

“A savage writer with a savage eye”

OBITUARIES P32



Did Trump pick the wrong VP?

BEST AMERICAN COLUMNISTS P12



How the parakeet invaded Britain

BRIEFING P9



THE WEEK

10 AUGUST 2024 | ISSUE 1500

THE BEST OF THE BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

The far-right riots Starmer vows to get tough

Page 2



What happened

Starmer's first crisis

As the UK reeled from seven consecutive days of far-right rioting, Keir Starmer vowed to do "whatever it takes" to bring the "thugs" involved to justice. The unrest began last week in Southport after three young girls were killed there in a knife attack; it then spread to at least 25 towns and cities in England and Northern Ireland (see page 16). Some 4,000 riot police were deployed, and scores were injured; about 400 people were arrested. Children as young as 14 have appeared in court over the disorder, and police were this week braced for further unrest.

After chairing an emergency Cobra meeting on Monday, the PM said a "standing army" of specialist police officers would be deployed to hotspots of violence. Ministers also said they were readying 500 extra prison places to cope with offenders. As attention turned to the role of social media in fuelling the riots, No. 10 criticised the owner of X/Twitter, Elon Musk, for claiming Britain was heading for a "civil war". In response to Starmer saying attacks on Muslim communities wouldn't be tolerated, Musk tweeted: "Shouldn't you be concerned about attacks on all communities?" and dubbed him "two-tier Keir".



The PM: not "Sir Softie" now

What the editorials said

Britain was supposed to be "reaping the benefits of political stability" after Labour's crushing general election victory, said the FT. Instead, the new Government is having to grapple with the UK's "worst rioting in over a decade". The unrest presents Starmer with three major challenges. First, law and order must be quickly restored. Second, officials must work with social media companies to stop the spread of falsehoods and calls to violence. And third, the Government must "take the heat out of" Britain's often toxic immigration debate.

Starmer was right to "unequivocally condemn" the violent thuggery and law-breaking by far-right agitators, and to give the police his "full support", said The Daily Telegraph. But his steely rhetoric must be matched by action. Ministers must press ahead with plans for 24-hour courts (as were used after the 2011 riots). They must also address the fact that some 50,000 asylum seekers are currently living in hotels, said The Times. This costs some £6.8m a day, and these sites have become "magnets for petty crime and local tension". Since no alternative provision has proved workable, the solution must be to reduce the number of asylum seekers in the system; but so far, Starmer has presented no viable plan for doing so.

What happened

Israel raises the stakes

Western leaders scrambled to defuse tensions in the Middle East following the assassination last week of two leaders of Iran's "axis of resistance". First, Fuad Shukur, Hezbollah's top military commander, was hit by an Israeli air strike in the Lebanese capital, Beirut. Hours later, Ismail Haniyeh, the political leader of Hamas, was killed by a bomb in Tehran, shortly after attending the inauguration of Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian. Israel did not comment on that death, but confirmed it had killed the Hamas leader Mohammed Deif (aka "The Guest") in July.

Both Hezbollah and Iran vowed to retaliate and numerous countries, including the US and the UK, called on their citizens to immediately leave Lebanon. On Wednesday, Iran held an emergency meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, at which it lobbied Arab states to back its right to take reprisal actions against what it called Israel's "adventurism".



An anti-Israel rally in Tehran

What the editorials said

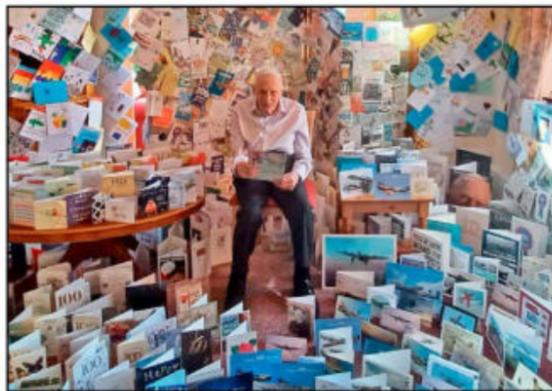
Last week's assassinations were "tactical and symbolic", said The Economist. Shukur was believed to be, among other things, "a critical link in shipments of Iranian guidance systems for Hezbollah's long-range missiles". Haniyeh, for his part, was the public face of Hamas, based in Qatar. Both men had a lot of blood on their hands, said The Wall Street Journal, and their clinical elimination sends a powerful message about Israel's determination and intelligence capabilities.

Ten months have passed since the 7 October massacre, said Haaretz. Israel is no safer and the odds of a regional war have grown. Meanwhile, 115 Israeli hostages, about half of whom are still alive, are still "rotting in Hamas captivity". Israel and Hamas appeared to be edging towards a hostage deal and a ceasefire, but Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu has now opted to escalate the conflict instead. The killing of Haniyeh was particularly "cold-blooded", said The National (Abu Dhabi). As Qatar's prime minister asked in a tweet: "How can mediation succeed when one party assassinates the negotiator on the other side?"

It wasn't all bad

The chough has bred in Kent for the first time in two centuries, thanks to a successful conservation programme. The black-winged corvid was once so common in Kent that it featured on many pub signs, but it was then driven to extinction by habitat loss and hunting. Last year, however, after extensive work to restore the chough's grassland habitats, eight birds were reintroduced, and earlier this summer a chick was finally spotted in the grounds of Dover Castle.

A Second World War veteran was sent more than 1,000 cards from around the world after the RAF appealed for well-wishers to mark his 100th birthday. Richard "Dick" Skepper, who lives in a nursing home in Warwickshire, joined the RAF at 18, completed his training in 1942, and eventually qualified as a flight mechanic, often working on Lancaster bombers, his favourite plane. "My dad has been truly humbled by the care and love shown to him in every single card he has received," his son David said. "He has read every message, enjoyed the variety of cards and been amazed by their origins."



A 15-year-old chess prodigy has become Britain's youngest grandmaster. Shreyas Royal won the British Chess Championships last week, which gave him the third of the three major victories that are usually required to become a GM. Shreyas was born in India and moved to London with his family aged three when his father got a job in the city. His talent for chess helped the family to remain in the UK when his father's visa expired in 2018. Shreyas's father told The Times that he was "extremely proud" of his son's achievement.

COVER CARTOON: HOWARD MCWILLIAM

What the commentators said

Starmer is well-qualified to deal with this crisis, said David Maddox in *The Independent*. He was director of public prosecutions during the 2011 London riots when 3,000 people were arrested, two-thirds of whom were later charged. In that role, he oversaw a muscular response in which magistrates were allowed to hand down “longer and tougher” sentences. The PM is showing similar resolve now, said Andrew Rawnsley in *The Observer*. He has urged police chiefs to apply “the full force of the law”, and has endorsed the wider use of facial recognition technology and criminal behaviour orders to limit the movements of ringleaders – making a mockery of the “Sir Softie” nickname that the Tories tried to affix to him before the election.

Starmer has been accused of “two-tier policing”, said Nick Timothy in *The Daily Telegraph*. Pointing to the pro-Palestinian demonstrations in London, his critics say that police treat protests involving minorities more leniently than those involving white people. This grievance is often cited by anti-immigrant groups, but the comparisons are imprecise. There’s a big difference between protests that end in violence at their fringes, such as the Black Lives Matter ones, and gatherings of people “intent on violence”, who attack others because of their race or religion.

Police will scoop up plenty of rioters in the next week, said Ian Acheson in *The Spectator*: officers are already scanning social media for cases where rioters have filmed their own illegal behaviour and posted it on TikTok. The next challenge is processing these cases. Unlike in 2011, the justice system is currently at “crisis point”: prisons are at capacity, and even with the extra places, jailing large numbers will be “fraught with risk”. Owing to his legal background, Starmer will be comfortable overseeing the legal response, said Lucy Fisher in the *FT*. What will come less naturally to him is his role as a national figurehead: even after his election win, he’s yet to prove that he can “inspire” voters, and it remains to be seen whether he can heal divisions and bring communities together. This outbreak of thuggery is a defining early moment of his premiership – and it’s a crisis that looks set to “reveal both his ability and limits as a leader”.

What the commentators said

Iran’s outgoing intelligence minister, Esmail Khatib, recently boasted that “dismantling Mossad’s infiltration network” in Iran was the greatest achievement of his three-year tenure. He must be regretting those words now, said Kasra Aarabi and Jason M. Brodsky in *Foreign Policy*. The killing of Haniyeh – reportedly via a bomb planted weeks earlier in his bedroom within an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps compound – suggests foreign infiltration “at the highest levels”. It’s a humiliation for Iran, long considered a safe haven for terrorist leaders. Tehran appears set on revenge, said Dan Sabbagh in *The Guardian*. Its response is expected to be more extensive than its action in April, when it responded to an Israeli air strike on its embassy in Damascus by launching a largely symbolic flurry of missiles and drones at Israel. The fear is that the new attack could involve Hezbollah’s large stock of missiles. That could overwhelm Israeli air defences and inflict damage on a scale that forces Israel to respond harshly, prompting a further escalation that draws in Western and regional powers.

It’s a dangerous moment, said Matthew Levitt in the *Los Angeles Times*, but tensions may yet subside. The factors that have prevented Hezbollah from launching a major attack on Israel since the Gaza conflict began still apply. Lebanon is in economic crisis, and its citizens have no desire for Hezbollah to drag them into a destructive war. And while Iran is happy to fight via its Arab proxies, its leaders “don’t want war to spill over their own borders”. As for the risk of this conflict “going global”, that’s pretty remote, said Andrew Neil in the *Daily Mail*. The West is not as dependent on Middle East oil as it once was. And while Russia and China offer vocal backing to their fellow dictatorship Iran, “neither has strategic interests in the region so important that it would go to war over them”. What we have here is a “stalemate with no end in sight”. It’s grim for those involved, but “a prelude to World War III? I hardly think so.”

What next?

Those who take part in riots face being charged with terror offences, the director of public prosecutions has warned. Stephen Parkinson said that he knew of at least one case in which terror laws were being used, and said that children as young as 11 had taken part in riots. This week, three men who joined disorder in Liverpool became the first rioters to be jailed: their sentences ranged from 20 months to three years.

Immigration lawyers have been urged to take extra security measures or stay away from work, owing to warnings that far-right figures are circulating a list of up to 60 immigration advice centres to be targeted in further disorder expected to take place this week.

What next?

Following the assassination of Haniyeh in Tehran, Hamas has named Yahya Sinwar as its new overall political leader. Sinwar, a hardliner regarded as the mastermind behind the 7 October attack on Israel, is assumed to be living in hiding in Gaza.

Western officials believe the chances of Iran being persuaded to pull back from a retaliatory strike are now “vanishingly small”, says Patrick Wintour in *The Guardian*. Vladimir Putin has reportedly sent a note of caution to Iran, calling for a calibrated military response that avoids civilian casualties.

THE WEEK

There’s nothing new about riots being fuelled by wild and malicious rumours. That has always happened. It’s clear, though, that social media has, in the words of Home Secretary Yvette Cooper, put “rocket boosters” under the process. Platforms such as X/Twitter and Telegram provide an easy means for people to publish false information, deliberately or otherwise, and enable that information to spread far and wide at terrifying speed. The platforms also help troublemakers plan and coordinate their actions. What’s less clear is whether our government can do much about this.

The Online Safety Act, which became law last year and is still being put into force, is designed mainly to protect internet users. It offers sanctions against those who promote violence or incite hatred, and those who knowingly distribute false information with the intent of causing harm. But it won’t stop the viral spread of non-malicious falsehoods, or stop troublemakers congregating online. Short of resorting to targeted shutdowns of the internet – a move countries such as India and Iran have deployed in response to unrest – there’s little democracies can do about those things. The financial world has devised some protections against the digital onslaught. Firms that engage in high-speed algorithmic trading are required to have systems in place to ensure their algorithms don’t generate false signals or contribute to a disorderly market. But it’s one thing to do this with numbers and trades; quite another with facts and opinions.

Harry Nicolle

Editor-in-chief: Caroline Law
Editor: Theo Tait
Deputy editor: Harry Nicolle **Managing editor:** Robin de Peyer **Assistant editor:** Leaf Arbutnot
City editor: Jane Lewis **Contributing editors:** Simon Wilson, Rob McLuhan, Catherine Heaney, Xandie Nutting, Digby Warde-Aldam, Tom Yarwood, William Skidelsky
Editorial: Anoushka Petit, Tigger Ridgwell, Amelia Butler-Gallie, Louis Foster **Picture editor:** Annabelle Whitestone
Art director: Katrina Ffiske **Senior sub-editor:** Simmy Richman **Production editor:** Alanna O’Connell
Editorial chairman and co-founder: Jeremy O’Grady
Production Manager: Maaya Mistry
Account Directors: Aimee Farrow, Amy McBride
Business Director: Steven Tapp
Commercial Head, Schools Guide: Nubla Rehman
Account Executive (Classified): Serena Noble **Advertising Director – The Week, Wealth & Finance:** Peter Cammidge
Brand Director, News: Harry Haydon
Managing Director, News: Richard Campbell
SVP Subscriptions Media and Events: Sarah Rees
Future PLC, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR
Editorial office: 020-3890 3787
editorialadmin@theweek.co.uk

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (Symbol: FUTR).
Chief Executive Officer: Ben Steinfeld
Non-Executive Chairman: Richard Huntington
Chief Financial and Strategy Officer: Henry Lachlan Brand
Tel: +44 (0)2025 442 244

Controversy of the week

The Edwards scandal

“Has any fall from grace ever been so catastrophic or more profound?” asked Jan Moir in the Daily Mail. For 20 years, BBC news anchor Huw Edwards was Britain’s master of ceremonies, covering national events from general elections to royal weddings. He was even entrusted with delivering the news of the death of Queen Elizabeth II to the nation. All that came to a shattering close last July, when he was identified as the BBC figure accused of paying a 17-year-old boy for sexual images; then last week, 14 months after he’d presided over the King’s coronation, he appeared at a magistrates’ court in London to plead guilty to making indecent images of children as young as seven. (He had been sent them on WhatsApp, but the law classes this as “making”, as it means there is another copy of the image.) He now faces up to ten years in prison.



Edwards leaving court last week

His reputation lies in tatters, said Jenny Hjul on Reaction, but our national broadcaster also has serious questions to answer, namely: why did it continue to pay Edwards his full £475,000 salary – including a £40,000 pay rise – even after it had been informed of his arrest, in November 2023, for possessing illegal images? Or, to put it another way: “What level of depravity must a top BBC star sink to in order to get sacked?” BBC bosses say that it would have been legally complicated to fire Edwards, who had been admitted to a clinic suffering from mental health issues, before any charges had even been brought. He finally resigned this April, on medical grounds. But it has been reported that the BBC’s own internal inquiry, launched last year, had revealed evidence of plenty of other potentially sackable offences: former and present employees said they’d received inappropriate messages from him; a junior producer said he’d been invited by a “pushy” Edwards to share his hotel room in Windsor on the eve of Prince Philip’s funeral. But it seems the BBC swept all this under the carpet. Such is the level of public anger, it is now facing calls from ministers, and its own presenters, to try to claw back some of the money it paid Edwards.

“If it feels like we’ve been here before, that’s probably because we have,” said Rosa Silverman in The Daily Telegraph. Jimmy Savile, Rolf Harris, Stuart Hall: Edwards is just the latest in a line of male BBC “talent” to have been guilty of horrible crimes. Why is the BBC so scandal-prone? Insiders say it is partly due to a culture in which stars are treated as untouchable “demigods”; this means that if other employees do complain about them to senior managers, they are either ignored or driven out – creating deep-seated resentment. Clearly, the BBC’s management has a lot of work to do to rebuild trust, internally and externally, said Jane Martinson in The Observer. But to use this case as a stick with which to beat the BBC as a news provider would be wrong. Edwards was the public face of the BBC, often reading out stories prepared by others; but he was not its “beating heart”.

Ofwat issues fines

Thames Water, Yorkshire Water and Northumbrian Water were issued with fines totalling £168m this week, following an Ofwat review of sewage discharges. The regulator found that the companies had failed to adequately invest in and maintain their networks, leading to the routine release of raw sewage into rivers and other waterways. It also found that executives, including at board level, had not properly overseen treatment operations. In the case of Thames Water (see page 37), which was issued a record fine of £104m, Ofwat found that more than two-thirds of its wastewater treatment works had operational problems. The fines will now be subject to a public consultation that will conclude next month.

Strike law to be scrapped

The Government has started to roll back Conservative-era legislation designed to limit the impact of strike action in some sectors. The law allows ministers to set minimum service levels for fire, health, education and transport services. However, the measures have never been enforced. The repeal of the law (which was in the Labour manifesto) will now form part of a bill to boost workers’ rights that will be introduced before the end of October.

Spirit of the age

Dolce & Gabbana has unveiled its latest scent: a perfume for dogs. Fefé costs £83 and is described as an “olfactory masterpiece” with “warm notes” of ylang-ylang, musk and sandalwood. Its advert features various dogs gazing into the camera as a man describes the alcohol-free scent – “delicate, authentic, charismatic, sensitive, enigmatic, rebel, fresh, irresistible, clean”. However, the RSPCA has warned that dogs should not be sprayed with scents, as they will interfere with their sense of smell.

WFH is fuelling demand for domestic air conditioning units, The Daily Telegraph reports. One firm says “high-wealth individuals” still shunning the office are paying up to £4,000 per room for home aircon.

Good week for:

Cash for access, with reports that Donald Trump is opening up a new ultra-exclusive category of membership at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, costing \$1m per person. Trump mingled regularly with guests at the resort during his presidency. Observers presume that wealthy individuals will stump up the fee in order to gain access to him if he wins back the White House.

Snoop Dogg, who became a viral sensation of the Paris Olympics owing to his enthusiastic support for the US team. The rapper acted as a torchbearer at the opening ceremony, and has since been seen at numerous events. He wore a shirt with Simone Biles’s face on it for the gymnastics, looked dapper in full equestrian gear for the riding and gave his own commentary at the badminton.

The Courtauld Gallery, in London, which revealed that it had received a £9.4m donation from a foundation set up by the late businessman, art collector and philanthropist Sir Edwin Manton.

Bad week for:

River swimming in Paris, after an Olympic triathlete was hospitalised with suspected E. coli a day after taking part in an open-water event in the Seine. Officials had ruled that the water was safe, though there had been concerns about sewage entering the river owing to heavy rainfall the previous week. Some £1.2bn has been spent trying to make the Seine swimmable in Paris.

Teetotallers, with the closure of Manchester’s first alcohol-free bar, after less than a year. The owner of Love From said that it did a roaring trade in “dry January”, but that footfall had fallen since and the concept was still considered “niche”.

Poll watch

Keir Starmer’s net approval rating has fallen by 16 points in a fortnight to +3%. Rachel Reeves, the Chancellor, has also seen her net score fall over the same period, by 23 points to –12%. *Opinium/The Daily Telegraph*

According to a poll for YouGov/The Economist, Kamala Harris is leading Donald Trump in the polls by two points, 45% to 43%. Morning Consult gives her a lead of four points by 48% to 44%; SurveyUSA gives her a lead of three points, by 48% to 45%.

One in three British dog owners say that they don’t allow their pet to swim in the sea because of the possibility that raw sewage has been dumped in it. *Savanta/Liberal Democrats*

Paris

Olympic threats: Prosecutors are investigating death threats made against the artistic director of the Paris Olympic Games opening ceremony, Thomas Jolly. The ceremony, staged on monuments and boats along the River Seine, was deplored by some religious leaders and conservative politicians for one section in particular – a bacchanalian scene featuring drag artists, which they mistook for a parody of Leonardo’s *The Last Supper*. Jolly, a well-known theatre director, says he has been sent hate messages, some in the form of death threats, reviling his sexuality (he is openly gay) and his “wrongly assumed Israeli origins”. Several threats sent to Jolly quoted a verse from the Koran and threatened “Allah’s punishment”. The opening ceremony’s director, Thierry Reboul, and the DJ Barbara Butch have also received threats. President Macron expressed his outrage at the threats, and said France was “proud” of the ceremony.

Nantes, France

Crayfish invasion: France has been hit by an unprecedented scourge of American red swamp crayfish. Nicknamed “tiny lobsters of doom” in the US, the crustaceans play havoc with ecosystems outside their native southern states, feeding voraciously on local species and dealing nasty nips to humans rash enough to meddle with them. They’re thought to have arrived in France in the 1970s, when several were imported by a fish farm. This year, however, they’ve proliferated as never before, owing to an unusually warm winter followed by a rainy spring that deluged the banks of lakes, forcing them to look elsewhere for places to burrow. They’ve appeared in gardens and swimming pools across the west and the south of France: motorists report driving over swarms of them on roads. Only fishermen and gastronomes have had cause to celebrate: a staple of Louisiana cuisine, the crayfish taste good. Some restaurants have been buying them in bulk.

Madrid

Marine park: The Spanish government has announced plans to create the country’s first fully marine national park – a 24,000-hectare area of the Mar de Las Calmas, the sea off El Hierro in the Canary Islands. A famous diving destination, the area covers a formerly volcanic stretch of seabed that drops to a depth of over 9,800 feet: it is home to coral gardens, rare algae, and a wide array of species including turtles, barracudas, tuna, rays, dolphins and even whale sharks. Some 750 hectares are already designated as a marine reserve; but environmental groups have long been lobbying for greater protections – calls that have been backed by traditional fisherman. Sport-fishing groups and some diving clubs, on the other hand, have opposed the idea of bringing the area under central government control. The proposals must still be consulted on and debated in parliament, a process that could take years.

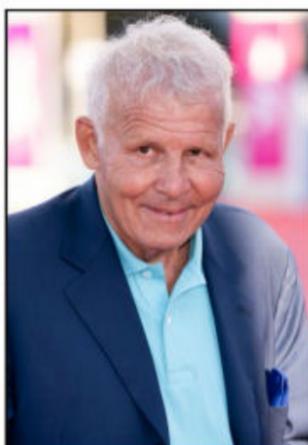


Amsterdam

Litterbugs: The townsfolk of Amsterdam are growing incensed by the inability of the city council to clean up after the tide of tourists visiting each year. “We live on a garbage dump,” a group of 38 well-known residents wrote in an open letter, branding the city “one of the dirtiest in the world”, with overflowing bins and a plague of rats. Councillors acknowledge the problem, but blame it on overtourism: the city receives 20 million tourists each year, roughly equal to Venice – a number the authorities have pledged to reduce, with steps that include an ad campaign encouraging rowdy younger visitors (especially Britons) to stay away.

Kyiv

Jets delivered: A full year after Nato pledged to supply them, US-made F-16 fighter jets have finally arrived in Ukraine and are being flown by Ukrainian pilots. “We did it,” President Zelensky declared on a visit to an airbase on Monday. “I am proud of our guys who are mastering these jets and have already started using them for our country.” It is unclear how many F-16s will be immediately available: six had been supplied so far. In total, Ukraine has been promised more than 60 F-16s, to be donated by Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway. The jets, each equipped with a rotary cannon, have great destructive capability. Russia has already been targeting bases that may house them and has vowed to shoot them down.



Paris

Anchor accused: The man who for two decades was France’s top TV news anchor is facing five new probes into rape accusations. Patrick Poivre d’Arvor, now 76, was fired from TV channel TF1 after being accused of sexually abusing female colleagues on an “industrial scale” over the course of his career. A preliminary enquiry into 23 charges opened in 2021, but 19 were dropped for being past the 20-year statute of limitations. His accusers have now reframed their separate accusations as a single serial crime, however, which means all allegations can be dated to the most recent case, which is not statute barred.

Ankara

Instagram ban: President Erdogan’s government has barred anyone in Turkey from using Instagram, saying it had failed to abide by Turkish regulations. The real motive, however, appears to be a desire to punish the social media platform for removing posts expressing solidarity with Hamas. “They cannot even tolerate photographs of Palestinian martyrs and immediately ban them,” Erdogan had declaimed at a human rights event. “We are confronted with a digital fascism that is disguised as freedom.” Unlike its Western allies, Turkey does not consider Hamas a terror group, and Erdogan has become vocal in his support for it. In recent years, Turkey has blocked a growing number of websites (about a million domain names in total), often for political reasons. Istanbul mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, a leading light of the main opposition party, has condemned the Instagram ban as “censorship”.



Washington DC

VP pick: Kamala Harris has named the Minnesota governor, Tim Walz, 60, as her presidential running mate. A former geography teacher, high school football coach and National Guardsman, who represented a rural district of Minnesota in the House of Representatives before becoming governor, Walz projects a folksy “normal guy” image (he loves hunting). His voting record in Congress was fairly centrist, but he has adopted more progressive positions since then,

and Republicans have presented him as a “far-left” pick. A relative unknown, Walz has lately made waves by characterising Donald Trump and J.D. Vance as “weird”. He has noted Trump’s habit of referencing Hannibal Lecter in speeches, and says it’s odd that he so rarely laughs. His selection was announced hours after Harris officially secured the Democratic nomination.

