

THE



TIMES

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## First for football

Chelsea stun Tottenham in thriller

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Times 2



## Syrians hail the fall of Assad

● Dictator flees to Russia as rebels oust him after 24 years in power ● Statues torn down, palace ransacked and prisoners freed



Jubilant Syrians topple a statue of Hafez al-Assad, father of Bashar, in the coastal city of Latakia before dragging it through the streets. The regime's disintegration ended 53 years of Assad family rule in Syria

Edmund Bower Damascus  
Richard Spencer

For a decade, Bashar al-Assad and his regime were said to be impregnable. In the end, it took a rebel uprising lasting a week and they were gone, the uniforms of the troops who had been supposed to defend Damascus abandoned on the streets.

Assad, Syria's leader for 24 years, fled his capital early yesterday as his troops, including hardline units such as the 4th Division, quit the military posts ringing the city. Crowds stormed his palace, ransacked police posts and freed his prisoners. As night fell, they went home and locked their doors, obeying a curfew imposed by the rebel commanders, and leaving the streets empty apart from the uniforms torn off as their owners tried to melt into civilian life.

After 53 years of Assad family rule,

the final straw was the decision by Iran and Russia, the regime's long-term backers, not to send support as they had promised. It was initially unclear where Assad, 59, had gone, but Russia's foreign ministry said he had "decided to resign from the presidency and left the country, giving instructions for a peaceful transfer of power".

His plane landed at Russia's Khmeimim air base in northwest Syria, and from there he flew to Moscow, arriving late in the evening. His wife, Asma, 49, and the couple's three children were said to be already there. The Kremlin said they would be granted asylum.

In Assad's absence, thousands of residents of Damascus poured onto the streets. In scenes reminiscent of the fall of Colonel Gaddafi in Libya in 2011, crowds stormed Assad's palace, walking out with trophies ranging from crockery to family photograph albums.

They held up snaps of the Assads on trips to the beach, one with Bashar in swimming trunks, others with Asma holding their newborn children.

In jarring contrast, rebels also broke into the regime's most feared jails, including Sednaya to the northeast of Damascus, and broke down the doors of cells crammed with inmates.

Women prisoners ululated in celebration. Emaciated men were helped away, some taken to hospitals, others embracing their waiting families. Children were among the freed.

Some of the saddest scenes, repeated around the country, were of elderly women in headscarves and abayas waiting as buses and lorries arrived carrying the freed men. They were looking for sons and husbands, many of whom were among the tens of thousands who have disappeared during Syria's 13-year civil war. One woman in

Aleppo said she had heard nothing of her son since 2012. She appeared to be there more in hope than expectation.

Since 2011, when widespread demonstrations against Assad's rule began, hundreds of thousands of protesters, regime opponents and, in many cases, random people stopped at checkpoints or at border entry points, have been detained, and tens of thousands have died or been executed. The United Nations and legal commissions in Europe have been studying endless files on the disappeared. They say 100,000 or more may still be unaccounted for.

President Biden said the fall of the regime was a "fundamental act of justice", adding that the US would engage with all Syrian groups over the transition of power. He warned, however, that some rebel groups had a "grim record of terrorism".

The hands into which Syria has now

fallen consist of a number of different groups. The most powerful is Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the former jihadist movement that says it is committed to Syrian nationalism and pluralism as well as Sharia, strict Islamic law. It is proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the United States, Britain and others.

Its leader, Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, arrived in Damascus and visited the Great Umayyad mosque, Syria's most important religious landmark. The mosque is the burial place of Saladin, whose armies defeated the Crusaders, and is said to be the final resting place of St John the Baptist. As he entered in triumph, Jolani was greeted by crowds cheering "Allahu akbar" or "God is great".

Other groups also made advances. The rebel factions that once held Deraa in the south rose up over the weekend

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## A country divided

Britain has the greatest polarisation between the left and right outside the United States, according to a report that warns of weakening social cohesion. **Page 10**

## Deer cull expanded

Hunters have been given the go-ahead to shoot hundreds more deer to slow the ecological damage that the growing population is wreaking in Sussex. **Page 13**

## Ukraine's heavy toll

President Zelensky has said 45,000 Ukrainian troops have died in the war as he warned Donald Trump he would agree only to an "enduring" and "just" peace. **Page 28**

## Confidence ebbs

Rachel Reeves's budget has been blamed for a slide in business confidence, prompting analysts to warn that the economy will end the year in contraction. **Page 31**

## United director exits

Dan Ashworth, the sporting director of Manchester United, has left the club only five months after he was appointed after falling out with members of the board. **Page 58**



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**8.05am** General Jack Keane, former deputy chief of staff of the US army  
**10.30am** Hugo Rifkind's world news briefing with The Sunday Times's Mark Urban  
**3.30pm** Juliet Stevenson, right, discusses her film *Reawakening*  
**7.15pm** Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, former UK ambassador to Saudi Arabia, on Sir Keir Starmer's trip to the country

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## How the Pelicot trial has changed France

Gisèle Pelicot waived her right to anonymity when her husband, and dozens of other men, were charged with raping and sexually assaulting her. As we await the verdicts, France faces a watershed moment

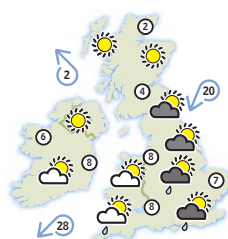
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## THE WEATHER



Showery rain in the south. Drier, chillier and sunnier further north. Full forecast, page 47

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## Police chiefs warn of staffing cuts to meet funding shortfall

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor

Police officer numbers will need to be cut and council tax raised to prevent funding shortfalls, police chiefs have warned.

Chief constables and police and crime commissioners (PCCs) have written to ministers to warn that funding announcements for the next year will put them in an "uncomfortable position".

They said they faced a reduction in headcount that could result in an increase in council tax because funds announced by Yvette Cooper, the home secretary, will not be enough to pay for pay rises and other unavoidable costs.

Overall police numbers could be cut by thousands, according to one senior policing figure who said headcount would most likely be reduced by not replacing retirees and other leavers.

Police chiefs said the upcoming cuts they will be forced to make are "completely at odds" with Sir Keir Starmer's announcement last week to recruit an additional 13,000 neighbourhood police officers as part of his wider government's plan for change.

Labour PCCs are among those who

have privately raised concerns about the shortage in funding, The Times has learnt.

Dame Diana Johnson, the policing minister, admitted in response to one of the letters that police forces face some "challenging trade-offs at a local level to set a balanced budget".

On Tuesday the Treasury will formally launch a major six-month review of all government spending, which will require every government department to undergo a line-by-line review of all spending in the first "zero-based" review since Gordon Brown's time as prime minister.

Cooper announced last month that police forces in England and Wales will receive an additional £264 million in core grant funding from central government.

She will unveil how much each force will receive from this grant, which is allocated according to a preset police-funding formula that is based on the size of the local population.

Forces can top up their funding from the council tax police precept, a protected portion of council tax that goes towards policing costs in the local area. The government announced last

month that this portion of council tax can be increased by a maximum of £14 per property before the PCC would need to hold a referendum.

A Labour PCC said: "I imagine that every PCC will be raising the precept to the cap limit."

These two announcements have enabled police forces to start estimating their budgets for 2025/26.

Ben-Julian Harrington, chief constable of Essex police, and Roger Hirst, the police, fire and crime commissioner for Essex, have written to the home secretary warning that the funding she announced will not be enough to cover even the current year's 4.75 per cent pay rise for police officers.

Hirst, who is the finance lead for the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, said forces will be left £67 million short.

In their letter to the home secretary, seen by The Times, Harrington and Hirst wrote: "Our uncomfortable position is, therefore, that we face having to reduce our headcount at the same time as the government is asking us to make investment into neighbourhood policing, an investment which we and our residents would welcome."

## Reeves joins EU meeting as part of reset efforts

Matt Dathan

Britain's relationship with the EU under Labour will be governed by a business-like approach, Rachel Reeves will say as she becomes the first chancellor to meet her EU counterparts since Brexit.

She will vow to leave the "fractious" relationship of recent years behind and pursue one "built on trust, mutual respect and pragmatism".

Reeves says she will ensure that the government's central mission to improve the living standards of working people will drive Labour's reset with the EU. The relationship is "not a zero-sum game", she believes, and breaking down trade barriers and creating more opportunities to invest will "improve both our growth prospects".

Reeves will travel to Brussels today to attend the Eurogroup meeting of EU finance ministers. It is the latest mark of Labour's eagerness to pursue a closer partnership with the EU, with Sir Keir Starmer planning to travel to Belgium in February to take part in an "informal retreat" with the EU to discuss European security in light of Donald Trump's election as US president. The

prime minister has vowed there will be closer co-operation with the EU as long as it does not breach his red lines — that Britain will not rejoin the single market or the customs union or allow freedom of movement.

Reeves will also seek to bolster support for Ukraine, telling her counterparts that the UK and Europe's national security depends on ensuring Ukraine's national security.

She will tell her EU counterparts: "This is the first time a British chancellor has addressed the Eurogroup since Brexit. And there could be no more important moment to do so than now. It is a signal of the new UK government's commitment to resetting our country's relationship with the EU; and the importance I place in realising the economic potential of our shared future."

Starmer's plans to reset and bolster ties with the EU are particularly sensitive given the views of the US president-elect. During the election campaign, Trump described the EU as a "mini-China" and senior advisers have suggested that Britain will have to choose between the US and "socialist" Europe on trade.

## Minister wants state to behave like a start-up

Matt Dathan

Ministers will try to recruit start-up workers in the tech industry on 6 to 12-month "tours of duty" to deliver Sir Keir Starmer's "plan for change".

Pat McFadden, the Cabinet Office minister, will announce a £100 million "innovation fund" for the scheme as he says the state needs to become "more like a start-up".

The scheme will pursue a "test-and-learn culture" pioneered by digital companies as McFadden tries to use private sector practices. These test-and-learn-teams will be set up in public services. They will be given a challenge and allowed to experiment and innovate to tackle it. The move is likely to be seen by some as another attack on the civil service after Starmer's swipe last week when he said that too many Whitehall officials were "comfortable in the tepid bath of managed decline".

Tech workers in start-ups who join will be paid a salary equivalent to £85,000 and employed at a deputy director level.

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Syrians hail fall of Assad

and seized the province. Suweida, the capital of the Druze minority, was in the hands of its unofficial but popular local militia.

The Syrian Democratic Forces, the Kurdish-led militia that rules over northeast Syria with the backing of the United States and the West, with whose air force it defeated Islamic State in 2019, expanded its territory to take over the city of Deir Ezzor near the Iraqi border.

The Assad regime's prime minister, Mohammad Ghazi al-Jalali, said he had stayed in Damascus to oversee the preservation of Syrian national institutions and a transition of power to the rebels. He said he had spoken to Jolani and was ready to co-operate with "any

leadership chosen by the Syrian people".

