Novopetrivka boarding school, a facility for disadvantaged children, near Mykolaiv in southern

Ukraine when the Russians occupied the area on 12 March 2022, 16 days after their full-scale invasion. While most pupils were rescued by parents or relatives, Vova and Sasha were among 15 orphans left hiding in the basement for three months with no power or water and dwindling supplies. With them were the headmistress and a few staff.

“It was terrifying,” said Sasha, who was 11 at the time. “We were scared of the explosions and shootings and when we heard helicopters we ran to the basement and couldn’t come out.” Their situation would soon worsen. Like thousands of Ukrainian children, the boys were abducted to Russia – part of a programme to re-educate them and turn them into Russians. Last year the International Criminal Court declared this a war crime, issuing arrest warrants for President Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova, his children’s commissioner, who boasted of taking 720,000 Ukrainian children, including one she adopted herself. No one knows the true figure because many were orphans with no relatives or whose parents were killed – Ukraine puts it far lower, at about 20,000. Fewer than 600 have been rescued. The Petukhov boys are among the lucky ones, returning earlier this month.

But Mykola Kuleba, head of Save Ukraine, the organisation which brought them back, and rescued its 414th child last month, believes many of these children will never return. “It’s now almost impossible to get the kids out,” he said. “Our government is trying through mediation by Qatar and the Emiratis, but it’s very slow as Putin is trying to block any returns. He clearly understands every child abducted is a witness to war crimes.” That is not all. The indoctrination is working. “It’s two-and-a-half years now where they are at Russian schools and taught every day Russia is a great country and Ukraine is bad. The longer we leave them the more assimilated they are and the harder it is to get them back. Some contact us through our hotline saying they want to come home. But we have more and more Ukrainian children who when



Lvova-Belova and 125 Ukrainian children arriving in Moscow in September 2022

“Maria Lvova-Belova, Putin’s children’s commissioner, has boasted of taking 720,000 Ukrainian children, including one she adopted”

we track down say ‘We want to stay in Russia because Ukraine is at war and we received Russian citizenship and don’t want to come back’.”

Vova and Sasha, now 16 and 13, say they cried with happiness about their return. Sitting on a bed under a blue and yellow Ukrainian flag, in their Uncle Roman’s house where they now live in the peaceful village of Dobre, near Mykolaiv, they recounted their ordeal. In mid-July 2022, Russian soldiers came to the basement

of the boarding school, counted them all and forced the children onto military vehicles, along with the school’s director, Natalia Lutsyk. They drove them to Kherson, the biggest Ukrainian city to come under occupation. “They filmed us and made a video saying they were evacuating us to safety,” said Vova. In fact they were taking them against their will and close to the front line. The terrified orphans, 11 boys and four girls aged between seven and 16, were placed in a centre for child social and psychological rehabilitation in the village of Stepanivka, just outside Kherson – a city that Ukraine has since liberated.

That facility was empty because its director, Volodymyr Sahaidak, had hidden the children with friends and colleagues, fearful the Russians would take them. He was right. On 30 September 2022,

Putin declared that Kherson and Zaporizhzhia were now part of the Russian Federation, along with the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic, which Russia had occupied since 2014.

The first thing the occupiers did was open schools. Another recently rescued boy, Zhenya, 15, told how at his school in Kherson they had to sing the anthem every day, were forbidden to use the word war, and on Russian Defenders Day were told to make socks for Russian soldiers and write them postcards. One day, military recruitment officers came to the school and issued them military cards. “They told us we will get free houses, a salary up to a million roubles, and that when it got warmer they would return and take us children to the fields to dig trenches.”

Vova and Sasha did not go to school because they had teachers with them. They had been in the centre for four months when on 19 October, a bus pulled up. “It was all very sudden. We were just going to have lunch when we were told by the headmistress you have 30 minutes to pack as we are going to cross the Dnipro River on vacation for two weeks,” said Vova. “I didn’t believe her.” He was right. They never came back. “Only after we left were we told

we were going to Russia,” he said. It was a two-day journey, by boat across the Dnipro, then road to Crimea, then train. They ended up at a sanatorium in Anapa, a resort on the northern shore of the Black Sea known as the Pearl of Russia. There they found around 200 other children from Kherson. There were classes in patriotism. They had no real lessons, said Vova, just basic things, chanting times tables and checking handwriting. Any mentions of Ukraine were negative. “They wanted us to become Russians,” said Sasha.

Vova feared he would be sent to military school to fight. Some children were taken to Moscow to impress them with the city’s grandeur and size and told they could go to great universities. Vova refused to go. They were among the lucky ones who got out. Before the Russian invasion, an American family had done the paperwork for the adoption of one of their group of 15. Somehow they tracked the group down and eventually extracted them all to Georgia.

From the start, the brothers’ Uncle Roman had been trying to find them. They had lost touch when the power went off shortly after the invasion. But scouring groups on Facebook and other social media about the missing, he saw a photograph when they were transferred to Kherson. Eventually he made contact with Save Ukraine who got them and three others back from Georgia – the others have no guardians. “I am so happy to have them back,” he said outside the tumbledown house, where he survives through odd jobs such as gardening as well as growing potatoes. As in much of the region, the power was off after attacks on energy infrastructure, and the house was sweltering in 38°C. It is not easy. Even though they had some time in Georgia to recover, he says they have nightmares. So traumatised were they by their experience that the whoosh from opening a bottle of fizzy water makes Sasha jump.