Last week, Trump courted controversy by openly questioning Harris’s black identity. At a conference of black journalists, he claimed that Harris – who has a Jamaican father and an Indian mother – had portrayed herself as Indian for years, before she “became a black person”. The remarks were criticised by Democrats, and even Republicans questioned the wisdom of “playing racial identity politics”.

Washington DC

Deal revoked: The US defence secretary has overturned a plea deal that would have spared the alleged mastermind of 9/11 and two of his accomplices the death penalty. It emerged last week that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Walid bin Attash and Mustafa al-Hawsawi had agreed to plead guilty to conspiracy and murder charges in return for life sentences. All three have been held at Guantánamo Bay since 2006; Mohammed has been waterboarded a record 183 times; and the men’s trials have been held up by wrangling over evidence obtained by torture. But days after being agreed by Guantánamo’s military tribunal, the deal was torn up by Lloyd Austin, following criticism from Republicans and from relatives of some of the 2,977 people who died on 9/11.

Sarasota, Florida

Flood warnings: At least six people died this week, as Hurricane Debby battered Florida before weakening to a tropical storm that meteorologists warned could bring “historic” rainfall to the US southeast. A 12-year-old girl and 13-year-old boy were among those killed in the storm, which left up to 350,000 homes in the region without power and brought 80mph winds and 20 inches of rain to some areas on Monday. In the Florida beach town of Sarasota, 500 people were rescued from flooded homes; cocaine worth \$1m was found washed up among debris on a beach in the same state. Forecasters warned that the worst of the weather may yet be to come: the slow-moving storm was set to dump up to 30 inches of rain on low-lying regions of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina this week, bringing potentially “catastrophic” flooding to historic southern cities such as Charleston and Savannah.



Caracas

Protests continue: Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado emerged from hiding to address her supporters on Saturday, as unrest over the country’s disputed election continued (see page 13). Fearing arrest, Machado had

disappeared from public sight after accusing President Maduro of fraudulently denying her ally Edmundo González Urrutia victory; but she reappeared at a rally in Caracas where she reiterated her claim that Maduro had lost legitimacy. International calls for greater transparency over the election results have grown in recent days, but Maduro has vowed to “pulverise” any challenge to his rule. He said that 2,000 people have been detained since the vote.

New York

Bear admission: Ten years ago, New Yorkers were gripped by reports that a dead bear cub had been found in Central Park. How it had got there remained a mystery – until this week, when the independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr admitted that he had left it there. In a video on social media, he said that he’d found the cub dead on the road during a falconry trip to New York state. He’d put it into his van, planning to take it home to skin and eat. But he ran out of time before a flight, so he and some friends decided instead to dump the cub in Central Park, and stage it to look as if it had been killed by a cyclist (they also dumped an old bike that he had in his van), as a prank. Kennedy is believed to have made the video to get ahead of an article in *The New Yorker*. Previously in the campaign, he has said that a parasite once ate part of his brain, and been accused of eating dog meat in South Korea (he insisted it was a goat).



Buenos Aires

Crime prediction: The idea that police could apprehend criminals before they commit their crimes was the premise of the 2002 film *Minority Report*; now, Argentina’s government has unveiled a new “Artificial Intelligence Applied to Security Unit” seemingly aimed at making that notion a reality. With an official remit to improve efficiency and speed up police response times, the unit will use AI to analyse historical crime data to “predict future crimes”. It will also patrol social media for potential threats, and use facial recognition software to identify “wanted persons”. Rights groups have warned that the AI could be used to target journalists and opposition activists, and that it will curb freedom of expression via self-censorship.

Deir al-Balah, Palestinian Territories

Dozens killed: At least 44 people were killed this week in air strikes on two schools and a hospital complex in Gaza, according to local officials. Video footage showed men trying to rescue the injured and put out fires at a tented camp for displaced people in a courtyard of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah. The schools that were hit were also housing displaced families. Israel said it had been targeting Hamas command centres at the schools, and a militant based at the hospital. Separately, the WHO and the UN reiterated warnings about the spread of infectious diseases in Gaza owing to the lack of access to safe drinking water, the accumulation of rubbish, and the free flow of sewage as a result of infrastructure damage. Recently, the polio virus was detected in sewage samples from Gaza.

Dhaka

Hasina flees: Bangladesh's embattled prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, resigned and fled to India this week, after hundreds of thousands of anti-government protesters took to the streets, in defiance of a curfew and a police crackdown in which hundreds of people have been killed. With more unrest predicted, military leaders had warned that if she did not go, there would be a bloodbath. This week, her son told the media that his mother – who'd ruled the country since 2009 – was "disheartened" by the lack of "gratitude" of the people of Bangladesh, and that the 76-year-old (pictured) would not be returning to politics.

The daughter of Bangladesh's independence leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was killed in a military coup in 1975, Hasina emerged as a pro-democracy student activist. She was celebrated for helping to oust the military and, later, transforming her country's economy. But she had latterly been accused of crushing dissent, as inequality and state corruption rose. This week, her rival, the opposition leader Khaleda Zia, was released from house arrest, and her long-time critic, the Nobel Prize-winning economist Muhammad Yunus, agreed to return to lead an interim government.



El Fasher, Sudan

Humanitarian crisis: Famine has been declared in a refugee camp housing roughly half-a-million people in the Sudanese region of North Darfur. The UN-backed Famine Review Committee has warned that people are starving to death in Zamzam camp, near the city of El Fasher, which sprang up during the genocide in the early 2000s, and – owing to the fighting between paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese army – has since grown much larger. El Fasher and nearby camps have been besieged by the RSF for months, and the group has deliberately prevented medicine and food aid from reaching the city. The UN has estimated that more than 26 million people are facing acute hunger across Sudan.



Mogadishu

Beach attack: Al-Shabaab militants have confirmed they were behind a deadly gun and bomb attack on a popular beach in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, last week, killing 37 people. According to witness reports, a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a hotel on Lido beach; gunmen then tried to storm the hotel, and then targeted people relaxing on the beach outside. The group, which is linked to al-Qa'eda, has been waging an insurgency in Somalia since 2007 in an attempt to impose an Islamic state. While al-Shabaab has lost territory in recent years, it still controls parts of the country.

capital, Mogadishu, last week, killing 37 people. According to witness reports, a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a hotel on Lido beach; gunmen then tried to storm the hotel, and then targeted people relaxing on the beach outside. The group, which is linked to al-Qa'eda, has been waging an insurgency in Somalia since 2007 in an attempt to impose an Islamic state. While al-Shabaab has lost territory in recent years, it still controls parts of the country.

Tokyo

Rice pinch: Rice stocks in Japan are at their lowest level this century, owing to a scorching heatwave last year resulting in a lower-quality harvest. Private sector inventories were down 20% in June, year on year, and the trading price of the grain has hit a 30-year high. A surge in demand caused by the recent tourism boom is believed to have exacerbated the problem, and although there is no real risk of rice stocks running out, some supermarkets have taken action to prevent panic buying.

Mundakkai, India

Deadly landslides: The death toll from two huge landslides in Kerala last week has risen to more than 360. Triggered by heavy rain, the landslides struck late at night, submerging entire villages in mud. The district had recorded 300mm of rain in 24 hours – five times the daily average for the monsoon season. Climate change has been blamed for an uptick in landslides in the region, along with deforestation and rapid development on unstable terrain to accommodate a surge in tourism. The worst-hit village, Mundakkai, reportedly had almost 700 hotels and tourist lets.

Nicolas Cage vs. the memes

Nicolas Cage made his mark as an actor with a series of uninhibited performances. These won him many film fans; but latterly, his over-the-top movie moments have gained a life of their own, as memes: the internet is flooded with pictures of him grimacing wildly in *Vampire's Kiss* and having meltdowns in any number of films. Cage, 60, says he was unprepared for his meme-ification. "When I signed up to be a film actor, we didn't have the internet," he told Susan Orlean in *The New Yorker*. "We didn't have cell phones with cameras. I didn't know this was going to happen to me in such a pervasive way." He feels these out-of-context clips give a skewed impression of his work; and the experience has made him conscious of how easily actors today can become overexposed. "This Instagram thing? No. That's the quickest way to bore people." In the internet age, "less is definitely more. Don't do documentaries about yourself. Don't do other people's documentaries and talk about them. Stay away. Go away!"

A musician's passion

Steven Van Zandt is known to TV viewers for his role in the *The Sopranos*. But music is his passion. A stalwart of Bruce Springsteen's E Street Band, he has encyclopaedic knowledge of pop history and believes that music can change the world. As well as hosting his own radio show and running his own label, he led the group Artists

United Against Apartheid in the 1980s and now spearheads an initiative to engage children at school via music. For him, it all started with The Beatles, he told Neil McCormick in *The Daily Telegraph*. It wasn't just their sound, it was also their camaraderie: they felt to him like the first real band. Years later, he found himself performing with Paul McCartney. "You have to compartmentalise, to put your 13-year-old self away and switch your mind to thinking it's just a friend coming on stage to jam," he says. "You cannot think about putting the needle on the first album you ever bought. You treat him like an equal, a peer, another cat that loves the music."

The spirit of Southport

Last Tuesday, Ibrahim Hussein, the chairman of Southport's mosque, was trapped inside it with eight worshippers while rioters outside hurled missiles at the building and set fire to cars. "It was really terrifying," he says. He thought they might torch the mosque. The next day, the place looked like a war zone. But as workmen fixed the windows, local people were arriving with sweets and flowers. "Southport people are as you see here," he told *The Guardian*, gesturing at the gifts. "They are beautiful people. They support us and we support them and we love each other and we've been living in harmony for 30 years, so it's not going to change now just because a few idiots have put something on social media."



When Alison Moyet burst onto the pop scene in an oversize black dress in 1982, she "brought a level of everyday soulfulness not heard or seen since Aretha Franklin", said Will Hodgkinson in *The Sunday Times*. But she struggled with the fame that came to her virtually overnight. Growing up in Basildon, she'd never fitted in. She left school at 16, "having not distinguished myself in any way", and as a "gender non-conforming rough girl in the 1970s", she was regarded as no more than "factory fodder". She ended up moving to Canvey Island, playing blues and rock in local pubs; and would have stayed there, had she not been invited by Vince Clarke, whom she vaguely knew from a music class in Basildon, to join his new band, Yazoo. In no time at all, they were at No. 2 in the charts – and she was thrown into a new milieu. "I would meet the London crowd, the people who knew how to do small talk and be pop stars. I'd say the wrong thing and I could see them thinking: *freak*." Today, at 63, she lives with her husband in Brighton, helps with the grandchildren, travels by bus: it's about as normal a life as someone who has sold 23 million albums can hope for. Does she still get recognised? "I was visiting a friend in hospital recently and a nurse said to me, 'Has anyone ever told you that you look like Alison Moyet?' I didn't want to lie to her so I said, 'I am Alison Moyet.' She went, 'Yeah, right. Bet you wish you had her money, though.'"

Castaway of the week

This week's edition of Radio 4's Desert Island Discs featured the musician Mark Knopfler

- 1 *Ol' Man River* by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, performed by Ray Charles
- 2 *Red Sails in the Sunset* by Hugh Williams and Jimmy Kennedy, performed by Dean Martin
- 3 *Wonderful Land* by Jerry Lordan, performed by The Shadows
- 4 *Write Me a Few Lines*, written and performed by Mississippi Fred McDowell
- 5* *Duquesne Whistle* by Bob Dylan and Robert Hunter, performed by Bob Dylan
- 6 *Deborah's Theme* (from *Once Upon a Time in America*) by Ennio Morricone, performed by Ennio Morricone and Edda Dell'Orso
- 7 *Cleaning Windows*, written and performed by Van Morrison
- 8 *Jessye' Lisabeth*, written and performed by Bobbie Gentry

Book: *The Blue Flower* by Penelope Fitzgerald

Luxury: a favourite guitar

* Choice if allowed only one record

Viewpoint:**Summer reading lists**

"The reading lists that newspapers patch together each summer are a win-win. You, the impressionable audience, get a sense of which books to be seen with on the beach. Our downgraded profession gets a brief veneer of cultural leadership. Publishers cherish the fractional sales boost. There is no loser. Except common sense. More than 120 million titles have been published since the dawn of the printing press. What are the odds that one written in 2024 deserves our limited time? Instead of a list, here is a rule: avoid the contemporary. If a novel has worth, it will still have it in a decade or two. If not, time will remove it from consideration. There is something of the royal food taster in going first. Let others take the hit." *Janan Ganesh in the Financial Times*

Farewell

April Cantelo, soprano, died 16 July, aged 96.

Sir Ken Jackson, modernising trade union leader, died 25 July, aged 87.

Rosa Regàs, Spanish publisher and writer, died 17 July, aged 90.

Graham Thorpe, batsman who played 100 Tests for England, died 5 August, aged 55.

Helen Whitwell, pathologist who inspired the TV series *Silent Witness*, died 24 July, aged 69.

The great parakeet invasion

How did a parrot from the Himalayas become a common sight in southeast England?

Where are these birds found?

Britain's only naturalised parrot, the ring-necked parakeet, *Psittacula krameri*, has firmly established itself in parts of the country. An exotic-looking bird, with a green body, red beak and a pink and black ring around its neck, it can grow to over 40cm. Although originally native to the Indian subcontinent and sub-Saharan Africa, escaped parakeets have been sighted in the wild in England as far back as 1855. But feral populations weren't recorded here until 1968. Since then, numbers have soared: in the mid-1980s, there were about 500 in the UK; by the 1990s, that number had risen to 1,500; today, there are an estimated 32,000 parakeets (16,000 pairs). They mostly roost in urban areas, particularly in London and the southeast – but there are populations in the Midlands and Manchester, and they have been spotted as far afield as Plymouth and Aberdeen.



There are an estimated 16,000 breeding pairs in the UK

How did they first arrive?

That's a question that has spawned plenty of urban myths. One has it that Jimi Hendrix released two caged parakeets in London's Carnaby Street in 1968, and the population grew from there. Another posits that London's first parakeets escaped from Shepperton Studios during filming of *The African Queen*, the 1951 film starring Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn. Or perhaps they escaped when debris from a plane crashed into the aviary of Syon Park in the 1970s, or when aviaries in Surrey were damaged by the "great storm" of 1987? There's even one theory that they escaped from George Michael's Hampstead townhouse during a break-in in the 1990s; the burglars supposedly wrecked his aviary. These theories, however, have been largely debunked.

So what is the explanation?

Parakeets have been popular pets in Britain for more than a century, and a 2019 study in the *Journal of Zoology* suggests that UK populations are likely "a consequence of repeated releases and introductions": escapes and releases have been reported regularly since 1900, sufficient over time to build up breeding populations. One explanation for repeated releases is public health scares over psittacosis, or parrot flu: first in 1929-31, and again in 1952. The illness can be transmitted to humans, sometimes with fatal consequences, and the outbreaks were covered feverishly by the media. Even so, it wasn't until the 1980s that the first large colony was established, by the river in Kingston upon Thames. For years, parakeets were considered an exotic novelty of southwest London. But in the past 20 years or so, they've spread rapidly: from Richmond and Kew to Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park, then Hampstead Heath, into Hackney and, now, well beyond the M25.

Why have they spread so fast?

Although parakeets are often thought to be tropical birds, those in Britain are largely hardy creatures originating from the foothills of the Himalayas, and are quite able to cope with British

weather. They're very happy roosting in the mosaic of gardens, parks, trees and older buildings found in urban areas, and are opportunistic feeders, devouring everything from seeds and fruit to flowers and tree bark. They can travel up to 15 miles to forage, and are enthusiastic grazers on bird feeders during the winter months. They live for 30 or more years and mature early: they are prolific breeders, and can breed from six months; their mating season starts earlier than that of most other birds, in January. They also have few predators – though one study showed that London's small but growing peregrine falcon population eats them in large numbers.

Are they a threat to native species?

Parakeets have colonised much of western Europe: there are thought to be more than 85,000 of them living in Britain, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece. And scientists have expressed concern about their impact on native birds. Parakeets roost in large numbers, and aggressively defend their territory: they've been known to kill bats in tree hollows; and, in Seville, are displacing a rare bat species. In Britain, their unusually early breeding season gives them an advantage over native species, such as nuthatches and woodpeckers, in the competition for nesting or roosting cavities. They have been observed chasing other birds away from feeders, and fighting with starlings and jackdaws; they also carry diseases such as chlamydiosis, which can infect other birds. For now, though, there is limited evidence that Britain's parakeets are having a significant impact on our native wildlife. Certainly it is very minimal compared with habitat destruction, pollution and other damage inflicted by humans.

Are there other issues?

Plenty. Voracious feeders, parakeets can strip trees of blossom in spring, and of fruit in summer and autumn. Farmers in Israel have reported them descending on fields in their hundreds, ravaging crops such as almonds, sunflowers and plums. In the US, where monk parakeets have caused fires by nesting on electricity pylons, authorities have humanely removed birds, eggs and nests. The worry among some scientists is that these issues may come further to the fore if (or more likely, when) parakeet numbers continue to grow. And for residents of areas with big parakeet populations, the novelty of the birds' shrieking calls might quickly wear off.

Should numbers be stemmed?

There are currently no plans for a cull of parakeets in Britain, though some conservationists have suggested that action to reduce numbers will be needed, such as tightening laws on possession and import (as has happened in Spain), or even, controversially, shooting them. A 2019 poll in the journal *NeoBiota* found that – as with other immigrants – younger Britons and city-dwellers were more positive towards parakeets than older, rural-based residents.

Britain's winged invaders

Parakeets are Britain's most successful invasive bird species, but they are not the only one. Birds such as the common pheasant, native to Asia, and the Canada goose, have been established in Britain for centuries. The red-crested pochard duck, with its orange-brown head and red beak, can sometimes be spotted on Britain's waterways, as can black swans. Few of these birds, though, are thriving: the golden pheasant (smaller than its common counterpart, with a yellow crown, red belly and fine tail) is just about hanging on.

One invader, however, seems to be on the rise: the red-billed leiothrix. Native to Southeast Asia and the Himalayas, this 15cm songbird, olive green with a bright red beak and yellow throat, was popular as a pet in the UK until 2005, when imports were banned. It has doubled its population in Europe in the past 20 years. And it may now be establishing itself in southern Britain: most sightings have been in Wiltshire and Somerset, but some have been seen in Kent and Merseyside. That may be bad news for garden birds like robins and blackbirds, with which they compete for breeding spaces. They breed quickly to high densities, and are very noisy, dominating the "soundscape". Ornithologists are calling leiothrix "the next parakeet".



Only the *finest*
smoky chicken, chorizo & king prawn paella
is served in our summer Dine In menu.

DINE IN

TESCO
finest★

for the facts [drinkaware.co.uk](https://www.drinkaware.co.uk) 18+.
1 main, 1 side, 1 dessert and a drink. Clubcard
Price: £12. Clubcard or app required. Majority
of larger stores. Serving suggestion.

Public services suffer if you tolerate fraud

Jenni Russell

The Times

With so many demands on the public purse today, “every million counts”, says Jenni Russell. Weird, then, that our leaders aren’t doing more to stop welfare cheats. The rate of benefit fraud today is twice pre-pandemic levels: it cost taxpayers a record £7.4bn last year, according to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Yet the DWP appears resigned to that vast figure rising over the next few years, seemingly impotent in the face of what it calls the “headwind” of growing public tolerance of dishonesty. More than a quarter of adults, apparently, now think there’s little wrong in making a false benefit claim, 16% more than did five years ago. A routine sample of universal credit by the National Audit Office last year showed fraud was involved in almost a fifth of cases, some of it on a huge scale: in April, five Bulgarians were found to have stolen £54m by making as many as 6,000 fake claims. Labour should “commit itself to halving the fraud bill” by beefing up the DWP’s under-resourced but effective counter-fraud section: it saved more than £1bn last year. The creeping public tolerance of fraud must be challenged. “Permitting criminality encourages it.”

It takes two to quango... 200 billion pounds

Quentin Letts

Daily Mail

“When in doubt, create a quango.” That’s long been the rule among our governing classes, says Quentin Letts, and Labour has adopted it with gusto. In its first month in office it has created a raft of new arm’s length bodies, including Skills England, Great British Energy, various “Mission Delivery Boards” and an Office for Value for Money. Further ones are planned. Ministers adore quangos. They can fill them with like-minded souls who, though not being under Labour’s direct supervision, can generally be counted on to follow the party line but also be blamed for difficult decisions if need be. The mandarin class loves them too: they provide a wealth of lucrative sinecures. In Tony Blair’s day, the “Quango Queen”, Dame Suzi Leather, accumulated no fewer than 13 quango jobs. Hundreds of such bodies now exist, collectively spending an estimated £223.9bn a year, more than a fifth of total government expenditure. Enough. To entrust so much to these assemblies of unelected bigwigs is both wasteful and undemocratic.

Vladimir Putin, get off of our cloud

Gillian Tett

Financial Times

“The cloud.” When we think of the internet, says Gillian Tett, we tend to picture a disembodied thing out in the air somewhere. In reality, it’s rooted in physical infrastructure: 99% of global internet traffic travels through 1.4 million kilometres of undersea cables, and that includes “the \$10trn in daily financial transactions ... which drive global markets”. Any damage to these cables thus poses a major threat to Western economies. And the bad news is that the risks of such damage are escalating. The main threat used to be natural disasters or accidents with ship anchors: now, increasingly, it’s acts of sabotage by hostile states, such as Russia. The prime target used to be pipelines – in 2022, the Baltic Nord Stream gas pipeline was sabotaged – today it’s undersea data cables. Sweden reported such an attack last year; Estonia has accused China of cutting two of its cables. Western leaders are reluctant to spend billions on back-up cables, as internet engineers urge them to do, because, apart from the cost, they’ll likely face resistance from companies such as Google, which invest heavily in such cables. But if we fail to ready ourselves for the era of seabed warfare, the West’s financial architecture will be left in jeopardy.

How the Left has betrayed its principles

Akua Reindorf

The New Statesman

What a turnaround, says Akua Reindorf. In years gone by the threat to academic freedom came from the Church or the state, and the struggle for free expression was spearheaded by the Left. Today, the threat “comes from inside the academy”, specifically “those within it who identify as left-wing”. Academics such as Prof Kathleen Stock who challenge prevailing orthodoxy on gender or other vexed issues, are harassed, vilified and cancelled. Their one legal recourse is the Equality Act, but invoking that is not only hugely costly, it doesn’t extend rights to visiting speakers. The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act passed by the last government sought to remedy all this by placing more duties on universities to protect free speech. But Labour, responding to cries that this could pose a threat to minorities, has put the law on hold and may well repeal it. The fears are unjustified. Holocaust denial and outright “hate speech” would remain outside the law: the act is designed to protect the vital right of thinkers to stray into the contentious. “Challenging consensus is what universities are for.”

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

A visitor to a Welsh café was so cross about being charged £2.20 for a cup of tea, they sent an anonymous letter of complaint – at a cost of a further 85 pence. The disgruntled tea-drinker wrote to the Toast Café in Wrexham to vent their “shock” at getting a £4.40 bill for two cups. They added that it was “no wonder OAPs cannot go out”. The café’s owners said they were “disappointed” by the letter, adding that their prices were competitive, and noting that cafés have to cover significant overheads, including heating and rent.



The redecoration of an 18th century church has caused uproar in Spain, and resurrected memories of the notorious “Ecce Homol Monkey Christ” restoration of 2012. The white nave at the church in the city of Soria now has pink stripes, while its cherubs have been crudely repainted with bright red lips and dark brows, giving them strange startled expressions. Critics called the makeover “disastrous”, but church officials said the work had been carried out with the necessary permits, and that the debate over the colour scheme was simply “a matter of taste”.

A council in Yorkshire is having to draw up new signs after misusing the local dialect in an anti-littering campaign. North Yorkshire Council put up 800 posters bearing the slogan “Gerrit in’t bin” at local holiday spots. They should have read: “Gerrit in t’bin”. Rod Dimbleby, chairman of the Yorkshire Dialect Society, said it was “disappointing” to see such a mistake. “It’s a real language and it should be written correctly,” he said.

J.D. Vance: is Trump's running mate a liability?

The conventional wisdom among political scientists, said Noah Rothman in *National Review*, is that vice-presidential picks rarely “help a presidential candidate, but they can hurt one”. That certainly seems to hold true for J.D. Vance, the man Donald Trump chose as his running mate. The senator from Ohio got off to a rocky start after journalists raked up his past remarks about Democrats being led by “childless cat ladies”, and a whole series of jabs at childless people: calling them “sociopaths” who should pay higher taxes. Polls suggest Vance is the most unpopular veep choice in 45 years, said Jackie Calmes in the *Los Angeles Times*. Trump, who gets away with saying almost anything himself, is now in the unfamiliar position of having to clean up after his running mate. Vance just “loves family”, Trump explained on Fox News. As the political truism goes: if “you’re explaining, you’re losing”.