Sir Keir Starmer welcomed the fall of the regime but said it was too early to predict how Britain would engage with whatever replaced it. "We do need a political solution, and that's what we are talking to regional allies about," he said in Abu Dhabi, the first stop of a planned tour of the Gulf, including Saudi Arabia. "It is a good thing that Assad has gone, a very good thing for the Syrian people."

In Syria, many people stayed indoors, nervous about what the coming days will hold, particularly for minorities. But as well as the cheering crowds on the streets of its major cities, Syrian exiles around the world of all stripes, Sunni Muslim, Christian, Alawite and secular, rejoiced at the end of a dictatorship that had persecuted their fami-

lies and driven them out with barrel bombs. The road from Beirut to Damascus was filled with cheering refugees, saying that at last they could return home. "I've come here to celebrate," said Mohammed Ahmed Khatteeb, 19, who had been born in Aleppo but lived most of his life in exile in Lebanon. "Thank God, he has delivered us from that dog Assad," he added.

Another man, 40-year-old Mohamed Hassan, pulled up at the border in an open-topped lorry, saying he would pick up anyone else who wanted to come with him. "We want to take everyone with us," he said. "This is a great day and some people don't have cars to return to their country. We want them all with us."

Reports and analysis, pages 4-8  
 A cause for cautious celebration, leading article, page 27



## King kept coronation wobbles at bay just as his mother taught him

**T**he King has revealed that he was “anxious” his crown would “wobble” on his head during his coronation day last year, so he practised with it as his late mother had done (Kate Mansey writes).

Charles said in a new documentary: “It’s very important to wear [the crown] for a certain amount of time because you get used to it then. “But the big one that you are crowned with, the St Edward’s Crown, weighs 5lbs. It is much heavier and taller [than the Imperial State Crown]. So there’s always that feeling of feeling slightly anxious in case it wobbles.”

The comments were made in a documentary in which the King met women from Canada who had attended his mother’s coronation in June 1953.

They were among 50

girls aged 16 and 17 from rural Canada who had been chosen to travel to London for the crowning. A new film, *Coronation Girls*, follows the women, now in their late eighties, as 12 of the original group make a return journey for the King’s coronation.

Their trip culminated in a visit to Buckingham Palace in December last year, when the King dropped in to share his own memories. Charles, who was four at the time of his mother’s coronation, said: “My grandmother explained things to me while I was there. I can remember it. Well, I can remember quite a lot, particularly what I was dressed in. And what the barber did to

me beforehand.” One of the women said his hair was “perfect” but Charles said he “hated it”. To prepare for his own coronation, he said he followed his mother’s example by practising.



The King recalled his mother’s coronation with women who travelled from Canada to see it in 1953

The St Edward’s Crown, which has a solid gold frame, is the most important and sacred of the crown jewels. It is twice as heavy as the Imperial Crown, which is worn after the coronation service and

for the state opening of parliament. When he was crowned in May last year, the Archbishop of Canterbury had two attempts to place it.

Charles said he could “vividly” recall the lead-up to his mother’s

coronation. “I remember it all so well because my sister and I had bathtime in the evening,” he said. “My Mama used to come up at bathtime wearing the crown to practise. Because you have to get used to how heavy it is.”

The King said he was glad to meet the women. “I hadn’t realised you came over all those years ago,” he said.

On their initial trip, Garfield Weston, a Canadian philanthropist, paid for them to be picked up by a steam train before they boarded the *Empress of France* to sail to Liverpool.

Weston’s six daughters gave the girls lessons in etiquette. They watched the coronation procession from stands in Oxford Street before visiting Coventry Cathedral and Northern Ireland.

At the end of the seven-week trip Weston gave them medallions engraved with a line from a poem by the American author Ella Wheeler: “Tis the set of the sails, and not the gales, that determines the way they go.”

In the encounter, recorded before the King’s cancer diagnosis, one of the women invited him to return to Canada.

He replied: “I’m sure I will. If I’m still alive.”

*Coronation Girls* will be shown in Canada on Boxing Day. A broadcast date has yet to be set for its screening in the UK.

# Thou shalt not indulge in solo binge-watching

A bishop is lamenting the loss of communal TV viewing due to the rise of streaming, **Kaya Burgess reports**

Streaming services have made watching television a more “solitary and insular” experience because people now rarely enjoy the same shows at the same time, the Bishop of London has said.

The ability to watch “whatever we want, whenever we want it” through online streaming sites means it has become “more of a rarity” for viewers to gather in front of the TV for “moments of togetherness”, the Right Rev Dame Sarah Mullally said.

Writing in the *Radio Times*, she said she feared that something had been lost, noting: “The way in which we as a nation consume TV and media throughout the year has changed beyond recognition.”

She wrote: “Our lives have become more and more dominated by the instant gratification available through

our mobile phones and social media. Streaming sites have sought to displace traditional channels, allowing us to watch whatever we want whenever we want it.

“With that, the act of watching TV has become more solitary and insular — a far cry from the years many of us remember of three channels and one set per household.”

Many streaming sites upload entire series at once rather than releasing one episode per week on a set day.

The fact that viewers now have subscription packages allowing them to watch different programmes on different devices means that one person in a household can be upstairs in their bedroom bingeing on an entire series on their smartphone while other family members watch different programmes or episodes on the TV or on other devices.

It has led some to bemoan the death of “event” TV, in which the whole nation watches the same episode of the same programme on the same evening and can then talk about it at work or school the next day.

Mullally added that “for all the technological advances and abundance of choice, something has been lost”,

noting: “Christmas now feels like one of the few times a year when we can unapologetically press pause on the incessant demands of the modern world and truly be present with family and loved ones. That includes precious hours spent around the TV; laughing together, crying together, being together. The fact that this is more of a rarity today makes these moments of togetherness all the more special.”

She said she was looking forward to watching *Call the Midwife*, *The Great British Bake Off* and King’s Christmas message over the holiday period. She added: “Though viewing figures aren’t what they used to be, I sense that the enduring cultural impact of British TV, and the role it plays in bringing us together, will remain steadfast despite the ever-changing technological landscape.”

The *Times* revealed that the BBC would not be airing a New Year’s message from the Archbishop of Canterbury as usual this year, after the Most Rev Justin Welby announced that he would be resigning from the role on January 6. Welby will also not be taking part in Christmas services in Canterbury, instead spending the time privately with his family.

## Controversial Belfast rap group fêted at film awards

Alex Farber Media Correspondent

Unesco’s atlas of world languages describes Irish as “definitely endangered”. Luckily, one of its estimated two million speakers is the Hollywood A-lister Michael Fassbender.

The *X-Men* actor, 47, who learnt the language from the age of six, deploys his skills in a film about a controversial Belfast rap group that triumphed at the British Independent Film Awards (Bifa) awards yesterday.

The comedy-drama, titled *Kneecap* after the rap trio of the same name, follows the group’s early days and the reaction to their performances, which include rapping in Irish. It was awarded best British independent film, while *Kneecap*’s Liam Og Ó Hannaidh, Naoise Ó Cairealláin and JJ Ó Dochartaigh were named best joint lead. Its writer, Rich Peppiatt, won the best debut screenwriter prize.

*Kneecap* picked up seven Bifas in total, including four craft awards announced in November.

The film includes a cameo from Gerry Adams, who has repeatedly denied that he

**Kneecap’s DJ Provai, a teacher, wears a balacava in public**

was a leader of the IRA when it was carrying out the paramilitary punishment from which *Kneecap* takes its name.

The *Times* described the independently produced mock biopic as “raucous” and “stacked with politicised one-liners”. *Kneecap* have long courted controversy. Dochartaigh, a teacher, wears an Irish tricolour balacava and goes by the stage name DJ Provai.

When she was business secretary, Kemi Badenoch, the Conservative leader, vetoed a £15,000 grant *Kneecap* were awarded. The group sued the government and split the money with two Belfast youth clubs “on both sides of the community” last month.

After *Kneecap* won an audience award at the Sundance film festival this year, the group said it was an honour to be the first Irish-language winner.

“Hopefully, it will give people in Ireland the confidence to pursue the arts through their native tongue,” they added.

Other Bifa winners included *Wicked Little Letters* for its ensemble cast which included Olivia Colman and Jessie Buckley. Sophie Okonedo received the Richard Harris Award for outstanding contribution by an actor to British film.



## News Syria



# There was no final stand as

**Samer Al-Atrush**  
Middle East Correspondent

Just about the time Bashar al-Assad was packing his bags and preparing to flee Damascus, Syrian state television was playing Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* on loop. The president, said his office, was busy with "constitutional tasks".

There seemed little to worry about for a man who has made a brutal habit of survival. His military had pledged it would defend the capital with a "ring of steel" while his backers in Russia and Iran vowed not to abandon an ally who, for all intents and purposes, appeared ready to go down fighting.

By dawn yesterday, however, the dictator, his British wife, Asma, and their children were gone. Damascus had fallen and, after ruling Syria for 24 years, Assad had been removed in just 24 hours.

To underscore the dramatic turn in fortunes, hours after the dictator fled, groups of Syrians wandered around his palaces, posing for selfies and helping themselves to his furniture.

Video footage showed crowds in al-Rawda presidential palace, as children ran through the grand rooms and men slid a large trunk across the ornate floor. Several men grabbed gilt chairs to take home as souvenirs. At the Muhajreen palace, meanwhile, others gawped at the sheer gaudiness of decoration.

"My feelings are indescribable,"

## Behind the story

**W**hen the Taliban seized power again in Afghanistan, it was the speed of the takeover that was truly surprising (Catherine Philp writes).

The flight of President Assad and the Syrian rebels' entry into Damascus appears to have come at warp speed. Convention tells us this is a terrible blow for Russia, proof that its overreach in Ukraine meant it could not back up its ally in Damascus.

Russia's military intervention in the Syrian civil war, in 2015, came directly after its seizure of Crimea; Turkey's interventions would begin soon afterwards, targeting the Syrian Kurds whose growing control of autonomous regions close to Turkey's border caused it deep worry. What amounted to a vast campaign of demographic engineering won little attention from a world preoccupied by the fate of Islamic State.

In October, President Erdogan and President

Putin held a chummy catch-up on the sidelines of the Brics meeting in Kazan, Russia. Was this then, the moment when the leaders began discussing what each stood to gain in Syria? Russia has by far the most to lose — namely the Hmeimim airbase in Syria's Latakia province and its naval base at Tartus.

As the commander of Syria's western-sponsored, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces hailed Assad's "historic" fall, anti-

Kurdish voices were gathering steam in Ankara. Calls were being made to finish off Syria's Kurdish militia once and for all.

Some 900 American military advisers remain with those forces in northeastern Syria, even though Donald Trump pledged to remove them during his first term as president. Despite criticism of Washington's betrayal of its Kurdish allies, US interest in Syria remains confined to preventing a resurgence of Islamic State.

Omar Daher, 29, a lawyer in Damascus said. "After the fear that he and his father made us live in for many years, and the panic and state of terror that I was living in, I can't believe it."

Another reveller in the city said: "Damn his soul and the soul of the entire Assad family. It is the prayer of every oppressed person and God answered it today. We thought we would never see it, but thank God, we saw it."