The lasting effects of this were all too evident at a special camp near Lutsk, in northwest Ukraine, for children who have been rescued from forced abduction or occupation. Fifty children aged seven to 17, most of whom have spent between one and two years under Russian control, were brought together in mid-July for 11 days of sport, activities, *Harry Potter* films and intensive psychotherapy. From a distance they looked like any children as they queued for candy floss then jumped to catch blue and yellow streamers cascading from a blower. But most were pale and thin-faced – a result, say therapists, of extended periods of deprivation and lack of sleep from shelling. Those running the camp say the previous eight camps they worked at were for children processing grief after losing one or both parents, often as they watched.

“This is our hardest camp yet,” said Oksana Lebedeva, who set up Gen Ukrainian, which runs the camps. “These kids have something in their eyes which is different, they look at you as if they are adults with very old eyes... Under occupation and in deportation they were constantly checked and punished,” she added. “They agree to everything – it’s submission on the verge of despair. Here we have strict rules and timetable, no phones, go to group therapy, and they do it all without protesting, even the teenagers.”

“Children who return from Russian occupation are like mini-soldiers,” said Vannui Martyrosian, 33, the lead psychologist, sitting with her black Labrador Lola, who she jokes is the main therapist. But even on Lola, war has taken its toll. She has turned grey and developed epilepsy because of the stress of shelling and air raid sirens. “They are all very well behaved in a negative way,



Rescued children at a Gen Ukrainian summer camp

fearful of being even a minute late. It’s painful to see.” Unlike at previous camps, she said, “this time it took us much longer to develop contact with these children as adults are a source of danger for them”. They also took much longer to develop friendship groups. “They don’t trust anyone, even other children. They have seen teachers and neighbours become collaborators.”

At the start, each child is given a notebook marked “secret” to write down their feelings and hopes, but these children were nervous about putting anything in writing. Martyrosian shows a series of paintings done by the children, one simply painted black. “Even the art, when we gave

them paints they waited to be told what to do – it’s as if their imaginations were blocked.” To help counter the propaganda they had been subjected to, Lebedeva brought in a history professor for what she calls “cognitive deoccupation”. “For two years they’ve been told, ‘Ukraine doesn’t exist, we [Russia] are a large beautiful country that saved you,’” she said.

Gradually at the camp, the children have opened up. “We did it in the form of games and quizzes – we don’t just want propaganda to replace propaganda,” says Lebedeva. One boy from Kherson, now 15, recounted how he was stepped on by Russian soldiers and told: “You will make bullets with which to kill Ukrainians.”

Another, Max, 17, from Zaporizhzhia, who wants to be a philosopher, told how not long after Russians took over their area, his father, a welder, ended up outside during curfew and was picked up, interrogated and badly beaten. A few days later he had a heart attack and died, Max trying to save him with heart massage as medics did not come. His grandmother died of grief earlier this year.

Under occupation, his high school lessons became Russian ideology. “Our books completely changed and some of our local teachers became very pro-Russian. We were taught the Cold War was the fault of the West and that Khrushchev was a traitor who gave away Crimea to Ukraine.” (The Soviet leader transferred the peninsula from the Russian soviet republic to the Ukrainian one in 1954, a complex history that Russia uses to justify its 2014 annexation.) The children were offered tours of Russian universities. Worried about where he might be sent, Max contacted his aunt on the Ukrainian side who arranged for him and his grandfather to get out. First they went to Rostov, where security officials scoured his phone, then to Minsk in Belarus, then to Kyiv before a train to Ukrainian-held Zaporizhzhia, a vast detour to end up only a few miles from where he had started. He said he had not been sure about the therapy camp but found it “funny” and “very useful, particularly the psychological support”.

Some never joined in. One boy who was kept for a year under Russian control, having been tricked into thinking he was going to a summer camp in Crimea, said when he was rescued and came back, he found that people in his area had turned against his mother, asking: why did you send your son to Russia? By the last evening, however, many were opening up. There were tears and hugs as the children were given bracelets engraved with the words “Hope – everything will work out for you” and gathered round a fire pit. One girl, who had lost her parents and grandparents in a Russian attack that wiped out a third of her village, who had worried she had not been able to cry, finally burst into tears.