Vance: undergoing a familiar “trial by fire”

“Vance is undergoing the trial by fire that all newly prominent Republicans suffer,” said Henry Olsen in *National Review*. The same thing happened to Alaska governor Sarah Palin after she unexpectedly became John McCain’s running mate. She buckled in the face of the media pile-on, but Vance, who has held his

ground, looks to be made of sterner stuff. It’s still too early to know if Vance will be “a boon or a bust for the Trump campaign”, said Thomas B. Edsall in *The New York Times*. Had he known he’d be facing Kamala Harris rather than Joe Biden, Trump may have made a less divisive choice. But Vance has a lot going for him. He’s bright, young and engaging enough to mobilise diverse voters, from blue-collar Midwesterners like his own family to “crypto bros”.

Trump is stuck with Vance now in any case, said Ed Kilgore in *New York Magazine*. To drop him from the ticket would outrage the Maga base who love Vance “precisely for the outlandish views that make him controversial to normies”. Vance’s “cat lady” rhetoric is also directed at another audience, said Jeet Heer in *The Nation*. As a venture capitalist, he has been cultivated and promoted by Silicon Valley’s “pro-natalist” movement, which includes tech billionaires Elon Musk and Peter Thiel. The pro-natalists encourage procreation – by the *right* people – to improve the human gene pool and to minimise the need for immigrant workers. These notions may sound strange, “but the really terrifying fact about Vance is that he is deadly serious”.

Sports betting is out of control

Editorial

The Washington Post

The best thing about the Paris Olympics for many Americans, says *The Washington Post*, will be all the opportunities it has provided for gambling. Online sports betting has “exploded” in the US since 2018, when the Supreme Court gave states the power to set their own rules. The market is projected to generate \$14.3bn in revenue this year, with 11% of US adults using online gambling apps. It’s big business, but America lags behind many other nations on this front. In Britain, 20% of adults gamble online; in Australia, nearly 17% do so; in Canada, 49% do. As sports betting has grown in those nations, so, too, have its “toxic side effects” – addiction, bankruptcy, mental health problems – and the US would do well to study how others have responded. Several European countries, for instance, ban ads for betting during live games – “whistle to whistle” bans – to limit impulsive wagers. In 2020 Spain restricted gambling ads to the hours of 1am to 5am. The UK has banned anyone with a large social media following among minors from appearing in such ads. After the initial excitement over their new revenue from gambling taxes, several US states are having second thoughts and considering how to limit the damage. Fortunately, other nations “have run some experiments for them”.

Harris needs some friends in the middle

Kevin D. Williamson

The Dispatch

Americans have an unhealthy view of the presidency, says Kevin D. Williamson. We’ve turned it into “a kind of sacral kingship based on the idiotic notion that the president personifies the spirit of the nation in the way the British monarch does”. Presidential elections have accordingly become culture war battles in which parties paint their opponents as “enemies of the *nation*” and “enemies of the *good*”. This has made reaching out to the other side to pry away voters and build a larger coalition – or “what used to be known as *normal politics*” – rather tricky. But if Kamala Harris is to have any chance of winning this campaign, she’ll have to adopt a less tribal approach, even if it does risk upsetting some of her progressive friends in California. She should make clear, for instance, that she believes illegal immigration is a serious problem and not just “a matter of white guy panic”. When talking about gun control, she should steer clear of promising new executive orders and say her priority will simply be enforcing existing laws. Harris can afford to go looking for votes in the middle, and should do so. Or she can stick to revving up the base and “trying to beat Donald Trump in an outrage contest, and see where that takes her. My guess would be back to California.”

At last, the Democrats are name-calling

Jessica Bennett

The New York Times

“Snowflakes. Groomers. Cucks.” For years, the Maga movement has directed schoolyard taunts at the Democrats, says Jessica Bennett, while Donald Trump has burdened their leaders with horribly effective nicknames such as “Crooked Hillary” and “Sleepy Joe”. The Democrats, “abiding by the mantra to go high”, have long sought to rise above it. But now, at last, they’re responding in kind: by calling Trump a weirdo. “Some of what Trump and his running mate are saying, well, it’s just plain weird,” declared Kamala Harris at her first fundraiser as the Democrats’ presumptive nominee. After a recent Trump interview on Fox News, her campaign issued a list of observations, including: “Trump is old and quite weird?” It’s a great word to deploy against the former president. Neither pretentious nor “actively mean”, it’s nevertheless damning and hard to argue against. It’s much more effective than calling Trump “dangerous” or “a threat to democracy”, which only invests him with more power. True, there is “something slightly grim” about US politics descending into playground insults, and the Harris campaign should take care not to overdo it. But after all the insults they’ve endured over recent years, it’s gratifying to see Democrats deploying some of their own “verbal jujitsu”.

Venezuela votes: “the mother of all stolen elections”

Latin America is no stranger to stolen elections, said Andrés Oppenheimer in the [Miami Herald](#), but the one we’ve just witnessed in Venezuela must be “the mother of [them] all”. In most rigged elections, authoritarian rulers award themselves “an extra 1% or 2% of the vote”. To Venezuela’s strongman Nicolás Maduro, that’s chickenfeed. There was so much dispute over his re-election in 2019 that his close ally, Vladimir Putin, had to send over Wagner mercenaries to secure his safety. And, last week, Maduro outdid himself as he “fabricated as much as 40%” of the vote to claim victory. He did it by the simple expedient of getting the National Electoral Council – which he controls – to manipulate the voting data, said [La Nación \(San José\)](#). Without showing any voting records, the NEC simply declared Maduro to have won 51%, even though exit polls suggest his opponent, Edmundo González Urrutia, received well over 60%.



Maduro: relying on some powerful friends

Maduro has now been in power for 11 years, said Alejandro Velasco in [Nacla \(New York\)](#). A former bus driver politically trained in Havana, he rose to become vice-president under Hugo Chávez, the left-wing populist whose electoral victory in 1998 brought an end to Venezuela’s long-held reputation as Latin America’s most stable and prosperous liberal democracy. Chávez’s “Bolivarian revolution” proclaimed a new dawn for Venezuela’s dispossessed, and his massive subsidising of goods and services did indeed cut the extreme-poverty rate by some 15%. But Chávez’s time in power was also marked by widespread corruption, economic mismanagement and a deepening of Venezuela’s dependency on oil exports. And, as a result, when a dramatic plunge in oil prices occurred in the early 2010s, the oil-dependent nation plunged into a downward spiral.

And Maduro, his handpicked successor, elected by a hair’s breadth on Chávez’s death in 2013, has made things far worse, said the [Centre for Preventive Action \(Washington\)](#). His resort to printing money to tackle the crisis doomed the country to

years of rampant hyperinflation. All this, combined with crippling economic sanctions imposed by the US, has so impoverished the nation that 7.7 million people – about 25% of the population – have emigrated. Yet still he clings on. But for how long, asked Rebecca Hanson and Verónica Zubillaga on [The Conversation](#). Middle- and upper-class Venezuelans have often taken to the streets in protest before, but this time the protests have seen the mass participation of low-income and working-class Venezuelans, too. Chavismo seems to have lost

the support of the very people it claims to represent. Statues of Chávez are being torn down across the country, said Alejandra Carvajal in [Semana \(Buenos Aires\)](#); on social media even soldiers can be seen joining the protests. It’s all driving Maduro into a manic fury, said Juan Diego Quesada in [El País \(Madrid\)](#). He is accusing every critic of being a fascist; he has even challenged Argentina’s right-wing president, Javier Milei, to a fist fight.

Yet he has powerful friends to prop him up, said Alexandra Schwartzbrod in [Libération \(Paris\)](#). Venezuela is a key country: strategically placed at the top of the South American continent, it has the largest oil reserves in the world, ahead of Saudi Arabia. If the US and its allies have condemned his stolen election, Putin “and his club of dictators around the world” – China, North Korea, Iran, Cuba et al – have all applauded it, said Anna Zafesova in [La Stampa \(Turin\)](#). Maduro has notably strong links with Russia. Venezuela was one of only 11 nations at the UN to vote in favour of Russia’s annexation of Crimea; it plays host to Russian strategic bombers and warships; it has received investments from Russia’s state oil giant, Rosneft. And Maduro has the unconditional support of an even more crucial ally – China, said Carlos Eduardo Pina in [Nikkei Asia \(Tokyo\)](#). To bolster Maduro’s grip on power, Beijing has in recent years transferred around \$14bn to Caracas. Even so, his position is precarious. The next few weeks will tell whether it’s President Xi or the protesters who will decide his fate.

TURKEY

It’s a dog’s life? Maybe not for much longer

[The New York Times](#)

“They haunt city squares, they wait outside butchers and coffee shops.” For centuries, living in Turkey has meant navigating stray dogs, says Kaya Genc. Some see them as “inseparable from the idea of Turkey itself”. Perhaps not for much longer, though. The government has just presented a bill to parliament that will see the four million or so dogs on the streets rounded up, to be put in shelters or euthanised. Supporters say the dogs cause road accidents, but many Turks, outraged at the idea of a dog massacre, are arguing for sterilisation instead. Protests have mushroomed: “I’ve rarely seen Turks this united against a bill.” But the bill isn’t really about dogs. President Erdogan, a master of the art of scapegoating, knows he’s run out of rope blaming Turkey’s woes on refugees, journalists and intellectuals, so he has cast about for another trigger of voter anger: stray dogs. Well I, for one, hope the bill fails. As long as these animals roam the streets, “surviving on scraps and random acts of kindness”, they offer “a quiet rebuke” to a government “increasingly disconnected from reality”.

NAMIBIA

They call it an apology, we call it plunder

[Die Tageszeitung \(Berlin\)](#)

Europeans like to sound apologetic about past colonial “crimes” in Africa, says Alfred Shilongo, yet they continue to inflict them. Look what’s happening in Namibia. In the early 1900s, German empire-builders almost completely wiped out two ethnic groups who resisted German control, the Herero and the Nama. Berlin has talked big about making amends for the “genocide”, yet after nine years of negotiation it hasn’t provided a cent in compensation. Instead, it wants to make amends by investing \$10bn in “green energy”, a solar and wind facility geared to extracting hydrogen from water. Two million tons of it are to be produced a year and shipped to Europe in the form of ammonia. Turns out, however, that the facility is to be built in Tsau-Khaeb National Park, one of the world’s most important protected arid areas, a critical habitat for threatened plants and bird species. So a highly toxic substance, ammonia, is set to transform one of southwest Africa’s most valuable nature reserves into an industrial desert. In addition, a port is to be built there on the site of a German concentration camp where the bones of thousands of Herero and Nama are interred. To beatify this project with a “green energy” tag is a travesty. It’s “plunder” for the benefit of Europeans, pure and simple.



Want to find out more about the Quooker? We'd love to show you from the comfort of your own home.

Whatever you might like to know about the revolutionary Quooker tap, you can now arrange a personal appointment to join an exciting live virtual one-on-one demonstration where we'll answer all your specific questions.

As innovative as the Quooker itself, this truly unique online experience enables you control the meeting and what you would like to see. Live from our purpose-built showroom in Manchester at a time and date of your choosing, a member of the Quooker team will explain how a Quooker can save you time, energy, water, money and even make the kitchen a safer place.

To arrange your own personal appointment simply visit quooker.co.uk



Scan to book
your virtual
appointment



Quooker®

100°C BOILING, CHILLED AND SPARKLING WATER

The tap that **virtually** does it all

What the scientists are saying...

Bad news for light drinkers

People who enjoy a glass or two of wine will have probably taken comfort from the various studies suggesting that moderate drinkers live longer than those who never touch alcohol. But according to a new analysis, it may not be true. Canadian scientists looked at 107 existing studies on the impact of alcohol on longevity. When they combined all the data, it suggested that the light to moderate drinkers (who had between one drink a week and two drinks a day) were indeed 14% less likely on average to have died in the study period than the abstainers. But closer analysis revealed that some of the studies were of low quality because they had failed to distinguish between lifelong abstainers and people who had recently given up alcohol – although in many cases this would have been because they were in poor health. Once these studies were excluded, the apparent benefit disappeared.

Shingles jab “wards off dementia”

A new drug that was developed to protect people from shingles may also help to ward off dementia, a study has found. Researchers at the University of Oxford compared 100,000 older people in the US who had had the Shingrix vaccine with a similar number who’d had a different jab. Analysis of their health records showed that those who’d received Shingrix had 17% more “diagnosis free” time during the follow-up period, which equated to an extra six months, on average. The effect was stronger in women, at 22%, than in men (13%), which may be partly down to the fact that women are more prone to dementia. If the link is confirmed by clinical trials, it could have “significant implications for older adults, health services and public health”, said study



The odd drink: no apparent benefit

leader Dr Maxime Taquet. Just how Shingrix, which is being phased in in the UK, might delay the onset of dementia isn’t clear. It could be related to chemicals used in the vaccine to strengthen the immune reaction; or it could be that the effect is not caused by the jab itself, but rather by the protection it gives from infection. Previous studies have indicated that certain viral infections increase the risk of dementia, possibly because they trigger inflammation.

Fat arms linked to poor health

Being overweight is widely known to be a risk factor for dementia. But it seems that it can make a difference where the excess fat is stored. For a new study, 412,691 men and women in the UK with an average age of 56 were measured to determine where they mainly stored fat. They were also tested for strength and bone density. Over the next nine years, 8,224 of them developed dementia (mainly Alzheimer’s),

Parkinson’s and other neurological diseases. Analysis of the data showed that the participants who’d predominately stored fat in their arms were at 18% higher risk of receiving a diagnosis of one of these conditions, while storing it around the belly was linked to a 13% increase in risk. By contrast, achieving a high score in strength tests was associated with a 26% decreased risk. This suggests that keeping the arms and the belly in shape, and building strength, may be more important for brain health than general weight control, said study author Dr Huan Song.

A “game-changing” test for sepsis

Roughly 245,000 people develop sepsis in the UK each year, and up to 48,000 of them die of it. Now, a new blood test offers hope of faster diagnosis, earlier treatment and better outcomes. Sepsis, which occurs when the immune system overreacts to an infection, is currently diagnosed by taking a blood sample, and growing any bacteria that are present in a Petri dish until there are enough to be identified. Then a suitable treatment needs to be found, which may involve more lab work. This takes days – time the patient may not have. The new test cuts out the need to culture the bacteria. Instead, it involves using magnetic nanoparticles that have been coated in peptides to “catch” the bacteria in the sample, which are then extracted with a magnet and identified via DNA testing. Meanwhile, AI predicts how they will grow, to determine suitable treatments. In a trial, this technique was found to shorten the diagnostic time by up to 40 hours. And it requires just one machine, suggesting it would be relatively easy to roll out. Study leader Dr Kim Tae-hyun, from Seoul National University, described the test as a “game-changer”.

The truth about dock leaves

Dock leaves have long been used to soothe nettle stings, but that may just be because they happen to grow near nettles; so would any leaf be just as good? To investigate, a team from NHS Fife ran a trial in which nine doctors were persuaded to brush their arms with stinging nettles. The doctors were then blindfolded, and had crushed dock leaves applied to one arm, and crushed lettuce leaves to the other. (Lettuce leaves were chosen because they’re roughly the same size as dock leaves and have no anti-inflammatory properties.)



They have the same effect as lettuce

Over the next 20 minutes, the doctors were asked to rate their levels of discomfort, and to guess which leaf had been which. The results showed that their discomfort on each arm eased in the same time frame, and that they couldn’t distinguish the leaves.

When we brush against nettles, the tip breaks off their stinging hairs, injecting irritants (mainly formic acid and histamines) into the surface layer of skin cells. The simple action of rubbing the area may help ease the sting, especially if you are rubbing it with a crushed leaf that releases a sap that cools the skin as it evaporates. If so, “any large, fresh and non-toxic leaf would do the job”, said the team in the *Journal of Emergency Medicine*. Or it could be that the whole thing is a placebo, and that the stings would have eased just the same had they been left untreated.

Soaring ADHD prescriptions

The number of people being prescribed drugs for ADHD has reached record levels. According to the latest NHS data, 278,000 patients in England were prescribed the treatments between April 2023 and March 2024. That is almost 18% more than just a year earlier. The rise is likely due to increased awareness, coupled with more people reporting mental health problems since Covid, said Dr Heidi Phillips, of the Royal College of GPs. The biggest increase was in women: the number of 25- to 40-year-old women prescribed the drugs tripled between March 2021 and March 2024. ADHD was originally thought of as a hyperactivity disorder that affected boys, and so went overlooked in girls, in whom it tends to manifest itself as inattentiveness, said Phillips. So what we are seeing is likely to be at least in part “a catch-up situation where these women are coming forward”.

UK riots: how social media fanned the flames

In the wake of the riots in Southport last Tuesday, the mother of one of the three girls who'd been stabbed to death at a dance workshop in the seaside town a day earlier appealed for calm. False rumours that the attacker was a Muslim migrant had fuelled the disorder. Yet neither Jenni Stancombe's heartfelt plea to "stop the violence", nor the identification of the suspected killer as a UK-born 17-year old, quelled the unrest. Instead, it spread like wildfire, from Sunderland, Belfast and Hartlepool to Plymouth. Several known activists from far-right groups such as Patriotic Alternative were seen in the crowds at these disturbances, many of which had been promoted on social media, said Tom Witherow in *The Times*, but there were also "thugs" who'd gone "looking for a fight", local people who link immigration to "concerns about the cost-of-living crisis", and teenagers, bored in the long hot summer holiday, who'd come to relish the spectacle or to give the police "the runaround".



Rioters outside the Holiday Inn in Rotherham

These were very ugly scenes, said *The Daily Telegraph*. In some towns, lone Asian and black people were set upon by groups of white men. In Liverpool, where hundreds of anti-immigrant protesters clashed with counter-protesters, a police officer was knocked off his motorbike by a mob and a library was set alight. In Hull, shops were looted. In Middlesbrough, youths tore through a neighbourhood with a large immigrant population shouting "Smash the p*kis" and vandalising homes and cars. In Rotherham, 700 people gathered outside a Holiday Inn Express that houses asylum seekers and started hurling rocks and shouting racist abuse. With police overwhelmed, men in balaclavas stormed the hotel, marauding through the corridors while others attempted to set the building on fire. The hotel's staff and residents (some of whom had fled war zones) said they'd feared for their lives.

Even in an age of online disinformation, police were shocked by how rapidly the killings in Southport were weaponised, said Kitty Donaldson in *The i Paper*. The suspect, since named as Axel Rudakubana, the son of Rwandan-born parents, is alleged to have begun his rampage at 11:47am. News of it broke around 1pm, and within half-an-hour, baseless claims that the killer was a Muslim, a recent immigrant who'd arrived by boat, were being seen by millions on X/Twitter. Amplified by social media firms' algorithms, they were spread by larger accounts, with names such

as Enough is Enough, and Europe Invasion. One significant promoter of misinformation about the Southport attack was identified as an apparent news website called Channel3 Now. It is known to have started life streaming Russian drag races, leading to speculation that it is linked to the Russian state.

Even if Russian bots helped to bring the "tanked-up neo-fascists" out of their sewers, said Brian Reade in *The Daily Mirror*, the real finger of blame lies closer to home, in the shape of those "low-life British grifters" who "stir up hatred" online to boost their profiles and their bank balances. The most prominent include Tommy Robinson, formerly of the English Defence League, who stoked the riots (where his name was a rallying cry) from a luxury resort in Cyprus; Andrew Tate, the millionaire misogynist influencer, who told his nine million followers that the Southport attacker was "straight off the boat", and that people needed to "wake up"; and the actor Laurence Fox, who said it was time to "remove Islam from Great Britain". You have to remember that the millions of people who are tuned into these networks are seeing provocative content about Asian grooming gangs and foreign-born criminals every day, said James Tapper in *The Guardian*. Their anger doesn't always translate into violence, but in hard times, when people are struggling to find decent jobs, or feed their families, they're much easier to manipulate and inflame.

"In hard times, when people are struggling, their anger is easier to manipulate and inflame"

Politicians, too, though, have helped fuel xenophobia, said *The Financial Times*. Suella Braverman talking about a migrant "invasion"; her government's constant vow to "stop the boats" (a slogan seen at many of the riots), reinforcing the view that Britain is under threat; and the Clacton MP Nigel Farage, not dispelling the conspiracy theories last week but adding to them, by "wondering" in a video if the truth about the Southport attack was being withheld. It was "the old Nigel dog whistle", said Alan Rusbridger in *The Independent*. But perhaps the biggest villain is Elon Musk, that "free speech absolutist" who reinstated Tommy Robinson and other hate-mongers when he acquired Twitter, and downsized the site's content moderating teams. Truly, social media sites are becoming "the modern equivalent of *Der Stürmer* in Nazi Germany", said *The Times*. The Government must finally take action to stop these hugely profitable platforms from spreading incitement to violence and public disorder.

Pick of the week's

Gossip

Having been born and bred in Bradford, **David Hockney** was treated as an outsider when he moved to London in 1959 to study at the Royal College of Art. "People used to mock me," he writes in a new book. "They would say things like, 'Trouble at t'mill, Mr Ormondroyd.'" He rose above it, however. "Sometimes I'd look at their drawings and think, 'If I drew like that, I'd keep my mouth shut.'" **Joe Biden** has "no equal" when it comes to verbosity, says former foreign secretary **William Hague** in *The Times*. He recalls that when Biden was vice-president, and visiting Downing Street in 2013, the then prime minister, **David Cameron**, declared that he had "put six topics on the agenda" for their meeting. "That's a touch optimistic, prime minister," Hague warned. "In an hour you'll be lucky to get through one." "Oh, come on," Cameron replied. "He can't be that talkative." It turned out he could be. "The PM spoke for a couple of minutes about the situation in Afghanistan," says Hague, "and the vice-president then replied for the next 58 minutes."



Joe Biden has "no equal" when it comes to verbosity, says former foreign secretary

J.R.R. Tolkien was particular about the language used to describe his fantasy worlds, a letter sent to his publishers has revealed. "I am well aware that dwarfs is the correct modern English plural of dwarf; but I intend to use dwarves for good reasons of my own," he wrote to Allen & Unwin, in 1953. "I take it harder that my elven should be replaced, though not consistently, by the detestable Spenserian elfin, which it was specifically designed to avoid. Elfish also appears for elvish." He added that he would be "grateful" if his copy could be "left alone, whatever the handbooks may say".

The prisoner swap: was it a bad deal?

The photo “says it all”, said Peter Greste on *The Conversation*: “Returning prisoners in an American plane, all grinning from ear to ear” – their joy and relief testament to “the success of an incredibly complicated mission”. Last week, 16 people, including the *Wall Street Journal* reporter Evan Gershkovich, were freed by Russia, in exchange for eight Russian prisoners held in the US and Europe. The biggest such swap since the Cold War, it was a diplomatic coup for the outgoing US president Joe Biden, who had spent months brokering the agreement, and who was present at the emotional homecoming scene at an airbase in Maryland. Gershkovich, who’d spent more than a year behind bars on trumped-up charges of espionage, lifted his mother (who’d campaigned tirelessly to secure his release) off her feet in an embrace. The other released detainees include Russian opposition politician Vladimir Kara-Murza, and former US marine Paul Whelan. “All have endured unimaginable suffering and uncertainty,” said Biden. “Today, their agony is over.”



Gershkovich embraces his mother

We should all be glad of that, of course, said Sebastian Milbank in *The Critic*. But make no mistake: the deal is a dangerous one. This was no Cold War-era exchange of spies. The prisoners freed by Russia were mainly

innocent journalists and political dissidents, some of whom “were locked up precisely to be used in this sort of prisoner exchange”. And what did Putin get in return? The release of genuine criminals and thugs, including “a Kremlin hitman who murdered a Georgian dissident in cold blood on German soil”. The swap will encourage Putin to imprison more people for use as hostages, and falls within a pattern of “under-retaliation to blatant acts of aggression” that makes the West look weak, at a time when it badly needs the warmonger dictator to be convinced of its strength and determination.

This is what “realpolitik” looks like, said *The Times*. It’s not always pretty, but it gets results. Besides, Biden’s bargain was a hard one: Kara-Murza, for instance, is one of Putin’s most vocal critics. And leaving the likes of Whelan, who’d been in jail for five-and-a-half years, to rot in a Russian prison indefinitely would not have reflected well on the West either. We must spare a thought for the hundreds of political prisoners who will continue to rot, said *The Observer* – and for “those who will never make it to freedom”; such as Alexei Navalny, the opposition leader whose name was originally drafted for inclusion in the prisoner swap, but who died, or was murdered, in a Russian jail in February. “Navalny is never coming home.”