There even appeared to be the first

stirrings of a long-cowed free press. Syria's al-Watan newspaper, which was historically pro-government, wrote: "We are facing a new page for Syria. We thank God for not shedding more blood. We believe and trust that Syria will be for all Syrians." The newspaper added that reporters should not be blamed for the news of the past decade. "We only carried out the instructions and published the news they sent us."

Such scenes were still unthinkable

when the rebels first swept into Aleppo from their stronghold of Idlib last week. The ease with which they captured Syria's second largest city was shocking.

Within days, Hama had fallen. Even at the height of Syria's civil war, rebels had been unable to capture this city.

The rebels, under the command of Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, a former al-Qaeda commander, then swept through Damascus, liberating thousands of prisoners held for years in As-

sad's dungeons, as crowds turned out to celebrate. The Syrian army's underpaid soldiers put up little resistance and its self-enriching officer corps swapped their uniforms for jeans as news spread of the rebel approach.

There were no Russian airstrikes to strengthen their morale, no Russian muscle, no Russian intelligence operation. Nor did Hezbollah spring to Assad's defence as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and affiliated opposition groupings swooped from the north. Russia and Iran had promised to send their support to Assad but by then it was too late. There was no great battle for Damascus, no final stand as the political dynasty that ruled Syria for more than 50 years unravelled in a night.

No one had expected Assad to go down without so much as a whimper. "Not even the Syrian opposition," Danny Mekki, a Syrian journalist and analyst who witnessed the regime's final hours in the capital, said. "They were winging it."

But the forces that came together to bring down Assad, just as it appeared that he was more in control of the country than at any point since 2011, had been bubbling away for years.

The front lines had been frozen since 2020, with Assad in control of the bulk of the country while the rebels and the opposition were confined to the north-western province of Idlib and the east. Assad, meanwhile, was busy rehabili-



There was jubilation on the streets of Damascus with the fall of Bashar al-

Assad's regime — and a statue of his father, Abu Mohammed al-Jolani,

above, who led the HTS rebel army, addressed supporters in a mosque



# Pragmatic Islamist split from al-Qaeda

**Richard Spencer  
Gabrielle Weiniger  
Profile**

**A**bu Mohammed al-Jolani was born Ahmed Hussein al-Shara in Saudi Arabia, reportedly the child of Syrian exiles. In the late 1980s, his family returned to Syria and, in 2003, he travelled as a radicalised young man to join al-Qaeda in Iraq and fight US forces.

Like Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the founder of Isis, Jolani spent several years in an American prison in Iraq. At the beginning of the Syrian civil war he returned to fight there, founding Jabhat al-Nusra and taking on his nom de guerre, which refers to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

Although for a time Isis became far more notorious and successful, the group that merged with other Islamists to become Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) survived the fall of its rival's so-called caliphate, and its independence proved an advantage on the battlefield in northwest Syria.

Unlike the Syrian Defence Forces, which is constrained by its US backer; the Assad regime, which was dependent on Russia and Iran; and the "mainstream" northern rebels which are tightly controlled by Turkey, it could act autonomously.

Jolani, 42, also proved a smart and calculating politician. He may have sprung from the same nest as Baghdadi but he realised a more moderate face was necessary if he was to avoid Isis's fate.

He took to wearing western suits and trimmed his beard and hair. He worked with aid agencies to re-

establish order and services in Idlib, his stronghold in northwest Syria. He opened up to the western media, largely ending the longstanding kidnap threat against them in Syria.

Despite the split with al-Qaeda, some analysts are not convinced that HTS has fully renounced its jihadist roots. In Idlib, the group governed with a conservative and at times hardline Sunni Islamist ideology. It remains designated as a terrorist group by the US, EU and Britain. Washington has put a \$10 million bounty on Jolani's head.

His advance south, described initially as defensive, was intended to deter airstrikes and other assaults on his positions by the Assad regime. It was meticulously timed, with Russia and Hezbollah, the pillars of the regime's defence, both weakened by their own wars, and the world distracted by Gaza and Lebanon.

Nir Boms, a professor at the Dayan Center for Middle East Studies, said: "Jolani needs to show a degree of pragmatism if he wants to succeed in bringing freedom to Syria. There are many patriotic Syrians who come from different sides — more Islamist, less Islamist, even Alawites — who would like to see their country back."

Jolani has issued a number of statements vowing to unite Syria and, crucially, protect minorities including Christians, Druze and Kurds. He has promised not to harm the Alawites, who backed Assad. But protests about HTS rule in Idlib, some of which have brought thousands on to the streets in opposition, suggest Jolani may struggle to bring unity. "While he is somewhat open to the pragmatic view, he hasn't shown us all his true colours yet," Boms said.

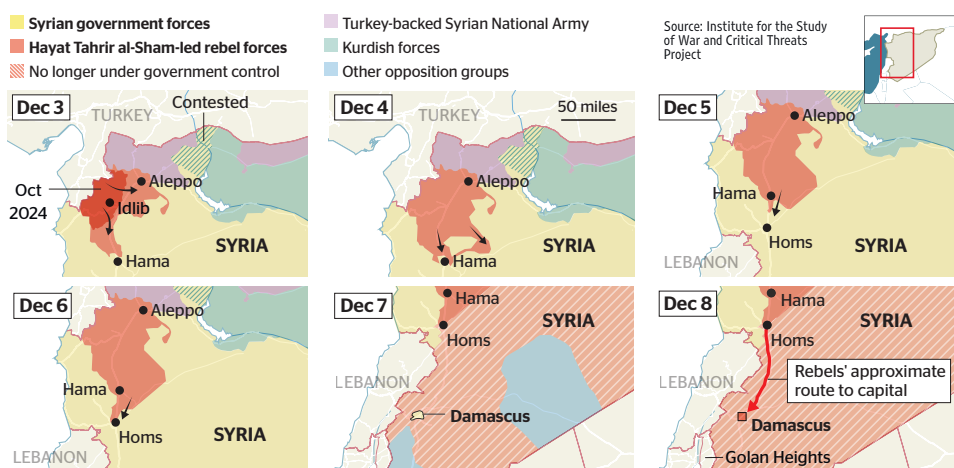
# dynasty unravelled in a day

tating himself internationally — governments that had expelled him from the Arab League re-embraced him, arguing that he was an evil they had to live with. The United States and Europe were contemplating lifting sanctions, in part to encourage him to sever his ties with the Iranians, who along with Russia had propped up his regime during the civil war. Yet the signs were there, a senior Arab diplomat said. "He who could read, should have read it long ago," he said.

Egypt, other Arab countries and Turkey urged him to start reforms and reconcile with opposition groups but he rebuffed them. They also urged him to crack down on the production of narcotics that were flooding their countries, and he ignored them as the drug revenue brought billions to his coffers.

In the meantime, he hollowed out his army as the western sanctions took their toll, although he still managed to enrich himself. "That son of a whore has billions of dollars but he couldn't spare a few million for fuel for his tanks," said another Arab diplomat who has worked on Syria.

In a surreal last-ditch effort to rally his troops, Assad ordered an increase this week in officers' pay, from \$30 a month. It was too little, too late. Officers had taken to sending their soldiers home so they could collect their salaries, said Joshua Landis, who leads the Centre for Middle East Studies at the



University of Oklahoma. When the rebels advanced, they were met by undermanned and demoralised forces who fled and left behind their weapons and uniforms. Several thousands of them packed into trucks and fled to Iraq; others just went home.

The advance caught the Russians and Iranians by surprise. Russia had a handful of jets remaining in the country, having diverted its fire power to Ukraine. Iran had been hammered in

Syria by Israeli airstrikes over the past year, and Hezbollah in Lebanon — the force that had early on helped Assad to retake Homs and other Syrian cities, was nursing its wounds from its devastating war with Israel that only ended this month.

Hezbollah hastily mustered hundreds of troops to Syria but, along with the Russians and Iranians, realised that there was no army for them to fight alongside. In apparent retribution for

its support of the regime, the Iranian embassy in Damascus was stormed by rebels yesterday.

In some areas, such as Deraa outside Assad's stronghold of Damascus and the coastal bastion of his Alawi minority, armed groups that had reconciled with his government held sway. They had been allowed to keep their light arms, and they remobilised as more territory fell to the rebels.

His elite Tiger Forces, a largely Alawi

militia, had made a stand in Homs but they were more focused on protecting the Alawi heartland. Other minorities that had once supported Assad, such as the Shia Ismailis and the Druze, jumped ship, with the latter seizing the southern city of Suwayda at the weekend and declaring it free of the regime.

"He needed to compromise with the Kurds," Landis said. "The Kurds have America's ear, he needed to get backers. He didn't help the Druze — they've really abandoned the regime — and so have the Ismailis. Most importantly, he doesn't speak to the Syrian people."

Jolani had taken the opposite tack. He returned to fight in Syria at the behest of Islamic State's Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, before turning against him then severing his ties to the organisation. His current group, HTS, is designated as a terrorist organisation by US, Britain and others, and he is now seeking to ally fears that he would impose a jihadist government.

The make-up of the rebels — Islamists, American-backed Kurds, Turkish-backed militias — may sound like a recipe for further internal conflict but many Syrians hope that they will work together on an interim government and then, elections. Anas Salhadi, a rebel commander who appeared on television, said: "Syria is for everyone ... Syria is for Druze, Sunnis, Alawites and all sects. We will not deal with people the way the Assad family did."

## News Syria

# How family put sadism at centre of their regime

Richard Spencer

The chief torturer for Islamic State in the Syrian city of Raqqa, once its de facto capital, was a man called Ali al-Shawah, who went by the nom de guerre Abu Luqman. He was, at different times, a part of the Assad regime and its enemy, but he symbolised the country that Syria became under Assad rule.

A military intelligence officer who turned against the regime, he became an Islamist, was jailed, tortured and, in 2011, freed as part of an amnesty at the start of the uprising. Whether or not, as many believe, Assad deliberately released hardened Islamists to discredit the uprising, Abu Luqman became a jihadist fighter and rose through the ranks of Isis.

Rather than shunning the methods of torture and killing that he and his friends had suffered, he repurposed them for a new wave of victims.

By this moment of the Syrian civil war, the nadir of the half-century of Assad rule, public acceptance that torture and brutality were part of everyday life had become set in stone.

The uprising that culminated in the end of the regime showed that the other dubious descriptors applied to the Assad regime — stability, pluralism, Arab nationalism — were hollow. In the end, industrialised torture will be the enduring legacy of Assad rule.

Bashar al-Assad's father, Hafez, came to power in 1970 by pushing aside his colleagues in the pan-Arab socialist Baath Party, which had mounted a coup seven years earlier. The previous president, Salah al-Jadid, spent the remaining 23 years of his life in prison, being regularly brought out for a moment of freedom, asked if he would swear allegiance and, on refusing, returned to his cell.

In truth, it was not the Assads who invented the array of sadism with which they became associated. Some techniques were introduced by the French after the First World War. Others, it is said — admittedly without much evidence — were the result of training by Alois Brunner, Adolf Eichmann's deputy, who fled to Syria in the 1950s.