A longer version of this article appeared in *The Sunday Times*
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THE WEEK CROSSWORD 1425

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 12 August. Send it to The Week Crossword 1425, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR, or email the completed grid/listed solutions to crossword@theweek.co.uk. **Tim Moorey (timmoorey.com)**



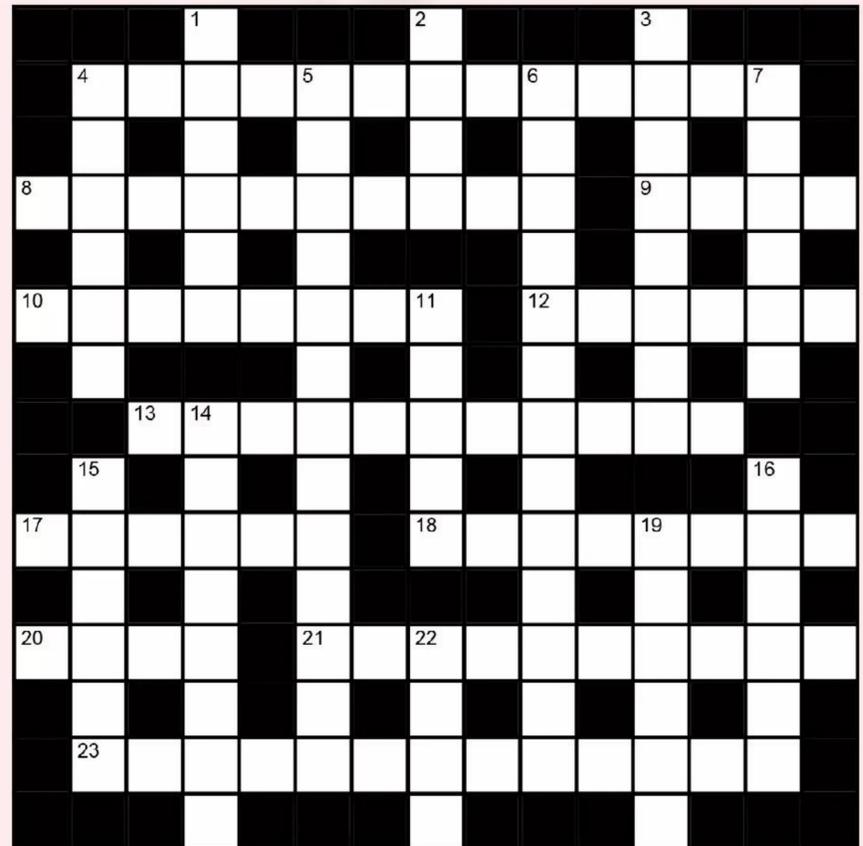
This week's winner will receive Week-branded items including a notebook, coffee mug and tote bag, as well as two Connell Guides (connellguides.com).

ACROSS

- 4 School fighter's a fool to behave unacceptably (2,3,3,5)
- 8 Cleaner's flying aid? (10)
- 9 Bird stuck in gate alas! (4)
- 10 Most harsh southern mountain (8)
- 12 Vocalist from Tangiers perhaps? No thanks (6)
- 13 I work for spinster (5,6)
- 17 Councillor facing river emergency (6)
- 18 Soldiers in second attempt to get official list (8)
- 20 Wood trade (4)
- 21 Holiday queues disheartened leading to blows (10)
- 23 Single celebrity, say in Texas (4,4,5)

DOWN

- 1 Sullen TV detective admits nothing (6)
- 2 Group of stores mostly offering tea (4)
- 3 Refusal to admit mean machine for entertainment (8)
- 4 Pleasant spot close to Epping forest (6)
- 5 Aussie lager is short mostly? Unrelated issue (6-7)
- 6 Opera dragged back from the Garden? (5,8)
- 7 Classy Arab lady announced is member of religious sect (6)
- 11 Drunkard taking a penny from the hat (5)
- 14 It's fresh down by the Hampshire coast (8)
- 15 British novelist offering an alternative to Spring (6)
- 16 Type of block that's an easy thing to make? (6)
- 19 Cut fruit for a sovereign (6)
- 22 Examine brief though short of time (4)



Name

Address

..... Tel no

Clue of the week answer:

Clue of the week: Team fixing matches, nice try! (10,4) *Jumbo, The Times* – set by its late, much-missed editor, *Richard Rogan*

Solution to Crossword 1423

ACROSS: 1 Techie 4 Crumbs 10 Ransome 11 Interns 12 Misappropriate 13 Amnesiacs 14 Bawl 17 Scam 19 Thousands 21 All over the shop 24 Tsarina 25 Nigella 26 Sister 27 Edited

DOWN: 1 Turf 2 Confirm 3 Idolater 5 Rotor 6 Marsala 7 Sisterly 8 Terpsichorean 9 Fit of coughing 15 Espartos 16 Massaged 18 All ears 20 Droplet 22 Voice 23 Bald

Clue of the week: Sex, according to Roman Church? (4)
Solution: VICE (VI + CE)

The winner of 1423 is Henry Jepson from Cheadle Hulme

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

Sudoku 967 (easy)

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 966

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



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Charity of the week



Women's Environmental Network is the only UK charity working on issues that connect gender, health, equality and the environment, and takes an intersectional feminist approach to tackling the climate and nature emergencies. Since 1988, Wen has created groundbreaking projects on environmental issues, including building sustainable food systems, nature-based well-being sessions in women's refuges, and campaigns highlighting toxic chemicals in menstrual products and cosmetics. We cultivate grassroots action at individual and community levels, as well as amplifying marginalised women's voices and advocating for policy change. **Please visit wen.org.uk to find out more.**

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