GPs: the crisis in primary care

The NHS dramas keep coming, said Lucy Dunn in *The Spectator*. Just days after junior doctors in England were offered a cumulative pay rise of 22%, raising hopes of an end to hospital strikes, general practitioners in England have voted to embark on their first industrial action in 60 years. GP members of the British Medical Association (BMA) overwhelmingly backed the move last week in protest at a 1.9% increase in funding for GP surgeries for 2024/25. They complain that the increase won’t cover basic costs and will leave many surgeries, which operate as small businesses, unviable. The BMA recommended a list of work-to-rule options for GPs. These include limiting themselves to seeing 25 patients a day (as opposed to, say, 40), and refusing to cooperate with NHS cost-saving measures. The BMA said that the action was intended to harm policymakers, not patients, and that its impact would be a “slow burn” rather than a “big bang”.

This row is not about pay, as the junior doctors’ dispute was, said *The Guardian*. It’s about the neglect of primary care, which receives less than 10% of the overall NHS budget in England. GPs are right to be up in arms. In the past five years alone, our practices have lost £660m in funding, owing to uplifts in GP contracts failing to keep pace with inflation, said Dr Rob Barnett in *The*

Times. Over the same period, we’ve had to take on six million more patients and faced extra burdens as a result of long hospital waiting lists. Family doctors are leaving in droves. Meanwhile, many newly trained doctors who want to work as GPs in England can’t get jobs because practices can’t afford them.

There is a good case for a greater share of NHS funding to be apportioned to primary care, said Dr Martin Scurr in *The Daily Mail*, but that doesn’t justify this irresponsible decision. GPs should be explaining their concerns, not engaging in actions that, as well as squandering public trust, could prove hugely disruptive, if not “downright dangerous”. An actual strike by GPs would be “catastrophic”, said Polly Toynbee in *The Guardian*. The limited measures threatened last week, on the other hand, amount to little more than “an SOS distress signal” – it doesn’t sound as if many practices will take any action that patients will notice. It’s nevertheless odd that GPs felt the need to launch this battle right now. For the reality is that Labour shares their belief that primary care needs more resources. Wes Streeting, the Health Secretary, has already indicated his intention to alter the balance of NHS funding in its favour. “So why, after only a month, is the BMA taking action against a new government that’s on their side?”

Wit & Wisdom

“Stardom isn’t a profession. It’s an accident.”

Lauren Bacall, quoted on *BBC News*

“Without education, we are in a horrible and deadly danger of taking educated people seriously.”

G.K. Chesterton, quoted in *Forbes*

“Do today’s duty, fight today’s temptation; do not weaken and distract yourself by looking forward to things you cannot see, and could not understand if you saw them.”

Charles Kingsley, *ibid*

“You don’t stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing.”

Michael Pritchard, quoted in *The i Paper*

“What does culture want? To make infinity comprehensible.”

Umberto Eco, quoted in *The Guardian*

“If you’re being chased by a pack of taxidermists, do not play dead.”

Olaf Falafel at the *Edinburgh Fringe*, *ibid*.

“The Americans are a very lucky people. They’re bordered to the north and south by weak neighbours, and to the east and west by fish.”

Otto von Bismarck, quoted in *Responsible Statecraft*

“The phrase ‘middle of the road’ doesn’t make sense. Driving down the actual middle of the road is the craziest thing you can do.”

Stuart Laws at the *Edinburgh Fringe*, quoted in *Edinburgh Evening News*

Statistic of the week

The number of people killed or injured on Welsh roads has dropped significantly since most 30mph speed limits were reduced to 20mph.

There were 377 casualties on 20mph and 30mph roads in the first quarter of 2024, down from 510 in the same period last year. The number of deaths dropped from 11 to five.

The Guardian

Triumph and tribulation at the 2024 Olympics

Paris has been the stage for the world's fastest man and the greatest gymnast of all time



Lyles: fastest man in the world

sprinters “crossed the finish line in an almighty heap, their form disintegrating as their desperation grew”. For 95 metres, the gold seemed destined for Jamaican Kishane Thompson, as the 23-year-old known for his fast starts bulldozed towards the line “like an American football running back”. No one anticipated that Noah Lyles, self-proclaimed star of the Netflix docu-series *Sprint*, was finally about to live up to his hype.

As Lyles trailed in last place after 30 metres, that looked unlikely. But the 27-year-old had come from behind in both of his qualifying races. “Lyles has always said he is the best closer in the business,” said Andy Dunn in the *Daily Mirror*. “So it proved.” As Thompson appeared to tighten up, Lyles let loose with a personal best of 9.79. “Going beyond what you have ever done before at the most pressurised moment of your sporting career – that is what makes Olympic champions.” As the screen showed the word “photo-finish” next to every name, Lyles told Thompson: “I think you’ve got the Olympics, big dog.” But the American’s torso had crossed the line 0.005 seconds sooner. “Goodness gracious, I’m incredible,” said the world’s fastest man.

In one of the shocks of the Games, the world’s fastest woman was Julien Alfred, St Lucia’s first-ever medal winner, with a dominant 100m victory over the US superstar Sha’Carri Richardson. Team GB’s Keely Hodgkinson, meanwhile, silver-medallist in the 800m in Tokyo, won in spite of “having run a race that barely went to plan”, said Owen Slot in *The Times*. But Hodgkinson is so good right now, she “could actually have won it anyway she liked”.

Athletics

There was a “stunning light show” ahead of the 100m men’s final in Paris, said Dave Kidd in *The Sun*, but the razzmatazz was nothing to the event itself. A race boasting the fastest field in history resulted in a finish “as tight as a gnat’s back passage”. The US sprint legend Michael Johnson dubbed it the greatest 100m final he’d ever seen. It was more like “a brawl”, said Sean Ingle in *The Guardian*, “messy, exhilarating, raw”. The world’s eight best male



Biles: a legendary comeback

the floor, to extend her own record as the most decorated gymnast in history. “Biles’s redemption tour is complete.”

It was in the vault three years ago that she suffered an attack of “the twisties” – a loss of spatial awareness. Yet instead of retiring, as some suggested she would, “she began practising the hardest vault in female gymnastics”, said Tom Kershaw in *The Sunday Times*. At last year’s World Championships she fell attempting the “Biles II”, which includes two backward flips in the pike position. Here she landed it perfectly. Her ability to perform skills no rival can even attempt is part of her enduring appeal.

Biles has been “the Games’ hottest ticket”, said Oliver Holt in the *Daily Mail*. “Her events sold out, bedecked with celebrities.” On the last day of competition, though, when a clean sweep of titles seemed likely, Biles introduced a new twist: a mistake. In a beam final in which more than half the competitors fell, Biles too slipped off the apparatus after one of her most difficult moves. “She looked even more stunned than the rest of the arena.” It was “a day when her aura of invincibility slipped”, said Fiona Tomas in *The Daily Telegraph*. In the floor final, Biles went all out with a “showstopping routine” that defied “the laws of gravity by achieving huge mesmerizing height on her tumbles”. However, small errors cost her, and the gold went to Brazil’s Rebeca Andrade. But she refused to be downbeat about it. “A couple years ago, I didn’t think I’d be back here at an Olympic Games,” said Biles. “So competing and then walking away with four medals... I’m pretty proud of myself.”

Gymnastics

Yes, it was an “imperfect climax”, said Tumaini Carayol in *The Guardian*, but Simone Biles still left the Paris Olympics with “one of the most legendary Olympic comebacks of all”. She’d taken two years out of the sport to recover her mental health, after having withdrawn mid-competition in the Tokyo Olympics, a decision which attracted much criticism. But this week she took team, vault and all-around gold, as well as a silver on

Boxing: the row over sexual differences

When Algerian boxer Imane Khelif won her quarter-final bout to guarantee herself a medal, it was “a brief happy moment for the fighter”, said Jack Rathborn in *The Independent*. She “thumped the canvas in delight”, before tearfully declaring “I am a woman.” But her time in Paris has not been a happy one. A year ago, at the World Championships run by the International Boxing Association, she had been disqualified, the IBA claiming she had XY (male) chromosomes and thus failed the gender eligibility test. They did the same to Taiwan’s Lin Yu-ting, who this week also reached the semi-final. And as a result, the success of both women in Paris has been shrouded in “a cloud of toxicity and largely uninformed judgements”. Nevertheless, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which last year stripped the IBA of recognition, should have intervened in this case, said Owen Slot in *The Times*: it “has failed heinously in its duty of care to its athletes” by not doing so. Khelif’s case is in some ways reminiscent of that of the runner



Khelif: “I am a woman”

Caster Semenya, whose Olympic titles came under scrutiny when it was revealed she had “DSD” – differences in sex development affording her testosterone-linked advantages. But the difference between track and field and boxing is that boxing exposes contestants to physical danger. Khelif’s previous opponent, Angela Carini, had to abandon the fight after 46 seconds, saying she’d never before been punched so hard. She didn’t stand a chance. The IOC should never have allowed Khelif and Lin to fight.

Yet we shouldn’t take the IBA verdict on their gender as gospel, said Mike Keegan in *The Mail on Sunday*. The IBA is a discredited body with close ties to Moscow. Could we be “falling for another Russian-led misinformation campaign”? One thing is clear, said Barney Ronay in *The Guardian*, it has been horribly tough on the two boxers. “Seeing Lin and Khelif in the flesh, as people, not avatars in a war of ideologies” should give us pause for thought.

Pick of the week's correspondence

Kicking the "care" can...

To the Financial Times

Tony Blair convened a royal commission on long-term care in 1997 when he became prime minister. I was its secretary. The task, even then, was urgent and the risks of inaction huge. We gathered evidence from and questioned providers, care workers, economists, insurers and politicians. We looked carefully at the experiences from other countries. The plan we published was costed and practical: pool the risk that was otherwise uninsurable, act ahead of the demographic curve and then costs would be affordable and care quality high. Nothing was done. It was clear the government hoped for an easy, cost-free plan, and this did not fit the bill.

This pattern has been repeated for 25 years, and the time bomb has once more been placed in the "too difficult" box. We are long past the stage where this issue can be safely ignored. Without a resolution, the current care sector, local government and the NHS itself will simply fall over. And vulnerable people will suffer.
Alan Davey, former secretary, Royal Commission on Long Term Care 1997, London

A teacher's life lessons

To The Daily Telegraph

I take issue with your article, "How to become a teacher – and earn up to £140,000 a year". First, only a headteacher can earn that much. Secondly, my school day as a head of music was rarely – if ever – less than eight hours on site, followed by at least two or three hours of marking and lesson preparation at home for the next day. Thirdly, extracurricular activities – in my case, concerts, musical productions, and rehearsals for choirs and instrumental groups – were not regarded as part of the paid job, but were supposed to provide me with job satisfaction, as well as keeping the students fulfilled and occupied during lunchtimes and after school. These added a further average of two hours per day.

You give the impression that teachers have an easy ride but, if I had a second chance, I would never become one.
Mary Cobbold, Sheffield

Exchange of the week

The cost of winter warmth

To The Guardian

Years ago, Joan Bakewell suggested that pensioners who didn't need the winter fuel allowance should donate it to charity. Like thousands of others, I've done this ever since. All pensioners on low incomes should be encouraged to apply for pension credit to qualify. That will reduce some of the money the Government will gain, but it's infinitely better than handing out money to millions of us who don't need it.

Irene Waddell, Harrogate, North Yorkshire

To The Guardian

So "the winter fuel allowance made no sense for pensioners not on benefits", according to Polly Toynbee. Try telling that to my 86-year-old mother, whose small pension, hard-earned by my late father, puts her just above the pension credit limit. She broke down in tears on Monday, worrying about how she is going to afford the heating this winter. Tears, too, of anger and betrayal, that one of the first acts of the Labour Government she has voted for all her life was to take away £300, rather than raising income from those who are able to pay more.

The situation could be worse. I have offered to pay her £300 from my savings; £70 of that will come from the Labour Party membership that I have just cancelled.

Catherine Fuller, Bungay, Suffolk

To The Guardian

I led the UK national campaign that led to the adoption by the Blair government of the winter fuel payments system. The problem the campaign addressed was the annual 40,000 excess winter deaths among people affected by fuel poverty. The response – a universal rather than a targeted payment – was adopted because of the low take-up of pension credits and other benefits by many of those at risk; this take-up failure stands at 800,000 non-applicants today.

Winter fuel payments have been attacked by Conservatives and Lib Dems in government, and by Labour supporters who see them as going to the wealthy who do not need them, and many recipients have said they don't want them. But why not make them taxable income? This would ensure that everyone in fuel poverty is protected, and that we have a system that gives with one hand and takes back from some with the other.
Damian Killeen, former director, The Poverty Alliance

This name can not stand

To The Times

It is disappointing that the PM, in announcing the creation of a "standing army" of police to deal with rioting, reveals his ignorance of constitutional history. Ever since the Glorious Revolution of the late 17th century, it has been a feature of the constitution that we have no standing army that an arbitrary government could rely on to suppress opposition.

To this day, the Army's existence is subject to the Army Act, which has to be approved by Parliament every five years. To call the new unit a standing army flies in the face of this arrangement. I hope a more appropriate title can be found.
Michael Clarke, Portishead, Somerset

Two-tier protesting

To The Guardian

It's interesting to contrast the indignation of those who object to the Just Stop Oil protesters with what happened in 2000, when truckers and farmers brought the country to a halt. The Tory Party started it off by encouraging a day of protest and the Tory press roared its support. I saw it as an opportunity for the Right to take a whack at Labour.

I don't remember a single report of a trucker or farmer being arrested, let alone jailed. Some of your correspondents object to protesters causing disruption because of their opinions. Climate change is a scientific fact, not an opinion.
David Redshaw, Saltdean, East Sussex

BBC and Huw Edwards

To The Daily Telegraph

In my view the BBC cannot be blamed for continuing to pay Huw Edwards while he was under investigation. Had he been sacked and then found innocent, he would have had a clear case for unfair dismissal.

The principle of "innocent until proven guilty" must prevail. What I find staggering, however, is the salary the BBC is prepared to pay someone for reading an autocue.

Terry Lloyd, Derby

Why "far-right" is wrong

To The Guardian

It is misleading to suggest the rioters have any ideology that is implied by the "far-right" label. They are just aggressive young men looking for an excuse to cause trouble and indulge in looting. In the past, the same sorts of men were involved in riots that were called football hooliganism.

Toxic masculinity is a better explanation than any thought-through political views.

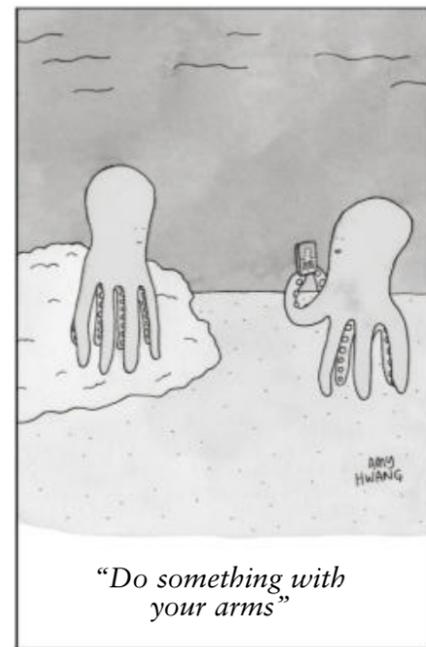
David Canter, emeritus professor, University of Liverpool

Blowing in the wind

To The Times

Watching one of the closest races in athletics history, the 100m men's final, you realise how important aerodynamics is. So it is amazing that with all the modern technology used in designing sports clothing, each runner's numbers are still attached using the humble safety pin, leaving the attachments to flap in the wind.

Simon Walters, London



© THE NEW YORKER



Safe as houses?

The housing market thrives on certainty, and with the new government settling into what looks likely to be a five-year term, Strutt & Parker examines what could be in store.

Moving house is always a major decision, and it's one best undertaken with the wind at your back. Now, with a new government bedding down for a possible five years in office, homeowners can be glad that the recent period of political and economic uncertainty is now behind them.

The aftermath of the pandemic saw soaring inflation rates, and interest rates in the UK – and elsewhere – being hiked to tackle the problem. Soaring mortgage costs dampened the housing market, impacting not just people's ability to move, but also the confidence to do so.

But with inflation at Bank of England's (BoE) target 2%, and the recent BoE cut to the base rate, homeowners and aspiring buyers can finally feel cautiously optimistic about the future. Strutt & Parker's forecasts are that values in prime central London, will rise 10% to 15% over the next five years and more widely across the UK prices will grow between 15% to 20%.

All eyes are now on the Autumn Statement in October to see exactly what Sir Keir Starmer's government will mean for Britain. There were however clues about what the future could hold in the party's election manifesto and in the recent King's Speech.

Labour's pledge to increase stamp duty for non-UK residents, and its promise to scrap the non-dom regime, may put off some buyers in prime markets, but they are unlikely to make

much of a material difference. James Gow, Strutt & Parker's Head of London sales, points to London's status as a global capital city and he is confident "it will continue to attract buyers for its arts, history, culture, education, as well as being a major centre for business, for decades to come."

The government's plans to scrap VAT exemption and business rates relief for private schools could see demand for houses in desirable state catchment areas hotting up further, as parents decide that the private system is just getting too expensive to commit to. Those who want to keep their children in the private system but need to free up money to pay for the increased fees may choose to downsize or relocate to a more affordable area.



Labour has also underlined that it wants to "get Britain building again", and it has pledged to build 1.5 million homes over the course of the next parliament. Such pledges are routinely made by aspiring governments, of course, but this administration seems more likely to push through its house-building commitments – at least to an extent – thanks to its large majority and bold vision for planning reform.

If the party's plans to overhaul the regulation of the rental sector sound familiar, it's because the Conservatives attempted a similar thing with the Renters (Reform) Bill that was dropped before the July election. Landlords have been expecting an overhaul of the private rental sector for some time so much of this has been baked in already and Anna Ambrose, Head of Lettings at Strutt & Parker expects the rental market to continue on a broadly similar trajectory.

Houses take time to build. People take time to move. What the housing sector really thrives on is certainty, and a stable environment in which decisions about the future don't feel like a gamble. Starmer's sizeable majority should mean that he manages to get things done, and that the bumpy ride we've had of late smooths out.

For more information visit:
struttandparker.com

Brought to you by

**STRUTT
& PARKER**

BNP PARIBAS GROUP

Review of reviews: Books

Book of the week

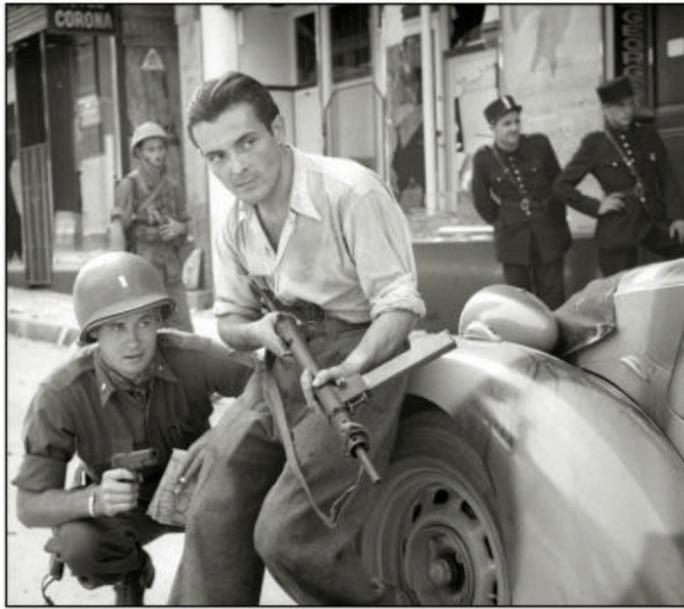
Paris '44: The Shame and the Glory

by Patrick Bishop

Viking 400pp £25

The Week Bookshop £19.99

As Britain wasn't invaded by the Nazis, we never had to decide whether to collaborate or resist – “and so, foolishly, we sometimes imagine ourselves to be better than the French”, said Nicholas Farrell in *The Daily Telegraph*. The “harsh choices” forced on the inhabitants of Paris lie at the heart of this “fascinating” account, by the journalist and historian Patrick Bishop, of the city's occupation, and its liberation in 1944. His prose is “admirably unflowery”, and his choice of testimony “inspired”; we meet a “rich cast” of characters, from dashing resistance fighters to the chief collaborator himself, Marshal Pétain. The “most gripping” part of the book is the account of the progress of Free French units into Paris; Dwight Eisenhower, the Allied commander, let General De Gaulle's units enter first. Paris on the eve of liberation is described as “dark, near-starving and throbbing with hostility and burgeoning violence”. But liberation itself, on Friday 25 August, was an eruption of pure joy. Bishop calls it “an immortal spectacle that rekindled humanity's love affair with the city”.



The story of Paris under occupation has been told many times, but Bishop is such a fine raconteur that even the most knowledgeable readers “will enjoy his book enormously”, said Dominic Sandbrook in *The Sunday Times*. For the Germans, he writes, Paris was “a dreamscape, a playground”, and in the brothels, business had never been so good. But for most Parisians, food was so scarce that children's growth was dramatically stunted. And for the Jewish population, those were “nightmarish years” – in a single period of two days in 1942, the French police rounded up 13,000 people. “As Bishop's narrative reaches 1944, his pace quickens.” His account includes a frank depiction of the “ugly face of victory”: thousands of women were publicly shorn, beaten and humiliated for collaborating with the Germans.

Bishop's book covers logistics and military manoeuvres, but it “does not read like military history”, said Andrew Martin in *The Guardian*. It reads like “an epic thriller”, full of vivid, well-drawn characters. Among his witnesses are Ernest Hemingway, accompanying the troops “as a sort of war-tourist-cum-journalist” (and “liberating much booze on the way”) – and J.D. Salinger, then a young sergeant in counterintelligence (who was for ever marked by his experience of saving a collaborator from a baying mob). All in all, “*Paris '44* is a wonderful book: droll, moving, with a cinematic eye and not a boring line in it”.

Thom Gunn: A Cool Queer Life

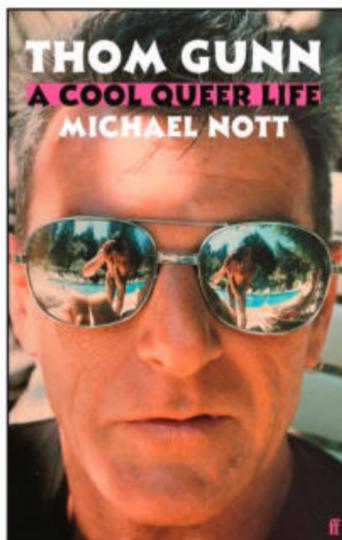
by Michael Nott

Faber 720pp £25

The Week Bookshop £19.99

There's a hint of “Jekyll and Hyde” in the story of Thom Gunn, said Rupert Christiansen in *The Daily Telegraph*. Born in 1929 and brought up in Hampstead, this Cambridge-educated poet is known for verse marked by a rigorous formal restraint. And yet after he moved to the US in 1954, his life was remarkably unrestrained: he was a “tattooed leather queen”, drawn to an “orgiastic” life of drug consumption and “sexual abandon” in the bars of San Francisco. It's a contrast explored with “scrupulous honesty” in this “admirably unsentimental and unsanctimonious” biography. Michael Nott has produced a “fine, frank” account of the poet's life, said Peter Conrad in *The Observer*, in which he gives full weight to the trauma Gunn experienced at 15, when his mother killed herself, leaving him to find her body. The many “masks” Gunn adopted in his life and in his poems were surely in part a “defence” against the “sense of abandonment” he felt that day, Nott suggests.

On the face of it, Gunn's life “should make a hell of a story”, says Sam Leith in *The Guardian*. Along with all the sex and drugs, there is the tragedy of the Aids epidemic in San Francisco (the subject of Gunn's superb collection *The Man with Night Sweats*), and also the sad decline of his last years, when he became “properly addicted to speed”, dying of an overdose in 2004. But much of Gunn's existence was actually quite humdrum (romantically, if not sexually; he spent his whole adult life with a single boyfriend, Mike Kitay), and Nott's deeply researched life occasionally drags for lack of incident. Still, there are “plenty of funny and poignant bits” (Gunn scandalised the members of a Pall Mall club by turning up in “full leather gear”). Nott is “a very good reader” of Gunn's poetry, making this an important work on “one of the best poets of his generation”.



Novel of the week

The Echoes

by Evie Wyld

Jonathan Cape 240pp £18.99

The Week Bookshop £14.99

The Anglo-Australian writer Evie Wyld's novels have all featured “spectres from the past” – but *The Echoes*, her fourth, is the first to include “an actual ghost”, said Johanna Thomas-Corr in *The Sunday Times*. He is Max, and he haunts the south London flat he shared with his girlfriend, Hannah, before his death. She, a writer like Max, still lives there, and so he is able to uncover some of the secrets she hid from him during his life. They largely concern her childhood on a goat farm in Australia, and the legacy of abuse passed down through her family – “horrors” that Wyld reveals “allusively”, as the books moves to an “extremely moving” climax.