But the Assads made sadism the centrepiece of their power. Celebrated writers and dissidents disappeared into Syria's jails for years. Those who were relatively unknown fared even worse. During an uprising that shattered Hafez al-Assad's confidence in the late 1970s and early 1980s, led by the Muslim Brotherhood, tens of thousands of people died in army assaults on opposition strongholds, most notably the city of Hama. But those numbers were dwarfed by the disappearance of ordinary Syrians suspected of having taken part or merely sympathised.

Men were arrested in their houses at



Hafez al-Assad, pictured with his wife and children, came to power in 1970. Bashar, circled, married Asma Akhras, who was born and raised in Britain

night or picked up at army checkpoints. Some were never heard of again. Others were held formally, their families allowed to visit, only to be told curtly one day, "he is no longer here". There was rarely a forwarding address.

One or two are said to have emerged from jails liberated by rebels at the weekend, four decades after they were last seen, although such tales have yet to be verified.

Throughout the Hafez al-Assad years, diplomats flocked to his palace. Syria is home to many sects, majority Sunni Muslim but with substantial numbers of Christians, Druze and Alawites, the Shia offshoot to which the Assads themselves belong. That gave numerous other countries a stake in its future and made it a "crossroads of the Middle East", according to the cliché.

Hafez al-Assad's supposed "willingness" was another cliché. Syria, defeated by Israel in the Six-Day War of 1967 and the Yom Kippur War of 1973, and an ally of the Soviet Union, was thought to have the power to influence the anti-western half of the Arab world.

In practice, this meant everyone letting him do whatever he wanted. He kept his people down, he kept peace on the border with Israel, and he said yes to everything Moscow asked, delivering whatever he felt like. When America needed a favour, such as during the first Gulf War with Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 1991, he said yes to that too.

Bashar al-Assad, the lanky second son training as an ophthalmologist in London, was not supposed to inherit the dictatorship on Hafez's death in 2000. Bassel, his older brother, had died in a car accident in 1994.

Bashar may have been genuine in his initial attempt to bring some reform to the system. He opened up its economy, seeking western-trained advisers, and holding a more modern court for insiders beyond the family and the military. In this, his British wife, Asma Akhras — Emma, as she was known at her private London girls' school — played a key role. But

when his more open society spawned journalism determined to expose corruption and regime abuses, he reversed course. Again, the writers served jail terms of a few years, and emerged to tell stories of horror.

The scene was set for the 2011 uprising, when those writers and journalists joined forces with lawyers, exiled politicians and remnants of the Muslim Brotherhood rebellion of three decades earlier to establish a formal opposition, the Syrian National Council. But they rarely had control of the uprising itself, which gradually passed into the embittered hands of the nameless former inmates, and the sons of those still missing: the cellmates of Abu Luqman.

These inhabitants of provincial and rural Syria, where rule by force was the only rule they had ever known, thought nothing as the war spread, made even more barbarous by methods imported by jihadists from Iraq and beyond. The showmanship of Islamic State's beheadings was the most feared and horrific of these consequences.

Yet nothing quite matched the organised brutality of the regime itself. As the war progressed, photos and videos emerged of mass executions and, most remarkably, the emaciated and disfigured corpses of victims collected by a police photographer: 11,000 dead in one stash, from just one location, Hospital 601 at a military base in Mazzeh, Damascus. A hundred thousand detainees are still missing, presumed dead.

Assad's use of chemical weapons on opposition-controlled areas in the suburbs of Damascus claimed up to 1,700 lives in 2013 — the deadliest use of such weapons since the Iran-Iraq war. Barack Obama, then US president, failed to take action despite having suggested that a chemical attack would cross a "red line". David Cameron, prime minister at the time, lost a Commons vote to authorise British military action.

In the years since, new phrases have replaced "a force for stability" and "willingness" in Syria's canon of worn clichés. One is the "cycle of violence".

The Assads have fled. Their gruesome cousins, the Makhloofs, who were handed the economy and its cash to control, have presumably also left. Whether the cycle of violence that their rule spawned has left Syria for good is now the biggest unanswered question. **A cause for cautious celebration, leading article, page 27**



The Assad residence in Damascus became the people's palace as a family posed

## Toddler among women

**Samer Al-Atrush**  
Middle East Correspondent  
**Catherine Philp** World Affairs Editor

As Syrian rebels moved into the capital, Damascus, there was one building more than any other in their sights.

Saydnaya Prison, the infamous "human slaughterhouse" was where thousands of regime opponents had been locked up, tortured and killed from the earliest days of the 2011 uprising to the long brutal years of civil war.

Rebels filmed themselves as they entered Saydnaya, nestled incongruously in the hills north of Damascus.

Bashar al-Assad's guards had only recently fled. "There are still women in the cells," one rebel shouted as they entered the control room where screens showed surveillance camera footage of them breaking down cell doors and telling prisoners they were free.

"Don't be scared, we are revolutionaries," one called out. From one cell a blinking toddler emerged. He appeared to have been born in captivity.

Old women and young girls

streamed out, some of them weeping, others looking dazed. Some screamed in fear, suspecting a ruse or that their moment had come to be led away for execution or torture. "Everyone to her home now," ordered one rebel commander, though some struggled to believe him. "He's gone, Bashar al-Assad is gone," another explained. "You are free now, everyone go home."

There seemed no end to the prisoners. Some held up fingers to show how long they had been imprisoned, others shouted the years. From the male wing, a group of freed prisoners, weeping, explained that this was the day they had been slated for execution.

One man from the neighbourhood of the prison filmed the scenes from his window. "There are still more coming out," he said, incredulously. "How many people did that bastard jail?"

The reckoning will take time. In 2021, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that at least 100,000 people had been executed or killed in Assad's prison network in the first ten years of the uprising. Of those,



HUSSEIN MALLA, OMAR SANAD/ANP

# UK terror watchdog fears the creation of a new Islamic State

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor

The overthrow of the Assad regime in Syria risks creating a haven for terrorists that could lead to a new form of Islamic State, the UK's terror watchdog has warned.

Jonathan Hall KC, the independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, said he was "as worried as I was with Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan" after the fast-moving developments that resulted in the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) seizing the capital, Damascus.

He said he feared that the developments could lead to the release from prisons and detention camps in north-east Syria of jihadi fighters who could "form the kernel of a new Islamic State" or "rush to join HTS and firm up their extremist objectives".

Sir Keir Starmer said the UK welcomed the fall of Assad's "barbaric regime" but said it was too early to say whether the UK government would engage with the new leadership in Syria.

HTS is the most powerful of the groups vying for control of Syria. It has been a proscribed terror group in the UK since 2017 due to its historic links with al-Qaeda, meaning any association or support for it is a criminal offence in Britain.

The Times understands the UK government is not expected to de-proscribe HTS in the short-term while it assesses the group's next steps, but the Home Office signalled this could change in the longer-term as it pointed out the group had since "splintered" from al-Qaeda.

Thousands of former Islamic State fighters and other jihadis are imprisoned in the autonomous northeast region of Syria controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-led group backed by the United States. This is understood to include dozens of British jihadis who travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight for Islamic

State from 2013 onwards. Hall said: "We do not know what will happen to the prisons and detention centres in north-east Syria where the SDF are in charge. It may be that Kurdish autonomy in this part of Syria is undisturbed."

"I'm as worried as I was with Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan. Everyone talked about Taliban 2.0 but they turned out just as extreme as the first Taliban; just look at the way they've treated women. Anybody with jihadi roots you have to be very worried about."

Sir Richard Dearlove, who served as head of MI6 between 1999 and 2004, said he believed the biggest risk came from "lone wolf" terrorists who were likely to be freed and to feel emboldened by the fall of the Assad regime.

He said: "Everyone is very enthusiastic about liberation but we've all seen what happened in Iraq with Saddam's statue being torn down and we saw what happened with the same euphoria in Libya and the situation in Syria is really, really complex."

A Home Office spokesman said: "Since 2017, HTS's relationship with AQ [al-Qaeda] has changed, with a splintering between the two organisations. The situation on the ground in Syria is very fluid. The priority must be the safety of Syrian civilians."

Sir John Sawers, another former MI6 boss, said it would be "rather ridiculous" if the UK was unable to engage with HTS and predicted the home secretary would be asking the intelligence agencies to review its proscribed status.

He told *Sunday Morning With Trevor Phillips* on Sky News: "I think Abu Mohammed al-Golani, the leader, has made great efforts over the last ten years to distance himself from those terrorist groups [including al-Qaeda] and certainly the actions we've seen of Tahrir al-Sham over the last two weeks has been those of a liberation movement, not of a terrorist organisation."

## Assad's British-born wife faces a battle for her health

David Brown, Tom Witherow

Bashar al-Assad's wife may hold a British passport, but it is far too late for it to help her or her children.

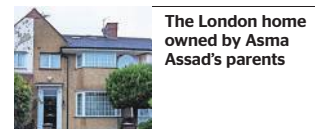
The Assad regime has close historical ties with the UK which opposition groups believe have been used to circumvent sanctions for years and will finance the family's exile.

The president's wife, Asma, 49, is the daughter of Fawaz Akhras, a cardiologist, and Sahar, a diplomat at the Syrian embassy. The family still own the £1 million terraced house in Acton, London, where Asma grew up. There is no suggestion the family has been involved in any wrongdoing.

Asma studied at Twyford Church of England High School in Acton before attending the private Queen's College in Marylebone. After a degree in computer science she joined Deutsche Bank and later JP Morgan.

She met her future husband during childhood holidays in Syria but became better acquainted when he moved to London in 1992.

Assad was suddenly recalled to Damascus following the death of his elder brother in 1994. He inherited the dictatorship when their father, Hafiz, died in June 2000 and the couple were



The London home owned by Asma Assad's parents

married six months later. They now have three children.

The first lady was initially seen as having a reforming influence on her husband. In 2010 *Vogue* magazine described her as a "long-limbed beauty with a trained analytic mind". The edition was still on sale when Assad began the crackdown on opposition groups in the city of Homs which sparked the civil war during which 500,000 people were killed and six million left as refugees.

Asma was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2018 and in May announced she had leukemia. A video led to speculation she has already fled Syria for treatment abroad. In it, she said: "Anyone battling an illness must have the strength and willpower to not only overcome it, but also to endure being away from the people they love."

Asma's family is not covered by UK sanctions, although her parents and two brothers are named under wider US sanctions regulations.



in the hallway, others scrambled for loot and a rebel fighter settled into an office. Snaps of Assad's cars were posted online



## and children freed from brutal jail

30,000 perished in Saydnaya alone. For much of that period, the world was well aware of what was happening. The horrors of Assad's gulag first emerged from a trove of photographs smuggled out by a regime defector codenamed Caesar in 2013.

The 6,786 victims that the photographs depicted were detainees of five

intelligence agency branches in Assad's sprawling torture network, whose dead bodies Caesar saw after they were sent to military hospitals in Damascus.