There is also a strand in the story concerning a reform school for indigenous children that once stood next to Hannah's family farm – a place where young girls were “stripped of their names, culture and identity”, says Tobias Grey in the FT. Adding the theme of colonial violence to that of family trauma makes for a lot to handle in a little over 200 pages. Even so, the book is tight, coherent and “compulsively readable” thanks to Wyld's sure narrative control and wry humour.

THE WEEK Bookshop

To order these titles or any other book in print, visit theweekbookshop.co.uk or speak to a bookseller on 020-3176 3835

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

Musical: A Chorus Line

Sadler's Wells, London EC1 (until 25 Aug), then touring (achoruslinetour.com) Running time: 1hr 55mins ★★★★★

The original 1975 production of *A Chorus Line* – about jobbing dancers auditioning for parts in a musical – was the longest-running hit in Broadway history until *Cats* stole its crown in 1997, said Fiona Mountford in *The i Paper*. This “thrilling” revival, which originated at Leicester’s Curve and which will be touring the UK following its London run, proves that the show still has the power to entrance and mesmerise. Based on its original creator Michael Bennett’s interviews with real-life dancers, *A Chorus Line* is structured around the tales of “difficult home lives, sexual confusion and body insecurity” that are drawn out of the auditioning dancers by a brutally old-fashioned director. But all this is really just a frame for a glorious feast of singing and dancing – performed here with consummate energy, commitment and skill by a crack cast.

Fifty years on, *A Chorus Line* feels of its time, said David Benedict in *The Stage*, but its “knockout determination and drive remain intact and exciting”. Ellen Kane’s demanding choreography is executed superbly, and “everyone seizes their opportunities with both hands and, indeed, their entire hardworking bodies”. And there’s no doubting the “enduring power” of Marvin Hamlisch’s score, said Theo Bosanquet on *What’s on Stage*. Standouts include *At the Ballet* and



The terrific ensemble cast delivers pure “jazz-hands joy”

What I Did for Love, while the first-rate ensemble and “electric” choreography shine in group numbers such as the “stunning opener” *I Hope I Get It*.

“There are neon-coloured hotpants galore and high kicks worthy of Olympic gymnasts” in this blockbuster, said Susannah Butter in *The Times*. And there’s tension, too: the 17 auditionees smile, but they know that “one false move could lose them a job they’re desperate for”. After a few numbers, I did start to feel the lack of a plot, and wish for a bit more pace. But ultimately, said Tim Robey in *The Daily*

Telegraph, you forgive the wispiess of the story, owing to the “jazz-hands joy” delivered by this “mesmerising” evening. When the ensemble comes together for the rousing closing number, *One*, you can hardly imagine the show “dazzling more incandescently”.

The week’s other opening

Alice in Wonderland *The Dukes, Williamson Park, Lancaster* (01524-598500). Until 25 August

Cleverly designed and well acted, this “delightful” immersive adaptation of Lewis Carroll’s story is the “perfect promenade show for children”, who follow the White Rabbit through the park, spying clues along the way (*Observer*).

Albums of the week: three new releases

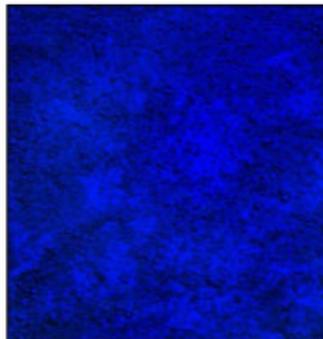
Aigul Akhmetshina:
Aigul
Decca
£12



“Some operatic voices do not respond well to the recording process,” said Richard Fairman in the *FT*. But Aigul Akhmetshina, the 28-year-old Russian mezzo-soprano who is rapidly establishing herself as a global star, sounds “as gloriously full-voiced” across her vocal range on disc as she does in the opera house. This has been her year of *Carmen*: she has starred in Bizet’s opera at the Met in New York, the Royal Opera House, and for several dates this month at Glyndebourne. Her triumphant debut solo album kicks off with three extracts from Bizet’s masterpiece, delivered with “glowing vocal colours”, sensuality and panache.

Akhmetshina’s “insouciance” and ease are irresistible, and this wonderful collection of excerpts from five operas “perfectly showcases” her extraordinary voice, said Erica Jeal in *The Guardian*. “It’s glowingly expansive in Charlotte’s soliloquy from Massenet’s *Werther*, poised and electric as Rossini’s caged Rosina, entreating and then swaggering as Bellini’s Romeo, with big high notes any soprano would be proud of.”

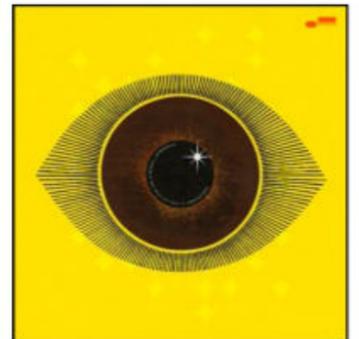
Jack White:
No Name
Third Man
Records



Jack White’s new album is “the freshest and most exciting rock’n’roll album to come down the pike in years”, said Jem Aswad in *Variety*. And with no disrespect to his previous five solo albums, this is the one fans have been waiting for. The collection – currently only available on vinyl or to stream – is “a fiery, straight-ahead, just-plug-in-and-let-rip rock’n’roll album in the vein of his dearly beloved and dearly departed White Stripes, but without seeming retro or leaning too heavily on nostalgia”.

The album’s initial “guerilla” release – staff at White’s Third Man Records shops slipped free “white label” vinyl copies into shoppers’ bags with their other purchases – was typical of this “at times loveably, sometimes lamentably cranky artist”, said Jon Dolan in *Rolling Stone*. But however you get hold of it, *No Name* will repay the effort: it contains “some of the best, most lively garage-blues crunch he’s given us in many many moons, with just the right amount of eccentricity thrown in”, and is one of the year’s best rock albums.

Meshell Ndegeocello:
No More Water – The Gospel of James Baldwin
Blue Note
£12



“It is only in music, which Americans are able to admire because a protective sentimentality limits their understanding of it, that the Negro has been able to tell his story,” wrote James Baldwin in 1951. Elsewhere, said Dorian Lynskey in *The Guardian*, the great African-American writer asserted that no novel could rival “the bright joy of Louis Armstrong or the sly sorrow of Billie Holiday”. So it is apt that the neo-soul virtuoso Meshell Ndegeocello should have set Baldwin’s own words to music for an “extraordinary” double album marking the centenary of the writer’s birth.

Ndegeocello pays rich tribute with a complex, freewheeling, jazz-inflected album that takes in funk, gospel and soul-pop, said Will Hodgkinson in *The Times*. It’s a reflective work, as “gentle as it is angry and musically rich”. And while the subject matter – black struggles and systemic racism – is serious, the music’s stylistic flourishes and “uninhibited poetic spirit” ensure that it goes far “beyond mere tub-thumping and into art. James Baldwin, you like to think, would be proud.”

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



Kensuke's Kingdom

1hr 25mins (PG)

Touching Michael Morpurgo animation

★★★★

Michael Morpurgo has had the honour of several of his books being turned into films, of which the best known are *War Horse* (2011) and *Private Peaceful* (2012), said Matthew Bond in *The Mail on Sunday*. Now we have *Kensuke's Kingdom*, an animated feature based on the 1999 book of the same name. "It packs a gentler punch than either of its predecessors", but "for those in search of the sort of children's film you weren't sure they made anymore, this will hit the spot". Our hero is Michael (voiced by Aaron MacGregor), whom we meet sailing around the world with his parents (Sally Hawkins and Cillian Murphy) and sister (Raffey Cassidy). Unbeknown to them, he has snuck the family dog, Stella, onto the boat; and one day, a freak wave sends him and Stella overboard. Boy and dog wash up on a desert island, where he soon encounters the ageing Japanese war veteran Kensuke (Ken Watanabe), whose wife and son were killed in the bombing of Nagasaki. The film has a "rather old-fashioned appeal, but it's none the worse for that": this is a "gently touching adventure" that would be a perfect way to fill a rainy afternoon in the holidays.

Adapted by the children's laureate Frank Cottrell-Boyce, this animation has noble intentions, "impeccable credentials" and is "expertly crafted", said Ellen E. Jones in *The Guardian*. I did worry, though, that it might fall into the category of "Films Parents Think Their Kids *Ought* to Enjoy". Michael's immaturity "makes him an irritating protagonist in the first half", said Tim Robey in *The Daily Telegraph*. But this is a "gently magical" film; and Kensuke's relationship with Michael – theirs is "a fragile bond with a rather secretive essence" – ultimately "catches the heart".



Didi

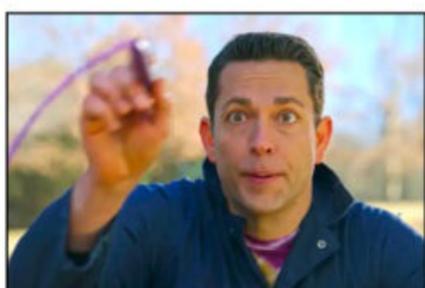
1hr 34mins (15)

Joyful coming-of-age drama set in noughties California

★★★★

Set in noughties California, this "affecting" coming-of-age drama follows a Taiwanese-American 13-year-old boy as he attempts to fit in with the local kids "despite feeling different in many ways", said Victoria Luxford in *City AM*. Nicknamed Didi (and played by Izaac Wang), he spends his time skating, longing for girls and grappling with the burgeoning social media age. The film's "cultural markers, such as flip phones and a late 2000s version of YouTube", might instil a certain nostalgia for a less sophisticated age in some viewers. Mostly, however, *Didi* is "about being a kid and experiencing the many pitfalls of youth". Wang "gets into the character brilliantly", and there are some "fine supporting performances" too, such as from former *Twin Peaks* star Joan Chen as Didi's "overwrought mother, struggling to manage the family in the absence of her husband", who is working back in Taiwan. Based on writer-director Sean Wang's own childhood, this is a raw, uncompromising and "intensely personal" portrayal of growing up.

I found it "an absolute joy", said Deborah Ross in *The Spectator*. "Funny, moving and authentic", *Didi* "takes you right back to being 13. (Agh!)." The film, it's true, "doesn't especially break new ground" – we watch Didi have his "first proper run-in with alcohol"; practise kissing on the back of his hand; and so on. But somehow it all "feels fresh and real and new". The film has a "non-sucrose" tone, set by Wang's "reserved, undemonstrative performance", said Peter Bradshaw in *The Guardian*. Lesser directors might have offered a "neat, emollient" ending; not this one. This is a "cool, downbeat and satisfying piece of work".



Harold and the Purple Crayon

1hr 32mins (PG)

Drab children's adventure

★★

"A big hearted ode to the power of young imagination, this children's fantasy stars Zachary Levi as a gormless man-child who can create whatever he wants with his magic crayon," said Ed Potton in *The Times*. "Stop sniggering, it's not aimed at you", and you might be glad of it if you have children to entertain over the next few weeks. Adapted from the 1955 children's book by Crockett Johnson, the film starts off as an animation in which Harold (Levi) draws a door from his cartoon dimension into the real world and steps through it with his animal friends, Moose and Porcupine. In the real world, they promptly transform into humans played respectively by Lil Rel Howery and Tanya Reynolds. The trio's naivety soon gets them into scrapes, from which they escape by using Harold's trusty crayon to conjure up a helicopter, a wrecking ball and a selection of animal hybrids, including "a gruesome spider-fly". The film will "probably play best with seven- to 12-year-olds", but "its wholesome message about the importance of creativity is surely one we can all get behind".

Not me, said Jesse Hassenger in *The Guardian*. I hated this film. "Almost nothing" about it works: the characters "don't even make dream-logic sense"; the story is driven in part by "crassly opportunistic brand partnerships"; the visual effects are "drab". You'd be better off reading the book. It's a pity that this adaptation is so unlike its source text, in which Harold is a "little boy", not a "goofy" grown-up, said Brian Viner in the *Daily Mail*. Although it's not devoid of fun, I spent most of the film "simmering" with indignation that Johnson's story had been so traduced.

Atomic People: harrowing BBC documentary about Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The survivors of the nuclear bombs dropped by the US on Hiroshima and Nagasaki are known in Japan as "*hibakusha*", said Lucy Mangan in *The Guardian*. This "deeply moving, quietly devastating" BBC documentary marries archive footage from the time with interviews with a handful of survivors, who are now octogenarians "at least". Shigeaki, who was eight in 1945, remembers a young woman swaying as she walked towards him while clutching her internal organs. Chieko, then 15, recalls seeing a group of schoolchildren with what "looked like long strands of seaweed hanging from their waists. It was the skin of their legs peeling off." Another survivor says that the noise of insects always reminds her of "the voices of the dying who begged her for



Hibakusha Kikuyo Nakamura

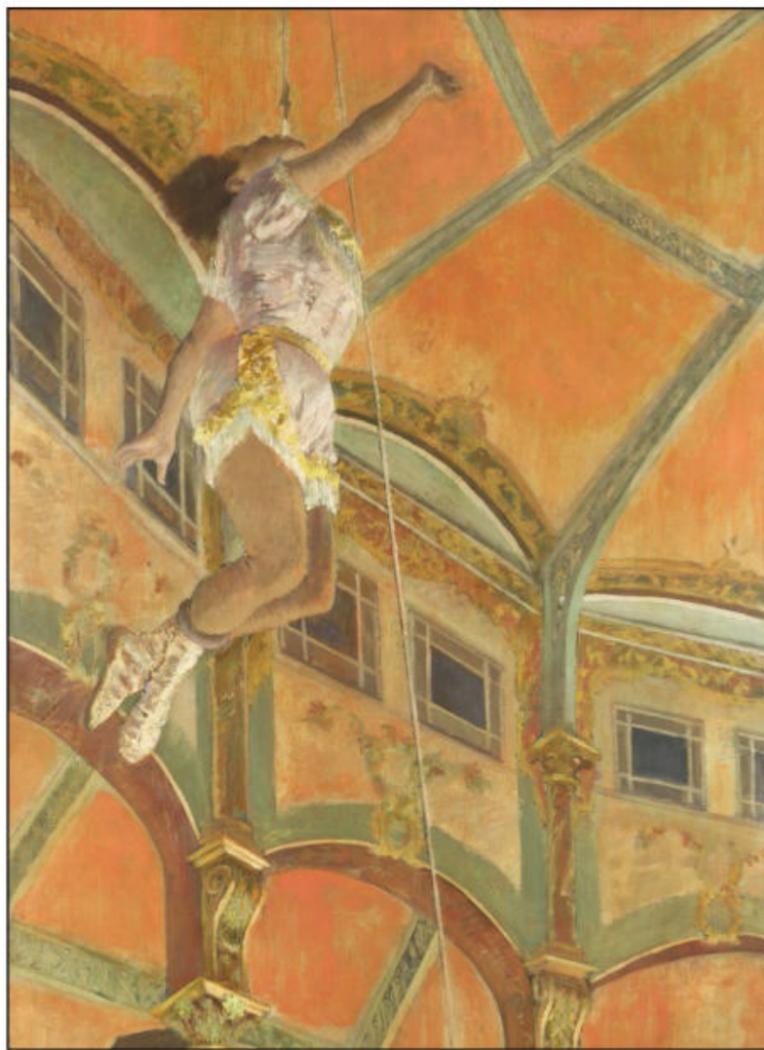
help and water". The documentary is, at times, "almost unbearable" to watch, but these witnesses "are asking us not to look away".

After Japan's surrender, talk of the bombing (and criticism of the Americans) was forbidden, and *hibakusha* were regarded with shame, said Christopher Stevens in the *Daily Mail*. Their relief at being able to talk openly is "palpable" here; and though their stories are harrowing, "this is our last chance" to hear them. The documentary is more than just a "perspective-shifting history lesson", said Dan Einav in the *FT*. "By confronting us with the horrors of what they experienced, the *hibakusha* provide us with the most urgent, unflinching and unequivocal warning possible about where nuclear escalation may lead."

Exhibition of the week **Discover Degas & Miss La La**

National Gallery, London WC2 (020-7747 2885, nationalgallery.org.uk). Until 1 September. Free entry

Edgar Degas's *Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando* is "one of the wilder paintings in the National Gallery's collection", said Laura Freeman in *The Times*. Painted in 1879, it depicts the celebrated circus performer of its title "hanging on by her teeth" from a dangling rope, viewed from a "crick-your-neck perspective" that heightens the sense of jeopardy. Yet famous as the painting is, Miss La La herself has long since passed into obscurity. Born Anna Olga Albertina Brown to a white mother and an African-American father in Prussia, she gained fame as an acrobat in 1870s Paris, performing "death-defying stunts from a flying trapeze". This small but "scene-stealing" free show at the National Gallery attempts to show this fascinating figure "in the round", exploring her life and the particular circumstances that led Degas to portray her. His painting is displayed alongside preparatory sketches, archive material, photos and posters, resulting in a "top-notch" exhibition "put together with great showmanship".



Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando (1879): "brehtaking"

Degas's "brehtaking" painting gives the impression that it was created with total spontaneity, said Laura Cumming in the *Observer*. Indeed, it's as though the artist is up there with her, "hanging mid-air in the moment". Yet, as we learn here, the composition was painstakingly achieved, the result of months of "sketching at the circus and painting at the studio". Degas even hired an architectural draughtsman to

consult about his depiction of the dome of the Cirque Fernando – an auditorium also painted by the likes of Seurat, Picasso and Renoir; some of these works are in this show. But its real star is Olga, as La La was known offstage. One of only two black subjects Degas painted, she is represented here in an "enthraling" display of period photographs. The images document her life from circus stardom to old age, always showing her as "a model of intense professionalism, poise and dignity".

Olga was clearly "fearless", said Jackie Wullschläger in the *FT*. For her act, a cannon would be attached to chains, which she would then grasp between her teeth while dangling upside down from a trapeze, and so keeping the cannon suspended in mid-air while it was fired. Her work was as dangerous as it looked: her stage partner died rehearsing a similar stunt to that depicted by Degas. The artist "loved to paint working women" and afforded his subjects "empathy and respect". Still, Miss La La stands out in his art: Degas "monumentalises her", rhyming her body with the circus's "curving arches", her costume's "gold trimming" flowing into its "gilded decor". It's exciting, too, to see the many drawings in which the artist refined his ideas for the final composition and, while the show makes an ideological attempt to reclaim "black models 'from the shadows'", neither Degas or Olga are "pinned down by cultural theory". Overall, this show is a "delight".

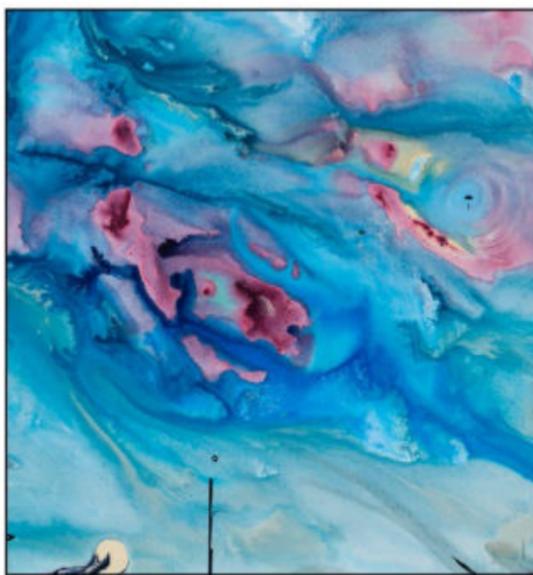
Where to buy...

The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery

Your Mind is Now an Ocean

at Pilar Corrias

We are well and truly into high summer, a fact reflected by the number of stopgap group exhibitions taking place around the galleries. This is a show that cleaves to that formula, but it does at least cohere around a fairly summery theme – to wit, the sea and its role as a source of inspiration to eight contemporary artists, including Manuel Mathieu. There are some nice pictures, too: Sophie von Hellermann's *Out of the Blue* is an unusual composition in which we watch a group of bathers from the perspective of someone further out at sea or even – who knows? – a shark; Ragna Bley's luscious, floaty abstraction *Drift*, meanwhile, evokes the feeling of gazing into a rock pool reflecting a particularly



Mathieu's *The Poetry In our Disappearance*

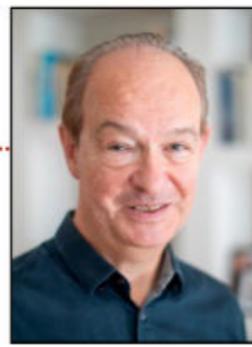
resplendent sunset. Best of the lot is Mary Ramsden, whose tense, spiky compositions are caught halfway between John Minton's illustrations for Elizabeth David cookbooks and something more adventurous and abstract altogether. Prices range from £10,000 to £70,000.

2 Savile Row, London W1 (020-7323 7000). Until 30 August

Tatchell's portrait

"A vibrant portrait of the LGBTQ+ and human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell has been hung in the National Portrait", says Harriet Sherwood in *The Guardian* – "as part of a drive to better reflect the diversity of the UK" in the gallery. The painting, by Sarah Jane Moon, shows Tatchell in a casual pose, wearing a rainbow tie. Tatchell, who has experienced more than 300 violent assaults and has been arrested or detained by police more than 100 times, said he was "delighted and honoured" to have his portrait in the gallery "alongside so many esteemed public figures". He added: "I love the bold, expressive, joyful style, which reflects the spirit of my campaigns." Now 72, Tatchell is a habitual tie-wearer. He realised many years ago that people had "preconceptions about campaigners in T-shirts. I put on a tie and people started treating me much more seriously, so I've stuck with ties ever since."





Best books... Peter Bradshaw

The writer and film critic chooses his favourites. He will discuss his latest short story collection, *The Body in the Mobile Library* (Lightning Books £9.99), at the Edinburgh Book Festival on 14 August (edbookfest.co.uk)

The Autograph Man by Zadie Smith, 2002 (Penguin £9.99). Smith's second novel is the least liked of her work, and some are unconvinced by the ventriloquised Jewishness of her autograph collector, Alex-Li Tandem. But I love the unstoppable garrulity and comedy that pours out of this book and its very prescient, pre-social-media world of celebrity obsession.

De Profundis by Oscar Wilde, 1905 (Penguin £7.99). When you're used to the dapper lightness and poised wit that comes so naturally to Wilde, it's an extraordinary experience to arrive at the explicit seriousness of this, his extended rebuke from

Reading Gaol to his duplicitous lover, Lord Alfred Douglas. It is moving and majestic, while sacrificing nothing of elegance or delicacy in the prose.

The Mars Room by Rachel Kushner, 2018 (Vintage £9.99). A great prison novel: brilliant, vehement and scary. It is the story of Romy, a former table dancer in a club called The Mars Room, who is now doing time in a women's correctional facility in California for murdering her stalker, and it is made clear to her that she will likely never see her young son again.

Collected Stories by Roald Dahl, 2006 (Everyman £20). It's still amazing to me how

many people don't know of Dahl's genius as the author of adult short stories, although some of these had 1970s TV fame with their adaptation as the *Tales of the Unexpected*. One of the nastiest, tastiest and funniest is *Royal Jelly*.

Father Sergius (1911) from **The Complete Short Stories, Volume 2** by Leo Tolstoy, 2001 (Everyman £20). A black-tragicomic masterpiece: a tempestuous, conceited young prince, idolising the tsar and the supposed virginity of his fiancée, is astonished to learn that they have had an affair. He retreats to become a monk, renamed Father Sergius, and his increasing renown as a holy man leads to chaos.

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

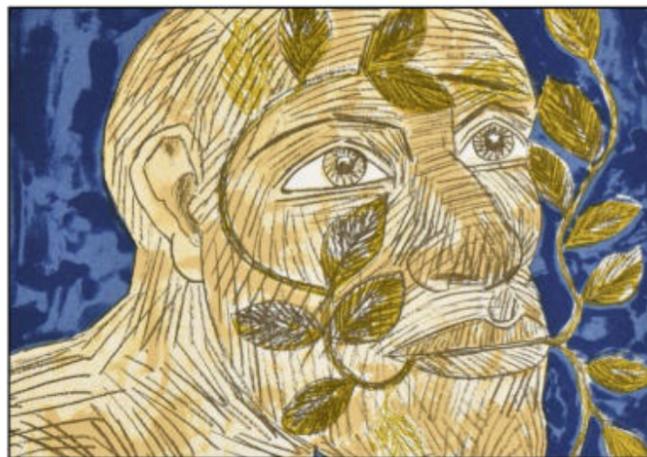
Timothy Shearer's swansong after 17 years as artistic director of Regent's Park Open Air Theatre is a crowd-pleasing new production of **Fiddler on the Roof**, the classic musical about life in the shtetl. Until 21 September, Regent's Park, London NW1 (openairtheatre.com).

Edinburgh is never short of "heart-on-sleeve tribute shows", but **June Carter Cash: The Woman, Her Music and Me** – singer Charlene Boyd's homage to the country star – "looks a cut above the rest" (Times). Until 24 August, Edinburgh Fringe; then touring Scotland until 22 September (nationaltheatrescotland.com).

Elisabeth Frink: Natural Connection is an indoor and outdoor exhibition of the artist's work bequeathed to Yorkshire Sculpture Park by her family; it displays "her enduring passion for the natural world" (Daily Telegraph). Until 23 February 2025, YSP, Wakefield (ysp.org.uk).

Book now

Billed as a "once-in-a-century" exhibition, **Van Gogh: Poets and Lovers** brings together



Detail from Elisabeth Frink's *Green Man (Blue)*, 1992

some of the artist's best-loved works painted over two pivotal years in the south of France. 14 September-19 January 2025, National Gallery, London WC2 (nationalgallery.org.uk).

Tickets are selling fast for the **Cliveden Literary Festival**, which returns with a weekend of lively talks by speakers including Salman Rushdie, Emily Maitlis and Ian McEwan. 21-22 September, Cliveden House, Taplow, Berkshire (clivedenliteraryfestival.org).

The Archers: what happened last week

Emma and Susan talk about George's changeable moods; he's upset by everyone calling him a hero. There's tension at the vet practice and Jakob tells Alistair some home truths. Chelsea sets George up on a date with Tilly Button, but can't understand why he turns her down. Chris and Brian collect Alice from rehab; Brian wants her to change her plea, but she refuses. Brian has a run-in with Jazzer, who says Alice needs to take responsibility. Alice overhears Brian telling Chris; she says her fragmented memories won't let her plead guilty. Jakob takes Paul out for dinner; Paul apologises for the tension at work and opens up about his feelings around Denise and Alistair's affair. Emma's worried about George after seeing photos of him looking miserable; Chelsea suggests he's struggling and they wonder if it's PTSD. Emma tries to talk to George; he eventually breaks down, telling her everything about the accident and that he was driving Alice's car. Emma says he needs to be brave and tell the police, but he's sure he'll go to prison and begs her not to tell anyone.

Television

Programmes

My Tiger Family

Documentary following a family of tigers over 50 years in their habitat in Rajasthan, as witnessed by one man who has dedicated his life to them. Mon 12 Aug, BBC2 21:00 (60mins).

Freddie Flintoff's Field of Dreams: On Tour

Two years after the acclaimed first series – and following his life-threatening accident – the cricketer brings his team of young players from Preston to compete in India. Tue 13 Aug, BBC1 21:00 (60mins).

Warship: Life in the Royal Navy

Julia Bradbury and J.J. Chalmers present a three-part look at life inside the Royal Navy, starting on board its biggest ship, the aircraft carrier *HMS Prince of Wales*. Tue 13 Aug, C5 21:00 (60mins).

Untold: The Rise and Rise of Taylor Swift

An investigation into the pop star's use of marketing to inspire devotion among fans. Tue 13 Aug, C4 23:05 (35mins).

Films

Dial M for Murder (1954)

Grace Kelly and Ray Milland star in Hitchcock's classic thriller about a man plotting to kill his wife. Sun 11 Aug, BBC2 16:15 (105mins).

Can You Ever Forgive Me?

(2018) Richard E. Grant and Melissa McCarthy star in this poignant comedy based on the memoir of real-life literary fraudster Lee Israel. Tue 13 Aug, Film4 01:00 (135mins).

Bridge of Spies (2015)

Steven Spielberg's drama stars Tom Hanks as a lawyer defending a captured Russian spy (Mark Rylance) at the height of the Cold War. Wed 14 Aug, BBC1 23:20 (135mins).

New to streaming

Stevie Van Zandt: Disciple

A "sprawling biography of one of rock's most likeable veterans", the E Street Band guitarist who also starred in *The Sopranos* (Guardian). On Sky Documentaries/NOW.

Bad Monkey

Vince Vaughan stars in this oddball comedy crime series adapted from a Carl Hiaasen novel. From 14 August on Apple TV+.

Colourful houses



▲ **Cornwall:** The Abbey, Penzance. An attractive Georgian gothic-fronted property with earlier 17th century origins, set in a commanding clifftop position with views to St Michael's Mount. 5 suites, 1 further bed, shower room, kitchen, study, 2 receps; two self-contained flats (1-bed and 2-bed), garden, parking. £1.95m; Pritchard & Co (01608-801030).



◀ **Devon:** Riverside Road East, Newton Ferrers. A charming cottage overlooking the wooded fringe of the River Yealm. 3 beds, family bath, kitchen/breakfast room, recep, studio, garden. £850,000; Marchand Petit (01752-873311).

▶ **Essex:** Crawley House, Elmdon. Grade II house built c.1550. 6 beds, 3 baths, kitchen/breakfast room, 4 receps, garden, barn, parking. £1.295m; Mullucks (01799-520520).



▲ **Devon:** Beenleigh Manor, Harbertonford, Totnes. Medieval manor house with approx. 150 acres of farmland. 9 beds, 3 baths, 2 kitchens, 4 receps, garden, outbuildings, parking. £2.75m; Luscombe Maye (01803-869920).

▶ **Carmarthenshire:** Pant y Ffynnon, Llanfynydd. This 18th century farmhouse with bucolic views has been fully renovated. Main suite, 3 further beds, family bath, kitchen, 3 receps, barns, garden, parking. £1.2m; Inigo (020-3687 3071).





▲ **Suffolk:** Dodds Cottage, Whepstead. Grade II 16th century thatched cottage in a delightful rural location. 4 beds, family bath, shower, kitchen/breakfast room, 2 receps, outbuildings, garden, parking. £650,000; Jackson-Stops (01284-700535).

◀ **Edinburgh:** Old Craig, Craighouse. A fully refurbished 16th century Scots Baronial house situated on Easter Craiglockhart Hill Nature Reserve. 5 suites, kitchen/dining room, 5 receps, workshop, garden, outbuildings, parking. £2.45m; Savills (0131-247 3770).



▲ **Surrey:** Barley Mow Road, Englefield Green. This handsome pink period house dates back to 1700 and overlooks the village green. Main suite, 4 further beds (1 en suite), family bath, kitchen/breakfast room, 2 receps, garden, parking. £1.65m; Strutt & Parker (01753-257217).



▲ **Hampshire:** Tyrells Lane, Burley, Ringwood. A secluded house surrounded by mature gardens located in the New Forest. Main suite, 3 further beds, family bath, 2 showers, kitchen/breakfast room, 2 receps, study, garden, parking. £1.95m; John D. Wood (01590-540139).



Greville Place, St John's Wood NW6

6 bedrooms | 6 bathrooms | 3 reception rooms | 3 car parking spaces | Garden
 Approximately 6,149 sq ft | EPC F | Freehold | Council Tax band H

An exquisite, recently refurbished, Grade II listed Georgian villa built circa 1810, with an excellent south east-facing garden, off street parking, and a double garage.

Guide price £10,950,000

Knight Frank St John's Wood
 declan.selbo@knightfrank.com
 020 7586 2777



Walton Court, Walton-on-Thames KT12

24-hour resident hosts | Fitness Centre | Furnished/Unfurnished | EPC C | Council Tax band E
 Available now | Minimum length of tenancy 3 months | Deposit amount varies

A brand-new build to rent development of one to three bedroom apartments exclusively for tenants in leafy Walton-on-Thames.

Guide prices from £456 per week

Knight Frank ILM
 zuzanna.zych@knightfrank.com
 020 8176 9755

The Park *Queensway, London W2*
(020-3959 9000)

On the face of it, The Park is not “the most thrilling of prospects”, says Tom Parker Bowles in *The Mail on Sunday*: “a ground-floor restaurant in Park Modern, that brand spanking newbuild beside Hyde Park, where the penthouse could be yours for a mere £60m”. In most hands, it would be little more “than a glorified refectory” offering expensive sustenance to the “terminally rich”. But the famed restaurateur Jeremy King – who recently opened the Arlington, his much anticipated reimagining of *Le Caprice* – is at the helm here, and he’s done a superb job. The all-day menu, which “has an American accent but a European heart”, is a “beauty”: crab linguine; shrimp cocktail that comes as five “plump beauties with a horseradish-heavy, chilled tomato dip”; a Cobb salad that is “exactly as it should be”. Lunch on Saturdays, alas, is brunch – “I hate brunch” – but even that is done well: French toast, steak with eggs, “an immaculate chicken Milanese, golden and glorious”. The service is “deluxe”, as is the room: “handsome and flooded with light, all clean lines and blonde wood, vibrant Horst P. Horst photos and good art”. In all, it’s “delightful, and most of all, good old-fashioned fun”. *About £25 per head.*



The Park: “good old-fashioned fun”

Birmingham; and now it has arrived in London, in a huge “600-cover pleasure palace” on tourist-heavy Shaftesbury Avenue. I went expecting the food to be like a “Bavarian-themed Wetherspoon”, where the ping of the microwave would signal the arrival of “cheap, cheerful stodge”, says Grace Dent in *The Guardian*. But the food is “much, much better than it needs to be, especially this close to Leicester Square”. Do order one of the giant pretzels, which come with sweet mustard and pickles (the jalapeño one is the best: “a hunk of warm, spicy carbs with a variety of dippy things that’s hard not to love”). The *schweinshaxe* pork knuckle, which is laden with a “huge, crisp

piece of crackling”, is a must too, its meat “seasoned with juniper, caraway, fennel and black pepper”. But the special thing about Albert’s Schloss isn’t really the food: it is the fact that there’s usually something fun going on – such as the weekly “Kunst Cabaret”. Sure, the place is “deeply silly”, but it is clean and welcoming, “and has friendly staff and nonstop giant pretzels. I had more fun here than I’ve had at many a Michelin-starred restaurant.” *From about £25 a head, plus drinks and service.*

Lilac *57-58 Broad Street, Lyme Regis, Dorset* (07733-132523)

The entrance to Lilac is a bit like a coal hole, says William Sitwell in *The Daily Telegraph*: you clamber down some steps on Lyme Regis’s main drag, and find yourself in a 400-year-old cellar, with stone floors, “cosy seating and a handsome curved bar”. The food, from chef Harriet Mansell, is “deliriously good, with a menu that sings with the ingredients of this part of Dorset”, and “saucing wizardry that elevates it to the sublime”. Highlights include the sea bass crudo, which comes “in a heavenly fragrant sauce”; the wild rabbit stew, in which “wild bunny, rendered soft as a toy”, is complemented with white asparagus and rocket pesto; and the beef fillet, which is “dressed in a rich gravy ingeniously tempered by little chunks of rhubarb and celery”. The service is a little perfunctory – but with such “scrumptious” food it hardly matters. *About £65 a head, excluding drinks and service.*

Albert’s Schloss *20-24 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1* (020-8165 0000)

The Bavarian mini-chain Albert’s Schloss has outposts in Liverpool, Manchester and

Recipe of the week: pistachio cake with lemon cream and raspberries

Cake with cream and fruit: simple but so satisfying to eat and cook, says Mike Davies. It’s perfect for a dinner party because every element can be made ahead of time. Inevitably you will have leftover cake, which is ideal because, in my opinion, cake gets better as it gets older. I even like to eat it straight from the fridge, when the butter has set and the cake is heavy-textured and cold. I suggest buying the lemon curd (though you could of course make it). The raspberries are unadulterated, but don’t stint on quantity.

For the cake: 450g caster sugar 450g butter, plus extra for greasing zest of 2 lemons 1 vanilla pod, split lengthways and seeds scraped 6 eggs 200g plain flour 450g shelled pistachios, coarsely ground in a food processor (if you are feeling very flush, look for peeled pistachios – they are so delicious and will turn your cake a brilliant bright green) 100ml brandy

For the cream: 200ml double cream 100g lemon curd zest of 1 lemon golden caster sugar (optional) *To finish:* lots of raspberries

- Preheat your oven to 180°C/160°C fan/gas mark 4, and line and butter a 30cm (12in) cake tin. Cream the sugar, butter, lemon zest and vanilla seeds using a food processor or stand mixer until pale and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time until fully incorporated. This might cause the mixture to separate, but don’t worry, when you add the flour it will come back together.

- Turn the mixer off and fold in the flour, ground pistachios, and brandy (with a wooden spoon). Pour the batter into the cake tin and bake for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, depending on the oven, or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Allow the cake to cool in the tin.

Once cooled, remove, and this cake can be kept in a lidded container at room temperature or in the fridge. It will last longer



in the fridge and if, like me, you don’t mind a bit of cold cake, this might be the way to go.

- For the cream: whip the cream to soft peaks, then gently fold in the lemon curd and lemon zest with a spatula. I have made sugar optional in this recipe because its necessity will be determined by the sweetness of the curd. If you feel like it needs a little extra sweetness, add some golden caster sugar to the cream before whipping. The lemon cream can be made up to 2 days in advance and kept in the fridge until required.

- I like to serve this dessert at the table. A whole cake is a nice centrepiece to finish the meal. Serve each slice of cake with a generous spoonful, or two, of cream and a big pile of raspberries, and perhaps a glass of muscat or sweet sherry alongside.

Taken from Cooking for People by Mike Davies, published by Pavilion at £30.

To buy from The Week Bookshop for £23.99 (incl. p&p), call 020-3176 3835 or visit theweekbookshop.co.uk.

Lotus Emeya: finally, a serious rival for Porsche's Taycan

The Taycan – Porsche's bestselling EV – has dominated the executive-super saloon-GT sector since its launch in 2019. Now, however, it has a new rival: the pure electric Lotus Emeya. It couldn't be further from a traditional Lotus, said Evo, but the marque's first four-door, four-seat GT car has "real presence"; for the Taycan, it represents "serious competition".



Lotus Emeya
from £94,950

There are three versions available: the basic Emeya, the S and R. All cars have a new 102kWh battery pack, offering a claimed 379 miles in the basic and the S models, and 270 miles in the R one. With 905bhp and capable of 0-62mph in just 2.8 seconds, the R will grab the headlines, said Autocar, but the S isn't exactly slow – with 603bhp, it can sprint to 62mph in 4.2 seconds. And while the 2,590kg R feels "big and boisterous", the 100kg-lighter S feels "vaguely sensible on

the road". It has "palpable class"; with good handling, it's easier to balance, and sweeter in and out of corners than the "lunatic" R. The S takes 18 minutes to charge from 10% to 80% on a 350kW charger, or five-and-a-half hours to go from zero to 100% on a 22kW wall-box. It has in-built route guidance linking with charging options, and will reroute if a charger is occupied.

The "opulent" cabin is dominated by the central touchscreen, which is crisp and responsive but robs the cockpit of "some old-fashioned GT romance". Far more spacious than the Taycan, the Lotus is "flamboyantly roomy" said PistonHeads. The excellent seats are mounted too high, but they are "exceptionally comfortable". And while the rear space is huge, the 509-litre boot is disappointingly small. But, overall, this is a "practical, well-assembled luxury car".

The best... new space-saving kitchen kit



◀ **Wonder Oven** Small but mighty, Our Place's dinky new 6-in-1 countertop oven can air fry, bake, roast, grill, reheat, and toast, with steam infusion. It measures less than 30cm in height and width, yet can accommodate a 2kg chicken (£195; fromourplace.co.uk).



▲ **Stackable Pantry Basket** A Place for Everything has great storage solutions, including these stackable open baskets, which have label holders and come in two widths (from £12.40; aplaceforeverything.co.uk).

▶ **Kitchenaid Go Cordless System** These cordless appliances – including a hand mixer, a chopper, grinder and blender – all use the same removable rechargeable battery and, of course, have no messy cables to clutter things up (from £179; kitchenaid.co.uk).



▶ **Joseph Joseph Space Cookware** This new range has "ingenious" folding handles, which means each piece will take up 50% less cupboard space. The pans are durable and non-stick, and stack vertically (from £85 for a frying pan; josephjoseph.com).



◀ **Tealby Freshly Cut Herb Keeper** Free up space on your windowsill or in your fridge drawer with this herb storage unit that fits neatly into the fridge door. It holds 380ml of water and has vents to allow the herbs to breathe (£20; coleandmason.com).

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

Tips of the week... packing tips for holidays

- Prioritise clothes with a dual use: a plain swimsuit, for instance, can double as a top with a skirt. Opt for a sun hat that rolls up or a baseball cap rather than a wide-brim one. Packing similar items together in packing cubes will help keep things organised.
- Pack a tote bag for shopping trips, a waterproof bag for swimming things, and a fast-drying towel for your last day.
- A small cross-body bag for your phone and passport will be useful en route.
- Put an adaptor on your phone charger before you pack it, so you don't forget it.
- Check your airline's size and weight allowances for luggage. Choose a lightweight bag that will be easy to identify on the carousel.
- If you're just taking hand luggage, decant toiletries into travel-sized pots. You can always buy sunscreen on arrival.
- Pack a spare outfit that rolls up easily, plus swimwear and essentials (contact lenses, medicines) in your cabin bag in case your hold luggage gets lost or delayed.

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN

And for those who have everything...



Dab'O's glass diffusing globes can hold up to a litre of water, which they slowly release to keep your house plants alive while you're away. Available in a range of colours, these are hand-blown in France and come in pairs, one large, one small.

£118; abask.com

SOURCE: FINANCIAL TIMES

Apps... the best apps for a smooth holiday

DB Navigator is great for planning journeys across Europe by train, but you'll need to go to the individual operators to buy your tickets. For the US, try **Wanderu**.

Atlas Obscura is a guide to "cool, hidden and unusual" things to do or see.

FlightAware will let you know the status of your flight, with real-time worldwide flight traffic information and flight alerts.

Tomorrow.io has super accurate weather forecasting, and you can select an activity, such as golf or eating outside, to find out when would be the best time to do it.

Google Maps is great for navigating cities. You can store chunks of maps offline, and turn-by-turn directions will still operate.

AllTrails has 400,000 hiking routes with distance, time and elevation listed. Subscribers can download maps and get a nudge if they take a wrong turn.

Currency is a no-nonsense currency convertor, with up-to-date exchange rates for more than 160 currencies and countries.

SOURCE: THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

This week's dream: a remarkable road trip in Patagonia

Argentine Patagonia is “thrilling”, says Stanley Stewart in the FT – “the scale of it, the solitude, those long empty roads, the Patagonian winds sweeping vast skies clean, the Andes rising in the west”. This is “the land of great drives” – most famously the journey to the deep south along Ruta 40. People come from all over the world to do it, in everything from camper vans, and 4x4s to pushbikes. But there are other, equally spectacular and far less-travelled roads, as I discovered on a recent trip to the region – a 12-night adventure in a 4x4. Heading out from the coastal town of Comodoro Rivadavia, I drove inland for six hours to the Andes, before heading south on Ruta 41, through “savage uninhabited country” where other vehicles became a rare sight: “for four hours I saw almost no one”.

The gravel road twisted through “woods of fairy-tale trees”, and past vistas of “scarred ethereal mountains rearing above water meadows where horses grazed”. In the Posadas valley, beneath the great summit of San Lorenzo, I stayed at the lonely



A land of “great drives” through “savage uninhabited country”

puma in the Caracoles Canyon, with its “soaring walls” and “cathedral hush”. And there’s much other wildlife to see, as well as the Cueva de las Manos Pintadas, a cliff face covered with painted hand prints – a “moving and strangely timeless” work of art, between 9,000 and 13,000 years old. *The 12-night trip costs from £7,000pp with Cazenove+Loyd (cazloyd.com).*

inn of Lagos del Furioso, perched on the isthmus between two lakes, one “electric blue”, the other a “delicate” green. The inn’s “old-fashioned painted cabins” were delightful, and I filled my days there with fly-fishing, kayaking, and picnicking on deserted beaches and in the gorge where the Rio Furioso “plunges through a narrow defile”. Heading further south, I reached Parque Patagonia, a conservation area run by Rewilding Argentina that now extends to roughly 700 square miles.

The park’s lodge, La Posta de Los Toldos, is like “a chic ranch house in Montana”, with a great chef and a good wine list. Guests can go looking for condors and

Getting the flavour of...



Short walks in the Dolomites

The “sawtooth” peaks of the Dolomites are among the most forbidding in the world – but hiking through them needn’t be demanding or strenuous, says James Stewart in *The Sunday Times*. On a seven-night trip to the Val Gardena with Inntravel, guests are given detailed route notes for eight self-guided walks that are between one and five miles long, and which make use of cable cars and funiculars to avoid steep climbs. That leaves plenty of time to enjoy the spa, sauna, steam room and infinity pool at the “spotless” hotel, La Perla – and to soak up the often breathtaking views along each path. Included are close-ups of towering granite pinnacles such as Sassolungo – the “show-stopper peak” that is often featured on tourism posters – and strolls through wildflower pastures of such “heart-stopping, bell-pealing beauty” that they look like pastoral visions “generated by AI”. *The trip costs from £1,255pp (inntravel.co.uk).*

© LINDE WANDHOFFER

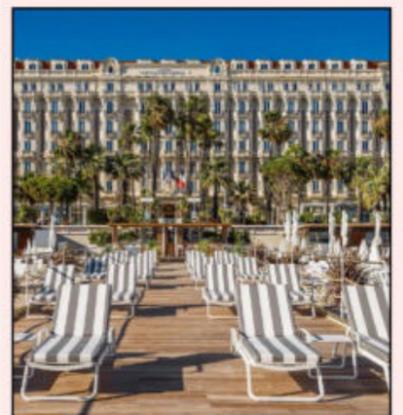
An oasis town in Morocco

Known as the “little Marrakech” for its terracotta-hued medina, Taroudant is among the most beautiful and “authentic” towns in Morocco, says Arta Ghanbari in *House & Garden*. Secluded in an oasis deep in the south of the country, it has two rambling old souks (where the goods are far cheaper than in Marrakech), spectacular 16th century ramparts (commanding fine views of the Atlas Mountains), and some lovely riad hotels, of which the best is Dar al Hossoun. It’s worth making a day trip to Tiout, with its “dusty pink” kasbah on a hill above lush palm groves, and spending at least an afternoon at the Palais Claudio Bravo, the former home of the eponymous Chilean hyper-realist artist – now a hotel with a superb restaurant and a museum housing “precious finds” from across North Africa and the Middle East.

Family adventures on Arran

The Isle of Arran is a great place for a holiday with younger children, says Fiona Kerr in *The Guardian*, only two hours by car and ferry from Glasgow. On a recent trip with my five- and eight-year-olds, we stayed at Balnagore Farm, a holiday let near the Neolithic stone circles of Machrie Moor (pictured). Wreathed in local legend, they were well worth seeking out – as were the dinosaur footprint on Kildonan Beach, the “dive-bombing” gannets near Holy Isle (spotted on a boat trip with Lamlash Cruises), and the “dramatic” falls of Eas Mor, the climax of a short but “vigorous” walk through a wooded valley. The island also has some good eateries, including the Mara Fish Bar, Cladach Beach House, the French Fox, the Parlour, and Blackwater Bakehouse.

Hotel of the week



Carlton Cannes France

The Carlton in Cannes “has always been at the centre of film industry razzmatazz”, and a recent revamp has only enhanced its “glamour”, says Lanie Goodman in *Condé Nast Traveller*. In the “show-stopping” lobby, original ceiling frescoes have been revealed, and the brass lift buttons are gleaming again. Cinephiles will love the “white-on-white” decor in room 623, where Hitchcock filmed the seduction scene with Grace Kelly and Cary Grant in *To Catch a Thief*. But the hotel has much to offer besides its “storied past” – including an excellent beach club, Cannes’ largest infinity pool, a “hi-tech” fitness centre and two excellent restaurants.

Doubles from about €330; carltoncannes.com.

Acclaimed Irish novelist who wrote *The Country Girls*

Edna O'Brien
1930-2024

Edna O'Brien, who has died aged 93, created a sensation with her debut novel, in 1960. Written from self-exile in London and based in part on her own experiences, *The Country Girls* was about two convent girls growing up in rural Ireland and their sexual awakening when they embark on their adult lives in Dublin. In the US and elsewhere, readers found O'Brien's writing "compelling, touching and truthful", said *The New York Times*. Young women's passions, and the intensity of their lives, had never been described with such honesty. But in Ireland the book caused an uproar. Denounced as a "smear on Irish womanhood", it was banned, and so were its two follow-up novels. Even O'Brien's family were appalled: she recalled that her mother, who adored her, "was too ashamed to be proud", and hid her copy of the book away.



O'Brien: a "savage eye"

A strikingly elegant woman, with auburn hair and green eyes, O'Brien came to be seen as a "glamorous" international literary star with a faint hint of scandal about her, said *The Daily Telegraph*. "Her views on sex were much quoted." But in her books, which became increasingly experimental, she explored, fearlessly, the full spectrum of female experience – "joy and sorrow, love, crossed love and unrequited love, success and failure, fame and slaughter". Having been criticised in Ireland for focusing on the Ireland of her youth, from the 1990s she set about examining the social and political changes sweeping her homeland, said *The Guardian*. *House of Splendid Isolation* dealt with the Troubles; *In the Forest* was based on a notorious triple murder in County Clare; *Down by the River*, also based on real events, was about a young victim of rape-incest seeking an abortion. "I am seen as a genteel, romantic writer," she said. "But the reality of what I'm doing is this: I am a savage writer with a savage eye. I write about the things we are not supposed to speak about."