Caesar, a member of a military police forensic photography unit, smuggled more than 50,000 images from Assad's prisons, testifying to the US Congress about what he had witnessed. In 2019 Congress passed into law the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, sanctioning Syrian leaders and committing the US to support international prosecution of those accused of human rights abuses. It was signed into law by the then president, Donald Trump.

For relatives of those depicted in Caesar's smuggled photographs, these were painful confirmations of their worst fears. Thousands more with loved ones "disappeared" by the regime have spent another decade in the dark until cell doors were sprung open by the anti-Assad forces.

In Hama, a grey-bearded man stumbled from his cell to report his long-forgotten name and recount the decades he had spent in prison. He was arrested

and incarcerated as a young teenager.

In Damascus, a veterinary student walked out of jail and into the glare of the cameras, where he stood trembling under a cloak, unable even to give his name.

Later, relatives saw his image in a video shared on social media. The student had disappeared 13 years ago, in the first blaze of the Syrian uprising. The video clip was the first evidence his family had seen that he was still alive.

Many of those released were jailed long before the 2011 uprising. Tal al-Mallohi, a young woman, was arrested in 2009 for a blog post. Raged Alkatary, a military pilot, was jailed for 43 years after refusing orders to fire on protesters during the 1982 Hama rebellion. The massacre of between 10,000 and 25,000 people took place under orders from Assad's father, Hafiz.

Surviving veterans of that uprising often warned their younger counterparts that the 2011 rebellion would go the same way and that Bashar al-Assad's apparently mild demeanour hid a ruthlessness like his father's.



The toddler, who may have been born in Saydnaya prison near Damascus

## News Syria

# Putin counts cost of losing foothold in Middle East

Russia is scrambling to move strategic military assets after regime change, reports Peter Ostropolsky

Bashar al-Assad and his family were granted asylum in Russia hours after President Putin's military did little to prevent the fall of his regime.

After a day of speculation, a Kremlin source told Russian state news agencies that the ousted Syrian president, who has a British wife, Asma, and three children, was in Moscow, where he had been granted asylum on "humanitarian grounds". The move was unexpected after the Russian military, which had supported the Assad regime in its brutal suppression of rebels since 2015, failed to take steps to prevent the fall of Aleppo, Homs, Hama and Damascus.

Donald Trump, president-elect of the United States, had suggested earlier that Putin had abandoned Assad. "Assad is gone. He has fled his country," Trump said. "His protector, Russia, Russia, Russia, led by Vladimir Putin, was not interested in protecting him any longer."

Initially the Russian foreign ministry said only that Assad had left office and departed the country: "He decided to resign from the presidency and left the country, giving instructions for a peaceful transfer of power."

Assad's links to Moscow run deep. Hafez, his eldest son, defended his PhD thesis in physics and mathematics at Moscow State University (MSU) in November. Written in Russian and

98 pages long, the thesis was focused on the analytical and algebraic theory of numbers. He dedicated his work to "the martyrs of his homeland".

The Kremlin source also told Ria Novosti, the state news agency, that officials were in contact with Syrian rebels who had "guaranteed the security of Russian military bases and [Russian] diplomatic institutions in Syria".

Speculation has been growing over the fate of Russia's Khmeimim airbase, where Putin was welcomed in 2017 by General Sergey Surovikin, who became known as the "Butcher of Syria". Russia also has a naval base in the Mediterranean city of Tartus.

Sources in Ukraine claimed that Russia has withdrawn its warships from Tartus, a base handed to Putin in exchange for his support of Assad. It was said that the Admiral Grigorovich frigate of the Black Sea fleet and the Izhenher Trubin cargo ship of the Northern fleet departed from Tartus and headed into the Mediterranean, possibly bound for Russian ports in Libya.

The speed of the Assad regime's collapse and the inability of his army to resist the opposition's advance "came as a major surprise to Moscow", a source in Russia's foreign ministry told The Times yesterday. He claimed, however, that it was more related to the significant weakening of Iran and Hezbollah in recent months, not Russia.

Syria has long been a significant asset for Putin, handing him a strategic foothold in the region. Putin's bet on Syria worked at the time, said Boris Bondarev, a former Russian diplomat in Geneva and one of the few officials to resign in protest over Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, in an interview with The Times. Russia's involvement



Bashar al-Assad with President Putin in Moscow in July. Syria became a testing ground for military kit later used in Ukraine

in Syria and support for Assad had made Moscow an indispensable player in the region.

"Geneva talks on Syria, the Astana formats [a process led by Turkey, Russia and Iran aimed at ending the armed conflict in Syria] and other initiatives involved Russia directly. By leveraging its foothold in Syria, Putin forced countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, Egypt, and Israel — as well as western Europe and the United States — to engage with him," Bondarev said.

Russian bases in Syria have boosted its military experience, allowing it to test weapons in combat conditions. According to Ruslan Suleymanov, a Middle East expert and non-resident research fellow at the Institute for Development and Diplomacy at ADA University in Azerbaijan, "Russia had never so actively showcased its weapons before, and Putin admitted that Syria became a testing ground for military equipment later used in Ukraine".

It has been suggested that Putin has been unwilling to commit more forces to Syria with the death toll rising in Ukraine. "In addition, Moscow overestimated the strength of the Assad regime, believing that no further threats existed," Bondarev said. "When the opposition launched its latest offensive, it caught Moscow off guard, as it did everyone else."

Suleymanov added: "This is an unprecedented reduction in Russia's political and military influence in the Middle East. It may be the most significant foreign policy defeat for Putin in recent years."

According to Bondarev, the fall of the Assad regime demonstrates that Russia is neither omnipotent nor a reliable partner, unable to protect its allies or vassals. The Middle Eastern and other countries will see this as further evidence that Putin, despite his rhetoric and tough image, cannot always provide necessary support. This will fur-

ther limit Russian diplomacy and influence. The collapse of Assad's regime is a significant challenge for Moscow, a source close to Russia's foreign ministry acknowledged. However, the source said: "I wouldn't endorse pessimistic forecasts that Russia is being driven out of the Middle East and will remain only a bystander. That's an overstatement."

Meanwhile, Putin may be hoping that Syria descends into chaos. "The situation involves a complex coalition of various factions, some with conflicting interests," the source close to the Russian foreign ministry said. "It's too early to speak of Moscow's complete withdrawal from the region — we must wait to see how events unfold. There's also the possibility of internal conflicts among these factions. Parts of the country might fall under the control of groups with whom Moscow has constructive relations."

Moscow's secret war across Europe, page 19

## Despot's downfall will reverberate far beyond his nation's borders

### Analysis

The fall of President Assad will reverberate far beyond Damascus as the great powers that backed the various sides in the Syrian conflict emerge from the wreckage of his regime as winners and losers (Roger Boyes writes). "Turns out nuclear countries can lose wars," said Aleksandar Djokic, a political analyst, referring to Russia. "Lose strategic interests, be humiliated — and still no nuclear holocaust is unleashed."

The collapse of Putin's puppet regime also breaks up the Shia crescent, the web of Islamist affiliates that allowed Iran to extend its power into the eastern

Mediterranean. Iran's land corridor via Iraq has been closed, with Deir Ezzor in Syria now seized by the Kurds. Iran's ammunition supply route through Syria into Lebanon will soon seem as archaic as a Roman road.

Russia, meanwhile, is not only evacuating its Mediterranean naval base at Tartus but also the air traffic centres that control Syrian skies. Until now there has been a covert agreement between the Russians and Israelis that allows the latter to strike against Iranian Revolutionary Guards' arsenals or firing sites inside Syria. That agreement is now redundant.

The ripples from Syria were felt as far away as Paris as world leaders gathered on Saturday for the reopening of

Notre Dame cathedral. President Zelensky of Ukraine was seen talking to President Zourabichvili, his Georgian counterpart drawn closer by the apparent weakening of Moscow.

Russia hasn't only saved the skin of the Assad regime over the years but also that of Belarus in 2020 and Kazakhstan in 2022. But Georgia perceives Moscow weakened by almost three years of war against Ukraine and wonders how far and how quickly it can break out of

President Putin's orbit. If the Kremlin leader has to throw Assad under a bus in order to focus on Ukraine, then how strong is he really? How dependable an ally?

This will not have been lost on Donald Trump, the US president-elect, who was also in Paris. His declared

ambition is to end the war in Ukraine with some form of a land-for-peace deal. Yet it will be difficult for a US president to be able to frame an agreement that rewards

Putin for his aggression at a time when he appears unable to hold his alliance of autocrats together.

It will be Trump's first kinetic foreign crisis: US intelligence is already on high alert for the possible use of hidden chemical weapons by regime loyalists.

Even China, which came out in favour of the Assad regime a few days ago, seems dumbfounded by how quickly power can change hands.

What will happen next? Can Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the victorious Islamist group, credibly maintain its rebranded narrative of moderate, decentralised jihadism? Can it co-operate with Turkish-backed groups to restore services, public trust and be a plausible partner for foreign investors?

Will it follow the path of forming an inclusive transitional government that steers towards an election?

Turkey will be pivotal and it is up to President Erdogan to set out how he sees the future of his neighbour, how he imagines he can control HTS, how he plans to continue his struggle against the Kurds.

Turkey, a Nato member, will be sitting down with a smarting Russia and a suddenly vulnerable Iran. What if Tehran decides that its only logical course is to push more quickly for a nuclear bomb? What if Israel decides it needs a wide security zone inside Syria?

There's nothing quite as unsettling for the world as the ousting of a dictator in a geopolitical hotspot.



Russia hit Aleppo but has lost in Syria

# Record temperatures to bring first breach of 1.5C global warming target

Kaya Burgess Science Reporter

It is "effectively certain" that 2024 will be the warmest year on record globally and the first to reach more than 1.5C above pre-industrial temperatures, an official forecast says.

The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), which provides forecasts for the European Commission, found that last month was the second warmest

November on record after last year, with temperatures 0.73C above the month's average from 1991 to 2020.

The centre, which is based in Reading, Berkshire; Bologna, Italy, and Bonn, Germany, also found that the global average temperature for the first 11 months of this year was 0.72C above the 1991-2020 average and 0.14C warmer than the same period in 2023.

"At this point," the forecast con-

cludes, "it is effectively certain that 2024 is going to be the warmest year on record and more than 1.5C above the pre-industrial level."

An increase in the global average temperature does not mean that all regions of the world have experienced record highs. Last month was outside the top ten warmest Novembers on record for Europe, for example.

Under the Paris Agreement of 2015,

the UN vowed to "hold global temperature increase to well below 2C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels". Samantha Burgess, deputy director of C3S, said of the latest forecast: "This does not mean that the Paris Agreement has been breached but it does mean ambitious climate action is more urgent than ever."

A scarcity of clouds could be to blame

for the heatwaves seen across parts of the Mediterranean, China and the US in 2023, according to a study by German researchers.

The lack of clouds led to a drop in how much solar energy was reflected into space, meaning "we could see global long-term climate warming exceeding 1.5C sooner than expected," said Helge Goessling of the Alfred Wegener Institute.

## Thousands left in the dark by Darragh

Families were facing a second night without power yesterday after Storm Darragh wreaked havoc across the country (Shayma Bakht and Tom Witherow write).