Josephine Edna O'Brien was born in County Clare in 1930. Her mother was deeply pious. Her father was an alcoholic, prone to violent rages. To escape these, she'd wander into the fields to write stories. At home the only books were bloodstock reports and prayer books, said *The Times*, but in that small community, she was aware, she said, of "everyone's little history, the stuff from which stories and novels are made". Then, while training to become a pharmacist in Dublin, she acquired a copy of T.S. Eliot's introduction to the work of James Joyce. She became a committed Joycean, and later wrote a biography of the writer.

It was also in Dublin that she met her future husband, Ernest Gébler, a writer some 15 years her senior. He was married and their affair caused such a furore that, in 1959, they fled to London. She never lived permanently in Ireland again, but remained Irish, she said. "It is a state of mind as well as an actual country." In exile, she felt liberated to write, but Gébler became jealous of her talent – and controlling; she left him in 1964. Fiercely dedicated to her work, she wrote books, plays and screenplays for films including *X, Y and Zee* (1972). She mixed in starry circles. Paul McCartney came to a party at her house and tucked her sons into bed. She had an affair with Robert Mitchum; visited the White House; and went on an acid trip with R.D. Laing. Philip Roth described her as the best living female writer in English. She was still writing in her late 80s: her final book, 2019's *Girl*, was about the abduction of schoolgirls in Nigeria. By then, she had finally been accepted in Ireland, too. Her many garlands included the Irish Pen Lifetime Achievement Award. Her mother, however, had died unreconciled to her career and still fretting about her soul, said *The Times*. In a story based on their relationship, O'Brien wrote of wishing for a chance "to begin our journey all over again, to live our lives as they should have been lived, happy, trusting, and free of shame".

The only US soldier convicted over the My Lai massacre

William L. Calley Jr
1943-2024

William Calley, who has died aged 80, was the only US serviceman to be convicted in relation to the My Lai massacre of 1968, said the *Los Angeles Times*, when American troops slaughtered hundreds of unarmed civilians in a village in South Vietnam, and gang-raped several women and girls. A local memorial lists by name 504 victims of the massacre: 273 were women; 160 were aged between four and 12; and 50 were three or under.

The military initially managed to cover up the atrocity, but a soldier who'd heard about it started making noises, and the reporter Seymour Hersh investigated. When news broke, it shocked the world. At his court-martial, Calley, who'd been 24 at the time, insisted that he'd been following orders. He said he'd been told that My Lai was a Viet Cong stronghold and to kill "everything". His company had sustained numerous casualties in the area, a hotbed of Viet Cong activity; a few weeks earlier, they'd stumbled upon the body of a US soldier who'd been skinned alive. On 16 March, 100 or so men swept into My Lai; they met no enemy fire and saw only women, children and elderly men. Calley ordered the execution of dozens of civilians who'd been herded into an irrigation ditch. He shot a white-robed Buddhist monk and a two-year-old boy. Grenades were thrown; 246 houses were torched; the livestock was shot. Convicted of 22



Calley: made a scapegoat?

murders, he was sentenced to life. He served three years, mainly under house arrest. "Most people don't give a shit whether he's killed them or not," Richard Nixon observed, in response to thousands of letters demanding clemency for Calley. Many believed he'd been made a scapegoat.

William Calley was born in Miami in 1943. At school, he was caught cheating in a test and had to repeat a year. He spent time at a military academy, then graduated from a local high school, near the bottom of the class. Having dropped out of college, he took manual jobs. He was rejected when he tried to join the army in 1964, but in 1967, with the Vietnam War in full flow and casualties mounting, he was enlisted and sent to officer training on the basis of his time at military academy. Contemporaries said he could scarcely read a map. In a memoir in 1970, he said that it had been drummed into him during training that everyone in Vietnam was a potential threat; and he complained that the public was so "hung up" about the babies slain during the massacre, saying: "If we're in Vietnam another ten [years], if your son is killed by those babies, you'll cry at me, 'Why didn't you kill those babies that day?'" In his later years, he ran a jewellery shop; he married and divorced; and kept a low profile. He finally broke his silence with a public apology in 2009. He said he felt remorse every day, and agreed that he shouldn't have followed an unlawful order.

Perpetual lunacy



The extraordinary new **C1 Moonphase** from Christopher Ward. A watch that tracks the moon for 128 years – without missing a beat. With an aventurine glass dial infused with copper oxide to represent the night sky. And a 3D ‘moon’ sculpted from Globolight© – a luminous ceramic – that precisely follows the real moon’s journey across the sky. A watch this advanced can cost up to £45,000. But the C1 Moonphase starts from less than £2,000: the very definition of insanity.

Do your research.

 **Christopher
Ward**

christopherward.com



SCAN ME

HERE FOR FAMILIES FACING GRIEF



RUTH STRAUSS
FOUNDATION



#RedforRuth
 **2024**

Your support allows us to help
parents talk to their children about
their incurable cancer diagnosis.

**Text FIVE to 70600
to donate £5**

www.RuthStraussFoundation.com

Text messages cost the Donation Value, plus your standard network message charge (based on your service provider rates). Visit our website for full T&C's.

Registered charity in England & Wales 1183221



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



Apple/Berkshire Hathaway: et tu, Warren?

From a market perspective, the timing couldn't have been worse, said John Authers on Bloomberg. News that Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway had sold around half its stake in Apple – amounting to some \$50bn – in the second quarter broke last weekend, just as traders were finding any excuse to panic. “The sight of the world's most respected investor getting out of one of the Magnificent Seven” was hardly good for “rattled sentiment”; indeed, Buffett must take some of the blame for “Tokyo's selloff”. But from an investment standpoint, his timing was “as impeccable as ever”. Since Berkshire Hathaway began buying Apple's stock in 2016, it has “delivered a total return of nearly 800%”, noted Eric Platt in the Financial Times. Last year, Buffett began paring back his holding, and in early 2024 he “quickened the pace”. The sale of Apple and other stocks has lifted Berkshire's cash holdings to a record \$277bn: the cash is currently parked in short-term US Treasuries, awaiting buying opportunities. “Should you follow Buffett and dump your Apple stock?” asked Peter Cohan in Forbes. The best reason to hang on is that its AI strategy (hinging on a revamped Siri digital assistant) could motivate a mass upgrading of iPhones. Set against that, though, are decelerating revenues, declining sales in China and “legal woes”. It will be interesting to see if Buffett continues selling.

Greggs: stealing McDonald's lunch?

“The beloved northern baker” hosted a closing ceremony on the London Stock Exchange last week to celebrate “40 years as a listed business”, said William Turvill in The Sunday Times. Greggs has come a long way since 1984. In March, it knocked McDonald's off the top spot of the morning takeaway market, having stormed to a 19.6% share. Now it isn't just Egg McMuffins under threat, said Eri Sugiura in the FT. Having bagged the breakfast crown, Greggs – “riding high on the success of savvy marketing and continued expansion” – is gunning for lunch and dinner too. The chain, which is trumpeting a 14% rise in first-half sales, is planning to keep more of its stores open into the evening to flog snacks to punters on the way home from work. That is a big opportunity. And McDonald's is currently flagging, said Dominic Walsh in The Times. The world's biggest restaurant group last week reported its “first global drop in sales” since 2020 as it struggles to compete on price. Still, analyst Wayne Brown of Panmure Liberum warns against underestimating the Golden Arches, especially in its evening stronghold. “I don't think the public is falling out of love with McDonald's by any stretch of the imagination.”

PwC: China crisis

Who would want to carry the can as auditor of the collapsed Chinese property developer Evergrande? Already braced for a record fine, PwC now faces legal action from the company's liquidators, said the FT. The Big Four firm stands accused of “negligence” and “misrepresentation”, having given Evergrande “a clean bill of health” for more than a decade before it defaulted on some \$300bn of debt. The ramifications are serious, said Tom Howard in The Times. PwC China is the audit group's third-largest network firm after the UK and the US, employing 20,000. Now it faces a boycott. Following “window guidance” (unofficial verbal instructions) from the Chinese ministry of finance, local clients are exiting in droves, taking “hundreds of millions of dollars” in fees with them.

Seven days in the Square Mile

A massive sell-off in stock markets on Monday – partly prompted by fears of US recession – saw steep falls around the world and was likened to 1987's Black Monday. The US **Dow**, **Nasdaq** and **S&P 500** indices all fell by over 2%; the **FTSE 100** suffered its worst day in a year. But the brunt of the pain was felt in Asia – particularly Japan, where the **Nikkei** and **Topix** indices plunged by 12%. Most of the losses were recovered on Tuesday with 10% rebound. Japanese stocks rallied further on Wednesday after the Bank of Japan ruled out further interest rate rises.

The Bank of England lowered **interest rates** by a quarter-point to 5%, marking the UK's first rate cut since March 2020. On a visit to Washington, Chancellor Rachel Reeves added to speculation that she may increase **capital gains tax** in the October Budget by refusing to rule out a hike. The new Trade Secretary, Douglas Alexander, vowed to put Europe back at the heart of Britain's commercial policy: “our strategy won't be driven by post-imperial delusions”.

Shares in the engineering company **John Wood Group** lost more than a third of their value after **Sidara** junked its mooted £1.6bn takeover bid, citing “rising geopolitical risks and financial market uncertainty”. **Glencore** ditched a plan to spin off its coal business after shareholders objected. **X/Twitter** owner Elon Musk sued a group of companies, including **Mars** and **Unilever**, accusing them of plotting to “boycott” the site.

Google anti-trust ruling: a hammer blow for Big Tech

When Google was restructured to form Alphabet in 2015, its founding mantra, “Don't be evil”, was consigned to obscurity. Perhaps it's just as well. In a landmark case – described by US Attorney General Merrick Garland as “a historic win for the American people” – a judge has ruled that Google “violated” antitrust laws to maintain “an illegal monopoly” on online search, said Reuters. Judge Amit Mehta said Google struck exclusive deals with companies such as Apple and Samsung to cement its position as “the world's default search engine” on smartphones and browsers. It spent \$26.3bn in 2021 alone to maintain its dominant market share. “The ruling paves the way for a second trial to determine potential fixes” – possibly including the breakup of parent Alphabet.



Google: a “bellwether”?

in decades”, said Harvey Nriapia on FT.com. Alphabet intends to appeal the decision, which Kent Walker (its president of global affairs) said “recognises that Google offers the best search engine, but concludes that we shouldn't be allowed to make it easily available”.

It may take years for the “potential consequences to play out”, said Brian Fung and Clare Duffy on CNN. But this decision could prove as pivotal as the breakup of Standard Oil in 1911, or the busting in 1982 of AT&T's telephone monopoly – threatening Google's “ubiquity” just as AI-powered alternatives are emerging. A forced divestiture

of the search business would also sever Alphabet from its largest source of revenue, changing the landscape of online advertising. The ripples could spread even wider if this ruling becomes “a bellwether” for other major tech antitrust cases. Watch out, Apple and Amazon.

The case, initially filed by the Trump administration four years ago, is “the biggest win for antitrust enforcers against Big Tech

Issue of the week: global stock market meltdown

Markets suffered their worst day in years. Why did complacency turn to fear so abruptly?

“How quickly the mood turns,” said The Economist. For most of the year, stock markets have been on “a seemingly unstoppable bull run”. This week, they went into “free fall” with a speed and ferocity that shocked even market veterans. In Tokyo, the Nikkei plunged by 12% – its worst one-day fall since Black Monday in 1987 – in a sea of red repeated across Asia, said Bloomberg. “When the opening bell rang in New York, the Nasdaq plunged 6% in seconds.” Cryptocurrencies sank; Vix, a gauge of stock market volatility, skyrocketed. Whether these wild gyrations mark “the final bang of a global sell-off” or “the beginning of a protracted slump” is impossible to know. “But the pillars that have underpinned market gains for years have been shaken.”



Japan's Nikkei plunged by 12% on Monday

causing a typhoon in Japan”, said John Authers on Bloomberg. And it was exacerbated by fears that the lucrative “carry trade” – in which global traders take advantage of Japan’s low interest rates to borrow in yen to buy riskier assets elsewhere – may be unwinding. As a measure of calm returned on Tuesday, traders struggled to explain the violence of the sell-off, said the FT, with some pointing to “the exaggerated impact of algorithmic trading programs”. That was an irony that didn’t escape strategist Nicholas Smith of CLSA. “After all the excitement about the prospects of [artificial intelligence], it now looks like AI may have got us into this mess.”

“Financial markets are supposed to capture the wisdom of the crowd,” said James Mackintosh in The Wall Street Journal, “but on Monday the crowd ran in all directions waving its hands in the air screaming.” The sell-off was triggered when a feeble set of US jobs data prompted “a sudden switch in the economic narrative from soft landing to hard landing” – adding to a mix of “deflating hype about artificial intelligence” and a Bank of Japan rate rise. “But the triggers couldn’t possibly justify the scale of the moves.” This was a case of “a butterfly flapping its wings in New York

In the search for culprits, it is the Federal Reserve that “stands accused ... of being asleep to the risk” of a US recession and waiting too long to cut interest rates, said Nils Pratley in The Guardian. Goldman Sachs has upped its recession forecast from a 15% possibility, to 25%. The good news is that that “still represents decent odds of a gentle-ish landing”. But as we await the Fed’s September meeting, expect “every piece of economic data” to assume extra significance. The S&P 500 is still up by 10% this year, leaving “plenty of room for further wild days” if investors decide “the Fed has made a terrible error” and the recession odds are worsening. “August could be a long month.”

The UK rate cut: what the experts think

● Close call

“Don’t get too excited.” That, said Sabah Meddings on Bloomberg, was the message from central bank watchers after the Bank of England cut interest rates “for the first time since the pandemic”. In a “finely balanced” decision, the Monetary Policy Committee voted 5-4 to reduce rates from 5.25% to 5% – “a possible sign that further reductions may come only slowly and cautiously”. Governor Andrew Bailey was certainly “careful to manage any exuberance”, saying the BoE remains alert to the risk of inflation rising again. Nevertheless, this is a “turning point”. UK borrowing costs have been “stuck at a 16-year high”, weighing on the economy. The Bank’s decision “will give homeowners and businesses some relief, and maybe even the confidence to invest”.



The BoE: a cautious reduction

the FT. Emily Williams at Savills thinks buying activity this autumn could surge with “increasing confidence that mortgage rates are on course to return to more affordable levels”. Nationwide recently became the first to offer a five-year fixed deal below 4%, though plenty of experts are

playing down expectations. Tom Stevenson of Fidelity warns that rates will “eventually settle at higher levels than previously”.

● Move fast on savings

The rate cut means “the clock is ticking” to “secure the best savings rates”, said Lucy Andrews in The Sunday Times. As Myron Jobson of Interactive Investor observes: “banks and building societies have a history of passing on interest rate cuts as fast as possible on savings”. The best advice, said Anna Bowes of Savings Champion, is to “lock away some of your money for longer” if you can, in products such as fixed-rate bonds. The Access Bank is currently paying 5.25% on a one-year bond, 5.06% on a two-year bond and 4.81% over three years. Hampshire Trust Bank, meanwhile, has a good deal offering 4.55% over five years – rather higher than the average five-year bond, which Moneyfacts puts at 3.92%.

● Housing outlook

Markets reckon the Bank will make just one more quarter-point cut this year, said The Economist, bearing in mind “inflation is down but not out”. Although the headline rate has hit its 2% target, services inflation remains at 5.7%. Still, even a quarter-point cut was enough to boost confidence in the housing market, noted

Collectible cars

“The erratic, emotional nature of the classic car market” makes it hard to navigate without “crashing your finances”, says Alan Livsey in the FT. Here are some tips:

Study trends Middle-aged male buyers still dominate the market, but tastes shift with each generation. Demand for older models, such as the Austin-Healey 3000 Mk 3 and classic Aston Martins, has given way to cars dating from the 1970s to 1990s, notes John Mayhead of the Hagerty Price Guide: punters “remember them from their teenage years”. A 1987 Ford Sierra Cosworth RS500 model fetched £590,000. Rally racing models such as the Subaru Impreza are also having a moment.

Don’t hold out for returns Only “a small handful” of cars have beaten inflation since 1984. The stand-out performer is the Lamborghini Miura – produced from 1966-73 and “considered one of the first rear-engine supercars” – whose price has multiplied by over 195 times. Over the past six years, Porsche has outrun Ferrari, Aston Martin and Jaguar.

General tips “Buy something you really love.” Look for low-production-run models, unusual specs and “wow factor”. Some buyers go for beauty; others for performance: cars with “a race history” tend to hold their value. Establishing provenance is key: forgery “can be a problem”, and can require forensic investigation by mechanics.

Labour didn't bargain on the rout in equities

Ross Clark

The Spectator

The turmoil in stock markets – much of it centred on fears about growth – has presented Chancellor Rachel Reeves with “a political problem”, says Ross Clark. In 12 weeks’ time, she will deliver a Budget “based on the premise that the wealthy are doing well and can afford to be tapped for higher taxes” to pay for higher public sector wages. The trouble is that the current rout in global equities is making people with private pensions feel “a lot worse off”. And that spells problems for Reeves if, as rumoured, she’s “plotting to raid pension tax relief”. The market ructions won’t bother public sector workers as “most are on pensions that are guaranteed, salary-linked, inflation-proofed and underwritten by the taxpayer”. It’s a very different story, though, for those in the private sector. Reeves has promised not to raise taxes for working people, but “a stock market slide is only going to contribute to a sense of malaise”. Some governments are fortunate in their timing: it looked like Keir Starmer and Reeves “had walked into an economic recovery”. Suddenly, the outlook isn’t quite so rosy.

The ripples of the Murdoch dynastic drama

Editorial

Financial Times

Rupert Murdoch is “scripting a new episode” of his dynastic drama in the Nevada courts, where he is trying to amend the trust that holds the family interest in Fox and News Corp to give his elder son, Lachlan, full voting and decision-making powers at the expense of his siblings. Murdoch has “a reasonable rationale”, says the FT: Lachlan shares his political views, and right-wing leanings have helped his media outlets prosper. But problems arise when founders try to “rule from the grave”, and the “political rifts between Murdoch’s offspring do not bode well”. However, getting generational handovers right isn’t just an issue for the Murdochs. The question of how family businesses are run matters for economies, too. Some “two-thirds of all companies are family controlled”, and this is a pivotal moment for them. “Founders who made their mark in the second half of the 20th century are fading, making succession critical.” The interests of shareholders are ill-served by feuds between descendants. But at News Corp and Fox the stakes are far higher. “The ripples could extend well beyond the board room” to affect “the type and tone of news” we all consume.

No rush to buy Thames’s creaking assets

Nils Pratley

The Guardian

What does Thames Water’s latest disgrace – “top billing in a multi-year, multi-company sewage scandal” – mean for its dire financial position? At one level you could say it makes little difference, says Nils Pratley. Although a £104m penalty might be “close to the maximum” under regulator Ofwat’s powers, it’s “a rounding error” in the context of borrowings of £15.2bn. Yet seen another way, Ofwat’s damning report could have a big impact on Thames’s “great refinancing challenge”, because the detail reveals the scale of the improvements needed. An astonishing 67% of the utility’s wastewater treatment works were found to have “capacity and operational issues”. It’s yet another reminder that “the direct source of Thames’ woes is not the financial engineering and dividend-extraction over the years, appalling though that has been. It is old-fashioned operational failings.” Thames’s refinancing script still fondly imagines new investors can be found to replace the current owners, who’ve declared the company “uninvestable”. Dream on. Ultimately bondholders, still refusing to shoulder losses of around £5bn, will have to take the hit.

Why bother with industry awards?

Bartleby

The Economist

Industry awards are as ridiculous as they are ubiquitous, says Bartleby. “All the attributes of glamorous awards shows are replicated” save for one vital ingredient: glamour. “Some categories are so absurd that you start to suspect someone is playing a practical joke.” So why do we persist with these ceremonies? Some reasons are obvious. A night out is always fun and awards add lustre to the winners’ CVs. But these shindigs also survive because they tap into employees’ deeper needs. “There is validation in knowing that your boss put you forward for a gong, or that the sanitation industry sees you as a rising star.” Awards also make people feel as if they’re on a team. “Competition is one of the central facts of capitalism, but for many employees the contest can feel abstract” – except for that one evening a year, in the civilised surroundings of a large ballroom, when nominees come face to face with the employees of other companies. “Winners are greeted as heroes; losers get consoling pats on the back.” Awards might be absurd, “but they make you feel as if you belong”.

City profiles

Nicolas Puech

Hermès heir Nicolas Puech, 81, shocked his family last year by announcing his plan to adopt his former gardener and “bequeath him half of his €12bn fortune” – a thank-you for the kindness he’d shown during the pandemic, says Marianka Swain in *The Daily Telegraph*. To that end, he needed to liquidate six million shares in the luxury giant. The problem was, they couldn’t be found. So Puech pointed the finger at his financial adviser, accusing him of a “gigantic fraud”. Last month, a Geneva court upheld the finding there was no evidence for this – leaving the mystery of the missing billions “unsolved”. Could Puech’s estranged family somehow have managed to regain his 5.7% stake? At any rate, fences are being mended. In February, Puech, accompanied by his former gardener, attended his brother Bertrand’s funeral.

Elon Musk



“Not a day seems to go by that Elon Musk isn’t being sued or threatening to sue someone,” said Deadline. Now the Tesla founder is back at legal war with OpenAI and his ex-partner in the venture, Sam Altman. “The perfidy and deceit is of Shakespearean proportions,” alleges Musk, who invested \$45m in 2015. He claims OpenAI shifted from its advertised purpose – “to benefit the public and protect humanity” – into a vehicle for self-enrichment. Odd that Musk should be taking the moral high ground at the same time that he’s exciting the British mob with talk of inevitable “civil war”, said Alistair Osborne in *The Times*. Keir Starmer vows to prosecute those whipping up “violent disorder” online: he should know where to start.

Who's tipping what

The week's best shares

Auto Trader Group

The Daily Telegraph

Sales and profits are up at the online automotive marketplace, whose strong market position confers clear competitive advantage and pricing power. Continued capital growth potential even after recent "stunning returns". Buy. 811.2p.

Big Yellow Group

The Times

The self-storage market leader is benefitting from growing demand as it outperforms rival Safestore. Revenues and profits have jumped, and it yields 4.2%. A possible takeover target. Buy. £11.88.

Custodian Property

Income Reit

The Mail on Sunday

This real estate firm has a diverse portfolio of 155 retail parks and small industrial sites nationwide. Blue-chip tenants include B&M and Homebase. Growing demand and rising rents. Yields 7.5%. Buy. 79p.

DFS Furniture

The Times

The well-managed sofa maker has cut profit expectations by 50%, blaming "record low" demand. Cost challenges and shipping disruption are mitigated by an "enviable market position" and margin recovery potential. Buy. 120p.

Frasers Group

The Daily Telegraph

The resilient Sports Direct owner is targeting affluent customers via its Flannels homewares and designer brands. Becoming a bigger player in the "buy now, pay later" market. Highly cash-generative. Buy. 885.5p.

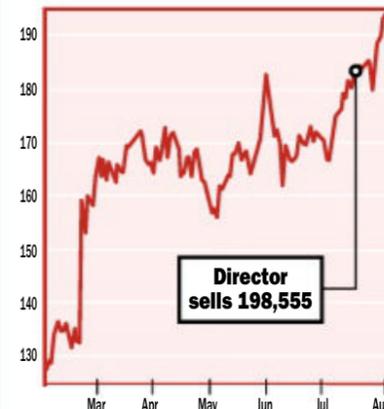
Intermediate Capital Group

The Times

This well-run private equity firm, which calls itself a "global alternative asset manager", invests billions in firms ranging from Wembley Arena to British Solar Renewables. Fair value, with "bright prospects". Yields 4.2%. Buy. £21.96.

Directors' dealings

ME Group International



The vending machine specialist's profits have jumped. But plans to install washing machines at petrol stations, and roll out "next-gen" photo booths, aren't risk free. Non-exec Jean-Marc Janailhac has capitalised on the mood and sold his stake.

SOURCE: INVESTORS' CHRONICLE

...and some to hold, avoid or sell

Alliance Pharma

The Times

The healthcare products firm, which specialises in helping damaged skin and supporting healthy ageing, has been boosted by sales of Kelo-Cote – a silicon scar treatment. Wait for the new CEO's detailed strategic plan. Hold. £37.50.

Oxford Instruments

The Times

This hi-tech tools maker is "big in semiconductors" and quantum technologies. A way to invest in the growing links between advanced science and emerging industries. Revenues are up and the order intake is robust. Hold. £25.10.

Unilever

Investors' Chronicle

Sales growth has slowed, but the consumer goods giant has raised margin guidance as it spins off the ice cream business to focus on "power brands", including Dove and Hellman's. Planned cost cuts should save €800m. Hold. £46.48.