Tens of thousands of people were hit by power cuts amid a wild weekend in which two men were killed when trees fell on their vehicles on Saturday.

Paul Fiddler, a Lytham Town FC assistant manager from Lancashire who was in his 40s, was killed when a tree fell on his van as he drove on the A59 at Longton about 9am.

Tributes were paid to the "well-loved coach" who worked at a television shop in Freckleton. A spokesman for the non-league club said he was a "football player, gaffer but most of all a true friend" in a post on social media. A friend added that he was "a massive support for countless families ... and his kindness will always be remembered".

The other victim, who has not been identified,



Storm Darragh sent a tree crashing into houses in South Kensington, west London, and toppled a kiosk on the pier at Llandudno, north Wales. Paul Fiddler, a "well-loved coach" for Lytham Town FC, was one of two people killed in the storm



died in his car in Erdington, a suburb of Birmingham.

A yellow wind warning for England and Wales, predicting disruption to travel, remained until 6pm last night. The Met Office said more winds of up to 70mph could cause short-term loss of power. The highest wind

speed recorded over the weekend was 96mph at Berry Head, Devon, south of Torquay on Saturday. Theresa White, 55, who lives near Rackenford, Devon, said her family was lighting candles in the "pitch black" after more than 24 hours without power.

"We had no internet and all our phone signals weren't working," she said. The Energy Networks Association, the industry body, said about 161,000 customers were still without power yesterday afternoon.

The Environment Agency had more than 50 flood warnings and more than 130 flood alerts issued across England yesterday. Specialists were called out when a tree crashed into a house in South Kensington, west London, smashing windows. The Royal Parks charity closed all of its eight parks while several gardens and playgrounds were shut until today. Some

Londoners criticised the closure of the parks as a "nanny state" decision. They said users should be left to gauge the risk. A Royal Parks official said the landscape had more than 170,000 trees. "Wind gusts in excess of 50mph pose a significant threat to their structural integrity," the official added. "A decision to

close the parks is not one we take lightly. We felt closure was the best course of action to manage the risk of accidents." It is the second time in a fortnight the parks have been closed after the authority shut them on November 24 due to Storm Bert. Forecast, page 47

## Travel agency's chatty bots can answer calls too

Lucy Tobin

If the voice on the line as you try to book a Florida sunshine break sounds a little robotic, there could be a simple explanation. One of Britain's biggest hotel booking websites is using AI travel agents — and says most customers don't realise they're not speaking to a human.

In their first month at work, the robots have fielded 40,000 holiday inquiries and billed customers £150,000 for room reservations.

HotelPlanner.com, which lists

1.4 million hotels on its site, used eight million of its human staff's recorded phone calls to create 20 AI agents, who are programmed to engage in realistic, two-way conversations in 15 languages.

The robots make recommendations, check hotel availability, offer prices, explain room types, and respond to detailed questions about each hotel before taking payments.

When The Times called the robot travel agent Cassandra, it was greeted with a familiar background hubbub of a call centre and typing noises. There was no indication that Cassandra wasn't a



Olivia, David and the rather familiar-looking Donnie have helped to double the number of calls answered by "working" around the clock

real person, and when asked about booking a hotel in Florida, she responded: "Florida is a beautiful state — to help find the ideal hotel, can you let me know what city you're interested in visiting?"

When told Orlando, Cassandra answered: "Are you interested in a particular city or hotel? Or would you like to be near the theme parks, downtown or International Drive area?"

The AI agent proposed a three-night stay at the Disney Swan hotel for \$1,374.87, then asked if the price was acceptable or "would you like a more economical option?"

The call, which avoided the need for navigating fiddly drop-down menus online, could be particularly useful for those with vision problems or who find

typing difficult. Most of HotelPlanner's agents have generic names such as Jade, Olivia, David and Gabriel — but customers can also choose to book a Lapland break with an agent called Santa.

In Washington, a tanned, quiffed character called Donnie specialises in bookings at the Waldorf Astoria — formerly the site of the Trump International. When The Times called Donnie, a familiar-sounding voice was effusive about everything he described. "This hotel is great, it's tremendous, absolutely tremendous ... it's a beautiful thing, believe me," he said. "How many nights would you like to make America — I mean make your stay — great?"

HotelPlanner's chief executive and co-founder, Tim Hentschel, said the AI

agents were a serious business development. Calls have doubled since the AI platform began running for 24 hours a day in November. The site's human call handlers mostly worked from 6am to midnight.

"This year we processed over £1.3 billion hotel bookings, but we forecast next year's will almost double to £2.4 billion thanks to our new capacity," Hentschel said. "This year, we've had to curtail the capacity on our site, when fewer call handlers were available, but now we can now scale much faster."

The majority of customers speak to AI agents without realising they're not real people, he said. "We have calls recorded of people saying 'hey, James, will you be at the hotel when I get there?', and he responds, 'sorry, no — I'm an automated agent'."

"The ability for the AI assistants to engage in emotionally intelligent conversations is revolutionary."

The robot travel agents can't answer every question, however. "Sometimes people call and say, 'I left a teddy bear at the hotel, is he in the room?', or 'does your breakfast have poached eggs?' In that case," Hentschel explained, "we'll transfer the call."

## News Politics

# Only US is more divided than Britain, report finds

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor

Britain has the greatest polarisation between the left and right outside the United States, a report suggests.

The research by Dame Sara Khan, the government's former counter-extremism tsar, warns of weakening

social cohesion. She found a decline in democratic resilience was creating a "permissive environment" for extremists to exploit.

Nearly half (45 per cent) of those questioned said they almost never trusted the government to put the nation's interests first, regardless of the

party in power. This was up from 23 per cent in 2020. Only 41 per cent of people trusted their neighbours.

Out of 28 countries, the UK was the least trusting at 39 per cent, from 43 per cent last year. The study published today by Crest Insights, an independent think tank that specialises in the crimi-

nal justice system, found the UK had the least trust in the media.

The percentage of people who thought Muslims had "completely different" values had risen from 38 per cent to 44 per cent after the summer riots over the Southport attack. Eight in ten British Jews felt less safe in Britain than before the October 7 attacks.

Some 43 per cent of people described Britain as "declining" and a further 25 per cent said "weak".

Khan identified a "boiling pot" of issues facing the government, fuelled by socio-economic and political issues, including the cost of living crisis, concerns about the scale and pace of immigration, global events, including the conflict in Gaza, and hostile foreign state interference.

The weakening of social cohesion provided an environment for extremist narratives to take root, she said. The increase in extremist activity contributed to a weakening of social cohesion in a vicious cycle, she added.

This could be eased by building cohesive communities, addressing local grievances and disillusion with authority and improving democratic engagement where hostile attitudes exist.

Khan cited the rise of figures such as Andrew Tate, the misogynist with millions of followers who is facing charges of rape and human trafficking, as an example of how extremists were exploiting the breakdown in social cohesion.

Her research found that nearly three quarters (73 per cent) of those aged 16 to 24 had encountered hateful, violent, extremist or terrorist content online.

The study found 45 per cent of young men had a positive view of Tate.

Khan said the spread of misogyny was fuelling the "growing normalisation of harmful attitudes toward women among young men". These beliefs and attitudes were a "significant and growing concern", she added.

The lack of trust in society had led to the spread of conspiracy theories. The report found 29 per cent of respondents believed in the "great reset", a conspiracy to impose a totalitarian world government during the pandemic.

About 30 per cent of those aged 45 to 54 believed state officials were hiding the true number of Covid deaths.

One in ten of people shared the views of those who engaged in violent disorder during the summer riots and had sympathy for the use of violence against refugees, while 8 per cent believed violent protest outside refugee accommodation was justified.

Khan, who has advised Labour and Tory administrations but stood down as the social cohesion tsar in May, has recommended the creation of a new unit, based in the Cabinet Office, to oversee a strategy to tackle the wider, non-terror threats posed by extremism.

Her intervention comes as the Home Office is carrying out an internal review to identify gaps and flaws in counter-extremism, with a new strategy due to be unveiled in 2025.

The research on the increasing polarisation of the UK was based on a new study by the Policy Institute at King's College London that interrogated the public's confidence in institutions, while evidence of growing hateful attitudes was based on surveys commissioned by Hope Not Hate, the anti-racism and anti-fascist organisation. Public attitudes cited by Khan's report were based on a range of opinion polls.



## Braverman's

Matt Dathan

The husband of Suella Braverman, the former Conservative home secretary, said it was "nice to believe in something again" after defecting to Nigel Farage's Reform UK party.

Rael Braverman, a businessman, was out campaigning for his new party yesterday after he jumped ship from the Conservatives on Saturday.

He was delivering leaflets for Reform UK after becoming the latest Conservative to defect in the past week.

It has intensified speculation that Suella Braverman could follow him to Reform UK, which would increase the party's MPs to six. However, she told The Times: "I'm not defecting to Reform ... This is the 21st century and not the 18th — my husband does not speak for me nor does he control my political affiliations."

"My husband and I have a healthy respect for each other's independence — he doesn't tell me how to do my job and I don't tell him how to pick a political party."

Farage told The Times: "He's out leafleting and campaigning today. I said that I hoped he would become an active member and boy, he's proving it already, despite the weather. He sent

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Kemi Badenoch meets JD Vance, the vice-president elect, on her trip to the US; Angela Rayner outlines her planning reforms on the BBC; and Suella Braverman with her husband, Rael, who has quit the Conservatives for Reform



# We'll strip councils of the power to block houses, says Rayner

Chris Smyth Whitehall Editor  
Matt Dathan

Councils will lose the power to veto big developments under plans to hand mayors greater control over planning.

Ministers are to shake up the rules to ease large-scale housing projects by requiring some decisions to be taken on a regional rather than local level.

Angela Rayner, the deputy prime minister and secretary for local government, said she would "revolutionise" planning rules by enabling mayors to drive forward the government's promise to build 1.5 million homes.

Under ministers' preferred model, mayors would be able to call in "significant" planning applications and assume responsibility for approving or rejecting them. Mayors would take charge of devising larger-scale development plans covering wider regions, with councils ordered to take part.

Councils in areas without mayors would be required to make big decisions across local government boundaries.

Rayner will set out plans this week to modernise the approval process by allowing applications that comply with local development plans to bypass committee approval. Local development plans are produced by councils and provide guidance on which types of proposals will be permitted.

The deputy prime minister denied that the government was removing democratic power from councils.

"I don't accept that," she told *Sunday* with Laura Kuenssberg on BBC1. "Because we're saying they have to have a local plan, local democracy, and we're saying the national planning policy framework, national democracy, were elected to build the 1.5 million homes. So therefore we've bolted in the consultation." She said the new streamlined approach was essential to end delays in building new homes, cutting costs for individual schemes and providing more certainty to housebuilders.

Rayner also told *Sunday Morning*

with Trevor Phillips on Sky News: "We can't have a situation where newts are more protected than people who desperately need housing."

"What we need is a process which says protect nature and wildlife but not at the expense of us building the houses. We could do both."

She dismissed claims that many of the 1.5 million new homes pledged by Labour over the next five years would go to migrants. Rayner insisted that there were enough private sector homes to cater for the growth in the immigrant population.

Estimates by the Office for Budget Responsibility suggest that immigration will add a further 1.5 million people to the UK population by 2029.

"There is plenty of housing already," Rayner said. "But there's not enough for the people that desperately need it. So the homes, especially under our affordable homes programme, which is social and affordable housing, will be for people who desperately need them, local people."

Richard Fuller, the shadow Treasury minister, has accused the government of overriding the concerns of local people. He said Labour's goal of 1.5 million homes was "a reasonable target". He added, however: "If you want to achieve that, you've got to bring the people with you. And, unfortunately, Labour seem to be saying that Angela is best and local people can be ignored."

In a devolution white paper expected this month, Rayner will set out proposals for mayors to make "strategic" planning decisions over a wider area. At present, local authorities decide planning applications, from kitchen extensions to developments of thousands of homes. Critics say this gives them an incentive to reject big projects that will affect local residents but may benefit the wider region.

**Regions risk drowning out England's voice, Matthew Parris, page 23**

**The nimbys aren't always wrong, Libby Purves, page 25**

## husband defects to join Farage in Reform

me a text saying it's nice to believe in something again."

Asked if Suella Braverman would make the same move, Farage said: "She'll make her own mind up as and when. We'll have to see but we've seen one or two names coming across and I do suspect many more will follow."

A poll last week put Reform UK ahead of Labour in a national survey for the first time. Across the nine most recent polls, Reform UK has an average of 20 per cent of the vote, up from 14 per cent in the general election. Labour is on 28 per cent, down from 34 per cent at the election, while the Tories' vote share has risen by just two percentage points to 26 per cent.

Angela Rayner, the deputy prime minister, said she understood that people were angry as she faced questions about why Labour had slumped in the polls.

When asked on the BBC's *Sunday* with Laura Kuenssberg programme if she was con-

cerned about the rise of Reform UK in the polls, she said: "I know people are impatient for change and people are very angry."

Rael Braverman, who The Mail on Sunday reported would become a senior campaigner for Reform focusing on farming, is the latest notable Conservative to make the switch in the past week, following Dame Andrea Jenkyns, a former minister and close ally of Boris Johnson, who was announced as Reform UK's candidate for the mayoral elections in Greater Lincolnshire in May.

Tim Montgomerie, the founder of the Conservative Home website and a former adviser to Johnson, also defected to Reform UK last week.

Farage attributed the steady flow of defections to the Conservative Party's decision to elect Kemi Badenoch over Robert Jenrick, who was of-

fering a more radical shift to the right. He also said that the latest immigration figures, which showed net migration reached 906,000 in the year to June 2023, had persuaded some Tories that it was time to leave the party after its poor record on the issue in government.

Richard Fuller, the Tory shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, said that the Conservative Party needed to offer more clarity on its plans to reduce immigration and how it intended to build more houses to combat the threat from Reform UK. He said on *Sunday* with Laura Kuenssberg: "On issues such as immigration, issues such as housing, yes, there is a need for us to start talking about what direction we're going to take the country in."

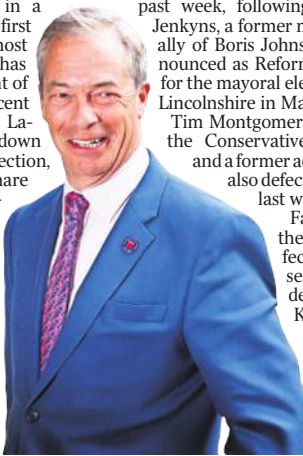
"We need to talk about issues that people worry about, but I don't think that's the same as saying we have to now say what exactly we would do if we were in government in five years' time."

Suella Braverman has previously revealed how she decided she wanted to marry Rael when he joined her on the campaign trail in the rain.

She told her local newspaper: "I realised he was the one when he came out delivering leaflets for the election in the pouring rain."

They married in 2018.

**Nigel Farage said others were expected to follow**



## Labour scraps initiative finding jobs for refugees

Max Kendix Political Reporter

Sir Keir Starmer has scrapped a scheme to help refugees learn English and find jobs.

Rishi Sunak and Robert Jenrick, then the immigration minister, launched the scheme last year to help "overcome the barriers faced by refugees to integrate into local communities and society".

The Refugee Employability Programme was backed by £52 million of Home Office funding until June 2025. A notice on the government website on Wednesday revealed the scheme would not be renewed and new refugees would stop being taken on from December.

A spokesman for the Home Office said the department was "committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of relevant public services and the way these services support refugees".

The programme helps refugees to write CVs, prepare for interviews, take English classes, register with childcare and healthcare and join community groups. It was open to any refugee granted permission to stay after June 2022 or those arriving through the special scheme created for those fleeing

the war in Afghanistan. Each refugee is allocated a case worker for up to 18 months, responsible for assessing a refugee's needs and working to develop a tailored plan. At least 1,400 people had been supported as of October this year.

When he announced the scheme, Jenrick said: "We want refugees and Afghans who have come to the UK legally and safely to have every opportunity to enter the world of work."

The government had cited statistics that refugees were more than 20 per cent less likely to be in employment than Britons, with the gap as high as 30 per cent for refugee women.

A Home Office source pointed out that the department would continue to pay councils to help resettle and integrate refugees and that employment support was available through the Department for Work and Pensions.

Separately, the Home Office has doubled the time that refugees are given to find a home before being evicted from asylum accommodation — 56 days rather than 28. Campaigners had raised concerns about increasing numbers of refugees becoming homeless through the winter months.

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# Dorothy's slippers fetch \$28m — some way over the \$3m estimate

David Charter Washington

To the Wicked Witch of the West, Dorothy's ruby-red shoes were priceless. No one, though, expected that the famous heels from *The Wizard of Oz* could fetch \$28 million at auction — a record for film memorabilia.

Four pairs of the shoes worn by Judy Garland's character Dorothy are known to exist, but this particular pair have a Hollywood history of their own: they were stolen in 2005 and recovered 13 years later by the FBI.

The final price, after taxes and fees, of \$32.5 million, may have been boosted by publicity around *Wicked*, the Oz spin-off stage show which has just been released as a film. It imagines the events leading up to Dorothy's journey over the rainbow.

The anonymous buyer outbid the Judy Garland Museum, which had held a crowdfunder before the auction. The museum's home state of Minnesota had also set aside \$100,000.

"There is simply no comparison between Judy Garland's ruby slippers



The anonymous buyer outbid the Judy Garland Museum for the slippers

and any other piece of Hollywood memorabilia," said Joe Maddalena, of Heritage Auctions, after bidding at the Dallas, Texas, sale spiralled way above the \$3 million estimate. "The breathtaking result reflects just how important movies and movie memorabilia are to our culture and to collectors."

The previous highest price for a piece of costume from a film was \$4.6 million paid in 2011 for the white dress that Marilyn Monroe wore in *The Seven Year Itch*. The latest auction, which featured the sale of the Wicked Witch's

black hat for \$2.9 million, set a record of \$38.6 million for an entertainment memorabilia event.

Between six and ten pairs of Dorothy's shoes were created for the 1939 film. This pair had been owned since 1970 by Michael Shaw, a collector. They were on loan to the Judy Garland Museum until they were stolen in 2005. The FBI recovered them in 2018. The shoes were returned in February to Shaw, who decided to sell them.

A pair in need of a safe hiding place, leading article, page 27

# 300% more deer to be killed in Winnie-the-Pooh's woods

Will Humphries

Countryside Correspondent

Winnie-the-Pooh and his friends may want to keep their heads down in Ashdown Forest after a wealthy donor paid for the number of deer culled to quadruple in the Sussex countryside.

Deerstalkers can now shoot hundreds more of the animals than the wild venison market normally demands to combat the ecological devastation the growing population is wreaking across Sussex, including the ancient forest made famous by AA Milne's stories. The meat will be given to food banks.

Wild deer are roaming Britain in their largest numbers for a millennium, with an estimated two million deer threatening to destroy woodland biodiversity and causing significant damage to young tree plantations and crops.

The expanded deer cull, which aims to kill 1,000 in Sussex this year instead of the usual 250, is being funded by an anonymous environmentalist through the Country Food Trust, which is organising the payment, processing and delivery of the minced venison to local food banks.

"We are a month into the project and it's going brilliantly," SJ Hunt, its CEO, said. "I couldn't be more excited that the outcomes are matching the theory, which so rarely happens. We have given 31,000 meals out to food banks in a month and killed 152 fallow does."

"We are guaranteeing payment at a set rate at the start of the season, which doesn't usually happen, and saying we want fallow does so that we can reduce reproduction in the population."

"Unless there is demand for venison, game dealers won't take it and stalkers won't cull deer if there is nowhere for it to go. But we have an inexhausti-



Ashdown Forest inspired AA Milne. Venison from the 1,000 deer killed in Sussex this year will be sent to local food banks

ble demand and the feedback from the people eating it has been fantastic."

Hunt said the wealthy donor funding the project wanted to see improvements in the biodiversity of the Sussex countryside and it is hoped the same can be done in other counties.

Before the Covid-19

pandemic there were an estimated 1.5 million wild deer in Britain, with about 80 per cent of the venison from shot deer going to restaurants or the hospitality trade. Those sectors struggled during lockdowns and demand for venison collapsed. With deerstalkers not culling as many animals during the pandemic, their population boomed.

Wild deer cause up to 75,000 road traffic accidents each year in the UK, resulting in 10 to 15 driver deaths. Between 500,000 and 750,000 deer need to be culled each year just to keep the population at a standstill.

With no natural predat-

tors such as wolves or lynxes to keep their populations in check, the animals can ravage the biodiversity of woodlands by overforaging the understorey that provides habitat for other wildlife. They can also have devastating effects on farmers' crops, leaving them with losses of up to £20,000 a year.

An overall population of less than a million is favoured by conservationists to reduce the impact on the country.

One of the main factors in controlling deer numbers is the price hunters can get for their carcasses.

If there is increased demand for venison, then the price will go up and hunters and game dealers will be incentivised to shoot more.



# How fish pick the perfect moment for a birthday

Kaya Burgess Science Reporter

Those with a birthday in the festive period might look with envy at fish that can choose when they make their entrance into the world.

A study has cracked the mystery of how fish embryos remain inside their egg until the time is right to hatch.

Researchers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem found that some species could delay hatching for months until the conditions were right.

They wrote in the Science journal

that others timed it to specific periods, "such as day or night".

The scientists found that the embryo itself made the "life or death decision" on when to emerge. They said that they now understood the mechanism behind the process.

The study found that fish "actively control their hatching timing through a neurohormone, thyrotropin-releasing hormone (TRH), which triggers the release of enzymes that dissolve the egg wall".

When the gene responsible for re-

leasing the neurohormone in zebrafish was inactivated in the study, the embryo was unable to hatch.