De La Rue

Investors' Chronicle

Pressure has built on the banknote printer, and a disposal is necessary. "Risky", but after a "lengthy downcycle" demand is recovering, and it has secured contract renewals in its authentication business. Hold. 95p.

Supreme

The Mail on Sunday

Supreme supplies goods, from sports nutrition products to light bulbs, to retailers including Amazon and Aldi. Now majoring on reusable vaping kits for adults trying to give up cigarettes. Sales and profits have soared. Hold. 203p.

Victorian Plumbing

The Times

Lower shipping costs and more own-brand sales have boosted profits at Britain's leading bathroom retailer, which has bought ailing online rival Victoria Plum. A brighter economic outlook should boost demand. Hold. 92p.

Form guide

Shares tipped 12 weeks ago

Best tip

Smith & Nephew
The Mail on Sunday
up 16.02% to £11.66

Worst tip

GSK
Investors' Chronicle
down 11.92% to £15.29

Market view

"It's the great unwind ... there are falling knives everywhere."

Vishnu Varathan of Mizuho Bank in Singapore on the worldwide sell-off in stocks. Quoted on Bloomberg

Market summary

Key numbers for investors

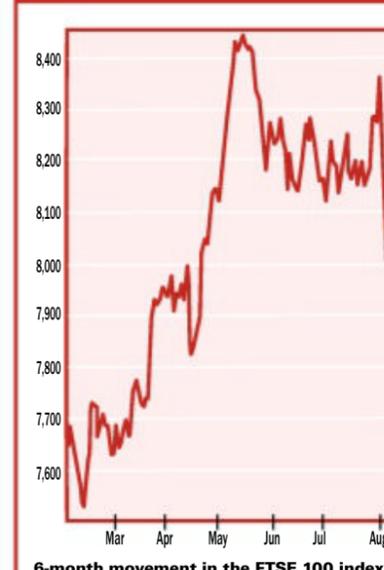
| | 6 Aug 2024 | Week before | Change (%) |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------|
| FTSE 100 | 8026.69 | 8274.41 | -2.99% |
| FTSE All-share UK | 4390.77 | 4539.49 | -3.28% |
| Dow Jones | 39143.04 | 40563.36 | -3.50% |
| NASDAQ | 16483.77 | 17116.04 | -3.69% |
| Nikkei 225 | 34675.46 | 38525.95 | -9.99% |
| Hang Seng | 16647.34 | 17002.91 | -2.09% |
| Gold | 2393.85 | 2391.10 | 0.12% |
| Brent Crude Oil | 76.87 | 78.00 | -1.45% |
| DIVIDEND YIELD (FTSE 100) | 3.73% | 3.57% | |
| UK 10-year gilts yield | 4.03 | 4.16 | |
| US 10-year Treasuries | 3.87 | 4.16 | |
| UK ECONOMIC DATA | | | |
| Latest CPI (yoy) | 2.0% (June) | 2.0% (May) | |
| Latest RPI (yoy) | 2.9% (June) | 3.0% (May) | |
| Halifax house price (yoy) | 2.3% (July) | 1.6% (June) | |
| £1 STERLING: | \$1.270 | €1.162 | ¥186.029 |
| | | | Bitcoin \$56,365.12 |

Best and worst performing shares

| WEEK'S CHANGE, FTSE 100 STOCKS | | |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| RISES | Price | % change |
| Haleon | 368.30 | +6.40 |
| Rolls-Royce Holdings | 468.50 | +5.40 |
| Smith & Nephew | 1165.50 | +4.20 |
| Next | 9360.00 | +3.60 |
| AstraZeneca | 12408.00 | +1.70 |
| FALLS | | |
| Melrose Industries | 481.90 | -16.70 |
| Schroders | 337.00 | -13.90 |
| NatWest | 323.00 | -11.90 |
| Barclays | 208.20 | -11.00 |
| Standard Chartered | 687.00 | -10.80 |
| FTSE 250 RISER & FALLER | | |
| Coats | 95.00 | +8.40 |
| Wood Group (John) | 128.80 | -36.80 |

Source: FT (not adjusted for dividends). Prices on 6 August (pm)

Following the Footsie



READERS SPECIAL OFFER

100% COTTON
**FLAT FRONT
CHINOS**

only **£50** buy 2 for £90
SAVE £10

PETER CHRISTIAN
Gentlemen's Outfitters

Our pure cotton flat front chinos are cut with no pleats, giving a flatter, slimmer profile. The perfect everyday, year round casual trouser. They feature our clever expanding waistband for an extra two inches of comfort.

- 100% cotton
- French bearer fly for a trim flat front
- 2 buttoned hip and 2 deep side pockets
- Hidden, expanding comfort waistband allows for 2" of flexibility
- No Quibble Money Back Guarantee**

Waist: 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 46 48 50 52"

Leg: 28 30 32 34"

Colours: Brick, NEW Sand, Green, Stone, Royal Blue, Mustard, Tan, Sky, Navy



WE ARE RATED
EXCELLENT
4.7/5 based on
21,287 reviews

**FREE
DELIVERY*
& RETURNS****
Use promo code
43X32

Order Flat Front Chinos (MT22)

Use code **43X32** for **FREE P&P**

peterchristian.co.uk

Call us **01273 493 393** Mon-Sun
24 hrs a day

Order by post – Cheques payable to Peter Christian.
Quote **43X32** and send with your order to:
Freepost PETER CHRISTIAN

[Go Online or Call for a Free Catalogue](#)

*Free UK delivery (normally £5). Offer ends midnight 09/10/24. £50 Minimum spend applies. This offer may not be used in conjunction with any other offer. **Free returns within the UK only and subject to items being in perfect condition, in their original packaging and returned within 30 days. A Division of Hills of Bramley Ltd. Co Reg No 04767802



MT22
Green



The secrets of successful late bloomers

Our society is relentlessly focused on early success, but many of history's most celebrated individuals found their paths only after years of wandering, writes David Brooks

Paul Cézanne always knew he wanted to be an artist. His father compelled him to enter law school, but after two desultory years he withdrew. In 1861, at the age of 22, he went to Paris to pursue his artistic dreams but was rejected by the *École des Beaux-Arts*, struggled as a painter, and retreated back to his hometown in the south of France, where he worked as a clerk in his father's bank.

He returned to Paris the next year and was turned down again by the *École*. His paintings were rejected by the Salon de Paris every year from 1864 to 1869. He continued to submit paintings until 1882, but none were accepted. He joined with the impressionists, many of whose works were also being rejected, but soon stopped showing with them as well.

By middle age, he was discouraged. He wrote to a friend, "On this matter I must tell you that the numerous studies to which I devoted myself having produced only negative results, and dreading criticism that is only too justified, I have resolved to work in silence, until the day when I should feel capable of defending theoretically the results of my endeavours." For ten years from the mid-1880s, none of Cézanne's paintings were put on public display. In 1886, when Cézanne was 47, the celebrated writer Émile Zola, the artist's closest friend since adolescence, published a novel called *The Oeuvre*. It was about two young men, one who grows up to be a famous author and the other who grows up to be a failed painter and dies by suicide. The painter character was based, at least in part, on Cézanne. Upon publication of the novel, Zola sent a copy to Cézanne, who responded with a short, polite reply. After that, they rarely communicated.

Things began to turn around in 1895, when, at the age of 56, Cézanne had his first one-man show. Two years later, one of his paintings was purchased by a museum in Berlin, the first time any museum had shown that kind of interest in his work. By the time he was 60, his paintings had started selling, though for much lower prices than those fetched by Manet or Renoir. Soon he was famous, revered. Fellow artists made pilgrimages to watch him work. What drove the man through all those decades of setbacks and obscurity? One biographer attributed it to his "*inquiétude*" – his drive, restlessness, anxiety. He just kept pushing himself to get better. His continual sense of dissatisfaction was evident in a letter he wrote to his son in 1906, at age 67, a month before he died: "I want to tell you that as a painter I am becoming more



Paul Cézanne had his first one-man show in 1895, at the age of 56

clairvoyant to nature, but that it is always very difficult for me to realise my feelings. I cannot reach the intensity that unfolds before my senses. I do not possess that wonderful richness of colour that animates nature." He was still at it on the day he died, still working on his paintings, still teaching himself to improve.

The year after his death, a retrospective of his work was mounted in Paris. Before long, he would be widely recognised as one of the founders of modern art: "Cézanne is the father of us all," both Matisse and Picasso are said to have declared.

Today, we live in a society structured to promote early bloomers. Our school system has sorted people by the time they are 18. Some of these people zoom to prestigious

academic launching pads while others get left behind. Many of our most prominent models of success made it big while young – Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, Taylor Swift, Michael Jordan. Magazines publish lists with headlines like "30 Under 30" to glamorise youthful superstars on the rise. Age discrimination is a fact of life. "Young people are just smarter," Zuckerberg once said, in possibly the dumbest statement in American history. "There are no second acts in American lives," F. Scott Fitzgerald once observed, in what might be the next dumbest.

"What drove Cézanne through the decades of setbacks? One biographer attributed it to his 'inquiétude' – his drive, restlessness and anxiety"

winners made their crucial discoveries at the age of 44. Even brilliant people apparently need at least a couple of decades to master their field. A 45-year-old is twice as likely to produce a scientific breakthrough as a 25-year-old. A study published in *The American Economic Review* found 45 to be the average age of an entrepreneur – and found furthermore that the likelihood that an entrepreneur's startup will succeed increases significantly between ages 25 and 35, with the odds of success continuing to rise well into the 50s. A tech founder who is 50 is twice as likely to start a successful company as one who is 30.

Successful late bloomers are all around us. Morgan Freeman had his breakthrough roles in *Street Smart* and *Driving Miss Daisy* in his early 50s. Isak Dinesen published the book that established her literary reputation, *Out of Africa*, at 52. Copernicus came up with his theory of planetary motion in his 60s. Noah was around 600 when he built his ark (though Noah truthers dispute his birth certificate). Why do some people hit their peak later than others?

In his book *Late Bloomers*, the journalist Rich Karlgaard points out that this is really two questions: First, why didn't these people bloom earlier? Second, what traits or skills did they possess that enabled them to bloom late? It turns out that late bloomers are not simply early bloomers on a delayed timetable. They tend to be qualitatively different, possessing a different set of abilities that are mostly invisible to or discouraged by our current education system.

If you survey history, a taxonomy of achievement emerges. In the first category are the early bloomers, precocious geniuses such as Picasso or Fitzgerald. Then there are the "second-mountain people", exemplified by, say, Albert Schweitzer. First, they conquer their career mountain; Schweitzer was an accomplished musician and scholar. But these people find career success unsatisfying, so they leave their career mountain. Schweitzer became a doctor in the poorest parts of Africa, and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952.

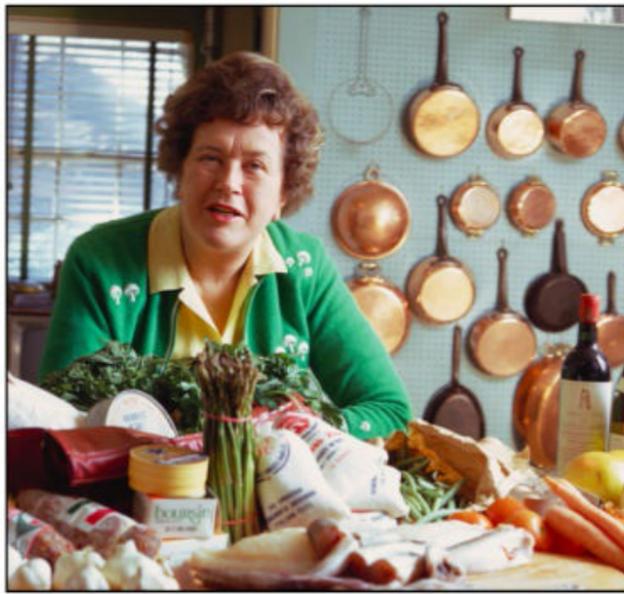
Finally, there are those that the economist David Galenson calls "the masters". People such as Cézanne or Alfred Hitchcock or Charles Darwin, who regard their entire lives as experiments. Their focus is not on their finished work, which they often toss away haphazardly. It is on the process of learning itself: Am I closer to understanding, to mastering? They live their lives as a long period of trial and error, trying this and trying that, a slow process of accumulation and elaboration, so the quality of their work peaks late in life.

Let's look at some of the traits that tend to distinguish late bloomers from early bloomers.

Intrinsic motivation Most schools and workplaces are built around extrinsic motivation: if you work hard, you will be rewarded with good grades, better salaries and bonuses. Extrinsic-motivation systems are built on the assumption that, though work is unpleasant, if you give people external incentives to perform, they will respond productively. People who submit to extrinsic-reward systems are encouraged to develop a merit-badge mentality. They get good at complying with other people's standards, pursuing other people's goals. People driven by intrinsic motivation are not like that. They are bad at paying attention to what other people tell them to pay attention to. Winston Churchill was a poor student for this reason. "Where my reason, imagination, or interest were not engaged, I would not or I could not learn," he wrote in *My Early Life*.

Diversive curiosity Our culture pushes people to specialise early: Be like Tiger Woods, driving golf balls as a toddler. Concentrate on one thing and get really good, really fast. Yet most professional athletes are less like Tiger Woods and more like Roger Federer, who played a lot of different sports when he was young. Many late bloomers endure a brutal wandering period, as they cast about for a vocation. Julia Child made hats, worked for US intelligence (where she was part of a team trying to develop an effective shark repellent), and thought about trying to become a novelist before enrolling in a French cooking school at 37.

During these early periods, late bloomers try and then quit so many jobs that the people around them might conclude that they lack resilience. But these are exactly the years when they are developing "diversive curiosity" – the ability to wander into a broad range of interests. The benefits might be hard to see in the short term, but they become obvious once the late bloomer begins to take advantage of their breadth of knowledge by putting discordant ideas together in new ways. The diaries of Charles



Julia Child didn't learn to cook until she was 37

Darwin show that in the decades before he published *On the Origin of Species*, he corresponded with at least 231 scientists, whose work ranged across 13 streams, from economics to geology, the biology of barnacles to the sex life of birds. Darwin couldn't have written his great works if he hadn't been able to combine these vastly different intellectual currents.

Early screw-ups Late bloomers often don't fit into existing systems. They are bad at being "excellent sheep" – bad at following the conventional rules of success. Buckminster Fuller was expelled from college twice, lost his job in the building business when he was 32, and later contemplated suicide. But then he moved to Greenwich Village, took a

teaching job and eventually emerged as an architect, designer and futurist. Colonel Sanders was fired for insubordination when he was a railway engineer, and then fired for brawling while working as a fireman. His career as a lawyer ended when he got into a fist fight with a client. Then, at 62, he created the recipe for what became Kentucky Fried Chicken, began to succeed as a franchiser at 69, and sold the company for \$2m when he was 73.

The ability to self-teach Late bloomers don't find their calling until they are too old for traditional education systems. So, they have to teach themselves. Successful autodidacts start with what psychologists call a "high need for cognition" – they like to think a lot. Leonardo da Vinci is the poster child for high-cognition needs. Consider his lists of research projects: "Ask the master of arithmetic how to square a triangle... examine a crossbow... ask about the measurement of the Sun... draw Milan."

Wisdom After a lifetime of experimentation, some late bloomers transcend their craft to achieve a kind of comprehensive wisdom. Wisdom is a complex trait. It starts with pattern recognition – using experience to understand what is really going on. But wisdom is more than just pattern recognition; it's the ability to see things from multiple points of view, the ability to aggregate perspectives and rest in the tensions between them.

When he was in his 60s, Cézanne built a study in Provence and painted a series of scenes of a single mountain, Mont Sainte-Victoire, which are now often considered his greatest works. He wasn't so much painting the mountain as painting time. He was also painting perception itself, its continual flow, its uncertainties and evolutions. "I progress very slowly", he wrote to the painter Émile Bernard, "for nature reveals herself to me in complex ways; and the progress needed is endless."

When I was young, I was mentored by William F. Buckley and Milton Friedman, both at that time approaching the end of their careers. Both men had changed history. Buckley created the modern conservative movement that led to the election of Ronald Reagan. Friedman changed economics and won the Nobel Prize. I had a chance to ask each of them, separately, if they ever felt completion, if they ever had a sense that they'd done their work and now they had crossed the finish line and could relax. Neither man even understood my question. They were never at rest, pushing for what they saw as a better society all the days of their lives. I've noticed this pattern again and again: slow at the start, late bloomers are still sprinting during that final lap – they do not slow down as age brings its decay. They are seeking. They are striving. They are in it with all their heart.

A longer version of this article appeared in *The Atlantic*
© 2024 The Atlantic Monthly Group



The Beauty of Bespoke

NEVILLE JOHNSON
HANDCRAFTED BESPOKE FURNITURE

REQUEST A BROCHURE NEVILLEJOHNSON.CO.UK 0161 873 8333

STUDIES BEDROOMS LIVING SPACES LIBRARIES

stiled
EUROPEAN INDOOR & OUTDOOR PORCELAIN

Indoor & outdoor living,
seamlessly *stiled*.

Tiles available from stiled.com & stores nationwide.
Pictured: Twyford Sand & Banham Emerald

www.stiled.com | Tel: 07907 040301

AISPA
The Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals

AISPA, Anglo-Italian Society for the Protection of Animals

For over 70 years AISPA has been supporting animal protection organisations throughout Italy. Our support involves the rescue and rehoming of cats and dogs, neutering campaigns and conservation initiatives including birds, bears and turtles. Please complete the form below and return it to us by post or email us at info@aispa.org.uk Please check out our website www.aispa.org.uk for further information.

6th Floor, 2 London Wall Place, London EC2Y 5AU
www.aispa.org.uk • info@aispa.org.uk • UK registered charity no. 208530

YES, I WANT TO SUPPORT AISPA - I enclose a donation of £
(Cheque/PO/CAF made payable to AISPA) Please Gift Aid my donation.
AISPA will send you Gift Aid information.

Name

Address

Postcode

Email

TW/A/24

THE WEEK CROSSWORD 1426

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 19 August. Send it to The Week Crossword 1426, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR, or email the completed grid/listed solutions to crossword@theweek.co.uk. **Tim Moorey (timmoorey.com)**



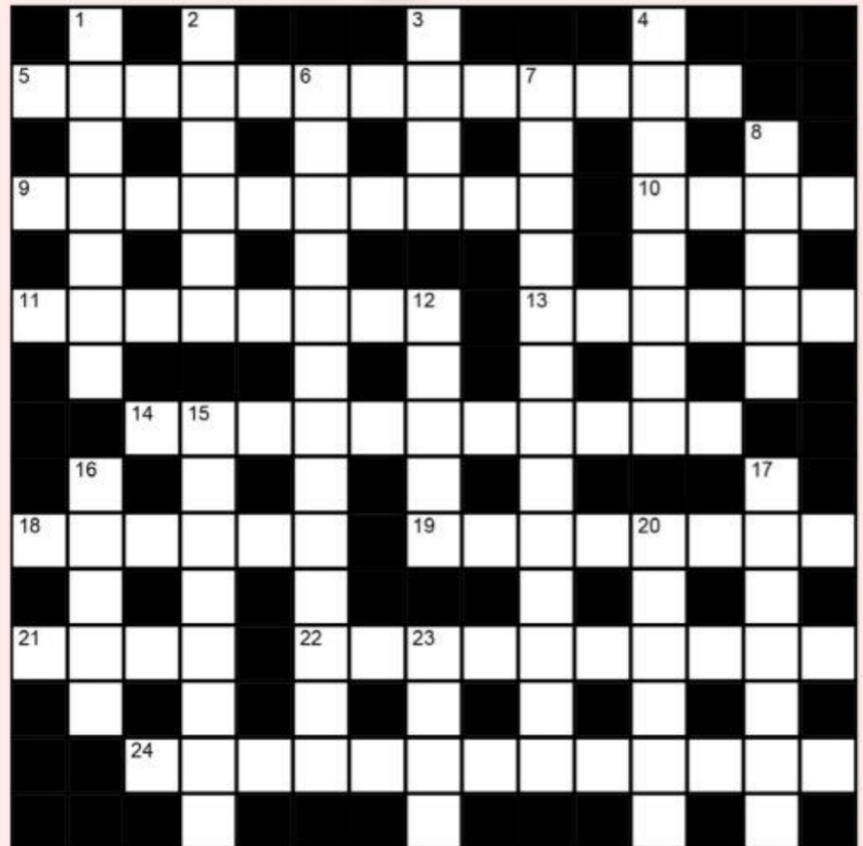
This week's winner will receive Week-branded items including a notebook, coffee mug and tote bag, as well as two Connell Guides (connellguides.com).

ACROSS

- 5 Red pepper cooked with a lot of aioli in perfect condition (5-3,5)
- 9 Abuse is dire hence husband leaves to get this? (6,4)
- 10 Mock Bob performing clumsily on stage (4)
- 11 How males promise to get clothing (8)
- 13 Long for bit of nourishment like chicken (6)
- 14 A Tory cypher for treatment that leaves one cold (11)
- 18 It's awkward for the French left (6)
- 19 Top military officer making money on Derby? (5,3)
- 21 Welshman's platform? (4)
- 22 Take time in garden about to be developed (10)
- 24 British stratagem in fighting could be old-fashioned engines (9,4)

DOWN

- 1 See red about parking with one going too fast (7)
- 2 Warnings picked up in past relationships (6)
- 3 Food shop entrances half obscured (4)
- 4 In Paris I was initially out of tune with musical instrument (4,4)
- 6 Two and six in old money (6,2,5)
- 7 Rain on certain ground can bring new life (13)
- 8 Turned up to get nothing for a small part (5)
- 12 Swimmer short of time showing up in clinic (5)
- 15 In which tourists may have been for a ride (8)
- 16 Precious little weight one's seen in horse-drawn vehicle (5)
- 17 Not such a bright month in European capital (7)
- 20 Celebrities going around Italy to get flights (6)
- 23 Copper missing poison that's hard to find (4)



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

Clue of the week: Plane carrying meals not able to provide sandwiches (5,3) *Filbert, The Independent*

Solution to Crossword 1424

ACROSS: 1 Spot on 5 Cockpit 10 Do it again 11 Allee 12 Caput 13 Antipasto 14 Top person 17 Raven 18 Overt 20 Treasurer 22 Adoration 24 Miens 26 Image 27 Canoodled 28 Turkeys 29 Twenty

DOWN: 2 Primp 3 Toastie 4 Nyala 5 Constance 6 Clapper 7 Pulls over 8 The countryside 9 Educationalist 15 Pterosaur 16 Set pieces 19 Trapeze 21 Someone 23 Nonet 25 Eilat

Clue of the week: Double beer for pop star (3,4)
Solution: DUA LIPA (dual IPA)

The winner of 1424 is **David Ormerod from Portsmouth**

The Week is available from **RNIB Newsagent** for the benefit of blind and partially sighted readers. 0303-123 9999, rnib.org.uk/newsagent



Sudoku 968 (medium)

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 967

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



For binders to hold 26 copies of The Week: modernbookbinders.com, £12

Charity of the week



Off the Record Bath & North East Somerset (OTR BaNES) helps more than 2,300 young people (aged ten-25) each year to improve their mental health and emotional well-being. We provide free services for those living, working or studying in the area, including counselling, youth participation, and support for care leavers and LGBTQ+ young people. We work in every local secondary school, Bath College, the two Bath universities and in various communities. Our 30th anniversary Young Futures appeal seeks to raise £100,000 to ensure that young people living in poverty, young people of colour, and boys & young men have equal access to our services. **Please visit offtherecord-banes.co.uk to find out more.**

Big picture news, balanced views

Join over 300,000 readers today and enjoy a refreshingly unbiased view of the news, every week.

Why subscribe?

- ✓ Get your first 6 issues for free
- ✓ Continue to save up to 56% on the shop price
- ✓ Try a digital subscription for subscriber newsletters, unlimited access to theweek.co.uk and more
- ✓ Cancel or pause at any time



Get your first 6 issues free

Visit theweek.co.uk/offer

Offer code

Or call 0330 333 9494

P1500

Calls charged at your standard network rate. Direct Debit offer. 6 issues free then continues from £45.99 every 13 issues for print (29% off the shop price) or £50.99 every 13 issues for print + digital (56% off the shop price). Your subscription is protected by our Money-Back Guarantee. Cancel anytime and we will refund on any unmailed issues.



The Week is a member of the Independent Press Standards Organisation (which regulates the UK's magazine and newspaper industry). We abide by the Editors' Code of Practice and are committed to upholding the highest standards of journalism.

If you think that we have not met those standards and want to make a complaint please contact editorialadmin@theweek.co.uk. If we are unable to resolve your complaint, or if you would like more information about IPSO or the Editors' Code, contact IPSO on 0300 123 2220 or visit www.ipso.co.uk.



PANTHÈRE
DE
Cartier