The Israeli researchers said: "This discovery uncovers a previously hidden neural circuit that governs one of the most crucial life-stage transitions and demonstrates how fish embryos, far from being passive, possess the ability to actively control their own hatching process, a key to their survival."

They said that the finding underscored "the remarkable ability of embryos to make decisions that directly

affect their survival, offering a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between neurobiology and environmental adaptation".

Scientists at the university, co-founded in 1918 by Albert Einstein, said they had "cracked the code of how fish pick their own birthday".

The study said "the need to precisely control the hatching moment" was common to many animals. The researchers said more research was needed to understand the circuitry controlling this in a range of species.

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

City solicitors may seem to be pampered enough with starting salaries of up to £180,000 and partners' pay at some firms averaging more than £2 million.

But one practice is going the extra mile by offering coffee facial scrubs to its lawyers in an effort to retain staff and reduce waste at its headquarters.

Bird & Bird, a firm noted for its intellectual property and technology specialisms, is offering bags containing granules from its coffee bar to its employees to take home.

While the move, first reported on The Lawyer website, may strike some as the ultimate in professional services wokeism, Dan Noakes, the firm's "head of responsible business", was unrepentant. The bags, he explains, "come with instructions on how to creatively reuse them, from making skin exfoliators to using them as compost".

Noakes's law firm, also known by the sobriquet Two Birds, was founded in London in 1846 and has offices around the world. It successfully represented the Crypto Open Patent Alliance in a High Court copyright battle that debunked claims by Craig Wright, an Australian computer scientist, to be the pseudonymous inventor of bitcoin, Satoshi Nakamoto.

While the face scrub plan might seem like a gimmick, one motivation could be the desperation of domestic City law firms to compete for the best graduates in the face of rocketing salaries being offered by the London offices of US rivals.

At least 20 of the highest-paying law firms for graduate solicitors in the City are based in America, forcing UK firms to promote "lifestyle" benefits to recruits.

One example emerged in 2022, when Hogan Lovells, another City firm, paid the animal therapy provider Paws in Work to bring in a litter of "adorable puppies" for two days in an attempt to lure staff back to the office after the pandemic.

Last year another gimmick from the managing partners at the London office of a US law firm backfired. Simpson Thacher & Bartlett, one of Wall Street's most prestigious practices, doled out sleeping advice "kits" to staff, only for the lawyers to point out on social media that they were routinely required to work on deals until 3am.

At Bird & Bird, Noakes told The Times that by handing lawyers and staff coffee granule sachets the firm was "actively reducing our food waste and simultaneously promoting a culture of recycling and reusing. This is also a fun, eco-friendly way of promoting self-care among our employees".

## News

# Christian influencer sues girls' school over sacking

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

A Christian social-media influencer is suing a Catholic girls' school amid claims of double standards over diversity after she was sacked "for supporting biblical marriage".

In an employment tribunal case that opens tomorrow, Gozen Soydag has accused officials at St Anne's Catholic High School for Girls in London of breaching equality laws by dismissing her from a role as a "pastoral manager" because of Instagram posts.

Speaking before the hearing over claims of unfair dismissal and breach of contract, Soydag, 37, said that there was "so much talk about diversity in the workplace — yet in this instance, my beliefs and who I am as a Christian were completely excluded". The influencer — who has nearly 40,000 followers on



Gozen Soydag quoted a biblical instruction for wives to submit to their husbands

her Instagram accounts — will tell the tribunal that her Christian beliefs were censored by the school before she was sacked on her birthday and ordered to leave the premises without pay.

Soydag posted on Instagram about the "importance of preserving purity for marriage" and quoted from Ephesians in the New Testament, which instructs wives to "submit to your husbands as to the Lord".

Soydag will argue that despite being told that her performance had been "outstanding", she was summoned to a

meeting with the school's assistant deputy headteacher in 2023 to be told that there had been an anonymous complaint about her social media output.

The assistant deputy headteacher is said to have told Soydag that if the same statements were made by a man, they would be deemed "misogynistic".

Soydag will claim that she was told for the first time at that meeting that employees' social media accounts must not be publicly accessible. But it is alleged that a fortnight later, Soydag was called to another meeting to be told that there were complaints about other social media posts.

Soydag was ultimately sacked, with senior teachers allegedly claiming that her "extensive online profile" was "incompatible with the school's mission statement and ethos". The school was contacted for comment.

## Ordained in history, bishop is but a boy

A medieval tradition has been revived with a cathedral making its head chorister a bishop (Nadeem Badshah writes).

Sam Irving, 13, was ordained at Norwich Cathedral on Friday as it reintroduced the custom to celebrate St Nicholas, the patron saint of children.

Sam's authority lasts until December 28, the day of the feast of the Holy Innocents in remembrance of the massacre by Herod of babies in Bethlehem.

Dr Jane Steer, the Bishop of Lynn, invested him in episcopal clothing, including a mitre headdress and a crozier staff.

Sam delivered a homily to the congregation of the cathedral in Norfolk. The custom was abolished in



England by Henry VIII but revived by Queen Mary. Elizabeth I ditched it in 1558.

The cathedral revived it to highlight the importance of young people. It was

believed that the ceremony was to celebrate the triumph of a child's innocence over the adults' harsher views of the world.

The tradition was

## Vote of no confidence in CoE leaders

Kaya Burgess Religious Affairs Correspondent

A vote of no confidence in the Church of England's most senior body of leaders and their ability to tackle child abuse has been passed amid anger in the pews over the handling of scandals.

A motion was tabled on Saturday in the church's regional parliament in the

Diocese of Rochester declaring "no confidence in the Archbishops' Council's oversight of safeguarding". The vote was passed with 51 in favour, five against and nine abstentions.

The council acts as an executive board. Its members are the archbishops of Canterbury and York, plus 19 others including priests, archdeacons, church commissioners and lay representatives.

Justin Welby resigned as Archbishop of Canterbury after a report identified failings in bringing John Smyth, an abusive Christian barrister, to justice.

Members of the General Synod are considering submitting a similar motion to the church's national assembly.

The Archbishops' Council has been approached for comment.

Welby's farewell, letters, page 26

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widespread across Europe in the Middle Ages when the bishop of the diocese would symbolically stand to one side on St Nicholas Day and allow a boy to take his

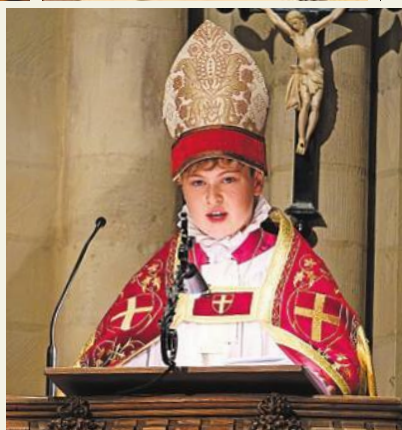
place. The young understudy was frequently chosen from among the choir boys, however, in



Sam Irving accepted the crozier from Dr Jane Steer and later delivered his sermon

some regions, the honour was given to one of the children attending the school attached to the cathedral or monastery. Once the boy and his colleagues took possession of the cathedral they traditionally performed all the ceremonies and offices except Mass.

Daniel Neville, a chorister at Norwich, was chosen in 2019 to be the boy bishop. He read from the Book of Job and spoke in his sermon about caring for the planet and understanding truth. Daniel said at the time: "The care of this planet falls upon all members of humanity — young and old. But not all of us have voices that are heard. For those of us who are young, it is difficult to know who is telling us the truth, or whether our voice is heard."



# Childminders may vanish in a decade

Georgia Lambert

Childminders will disappear by 2033 if those leaving the job continue at the present rate, a report has found. Three thousand are quitting each year, according to the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and Save the Children. Within a decade none could be left, they claimed.

Their research found that more than two thirds of parents in professional and managerial roles, such as lawyers and doctors, used formal childcare, compared to fewer than half of parents in elementary or service occupations, such as cleaners and care workers.

The report said the divide in access was worsened in "childcare deserts" — areas where suitable childcare provision is severely lacking. The study found disparities in the quality and quantity of childcare in England, shaped by class and geography.

The more deprived or rural an area, the fewer and lower-quality childcare options families tended to have.

Deprived areas had 32 per cent fewer places per child and 25 per cent fewer "good" options, as rated by Ofsted, the children's services authority, when compared with the more affluent areas.

Rural areas had 31 per cent fewer places and 29 per cent fewer "good" options than inner cities and town centres. More than a third (37 per cent) of parents with young children reported a shortage of places and 6 per cent said

they did not use childcare because local providers were full, with transport problems affecting a further 2 per cent.

Under the government's free universal childcare policy, working parents in England are eligible for 15 hours of free childcare a week for two-year-olds, with the same entitlement expanding to children aged nine months to two years. Parents of three- and four-year-olds can get 30 hours of free childcare each week, with the same provision extended to children from nine months to school age from September 2025.

The policy is under threat as nurseries warn of cuts due to rising costs.

Enrolment in school-based nurseries fell by 14 per cent (42,000 children) between 2015 and last year, despite an increase in the number of schools offering nursery provision. This decline is most evident in economically disadvantaged areas.

Jodie Reed, an associate fellow at the IPPR, said that without a rethink the government's "unprecedented" extension of funded childcare could leave the poorest families without access to quality care for their children.

The IPPR and Save the Children proposed several reforms, including establishing not-for-profit nursery trusts, strengthening local authority roles to target childcare expansion where it was most needed, extra funding for deprived areas and reforms to payments for those with special educational needs and disabilities.



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**Taking a stand** Allan Gayner, 80, from Tyne and Wear, and Michael Edwards, 58, from London, feature in a series of portraits by the photographer Rankin highlighting the alarming number of preventable amputations. The healthcare company Abbott is calling for earlier interventions in complications from cardiovascular disease

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- 2 Glazed opening (6)
- 3 Turn to ice (6)
- 4 Image (7)
- 5 Basic structure (9)

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# Call to let inmates help train prison guards

**T** **TIMES**  
**Crime and Justice**  
**Commission**

Matt Dathan Home Affairs Editor

Inmates should help train prison guards as part of a “radical transformation” of the role, a report has recommended.

The Prison Reform Trust (PRT), a charity that was led by Lord Timpson until he was appointed prisons minister in July, said that prisoners should be involved in both the design and delivery

of officer training and development programmes, while former prisoners should help to recruit officers and support them during their induction.

Detailed interviews with prisoners in jails across the country found that inmates consistently identified building rapport as the most crucial skill for effective prison officers. However, the report warned that the prison service stands at a “crucial turning point”, with only a minority of current staff having direct experience of the traditional relationship-based model of prison management that has historically characterised the system in England and Wales. It said there should be more

opportunities for prisoners and staff to build relationships through shared activities such as cooking, a recommendation widely backed by the inmates consulted as part of research. The report also suggested setting up a professional registration system similar to the one used in nursing. It would require mandatory registration for prison officers with regular renewal of training and professional development.

The PRT used the comparison with nursing because the role of a prison officer carries similar “life and death importance” for which up-to-date knowledge and skills are essential. Registration would involve a standard code

of practice for officers, a certificate of competence to practise with the requirement to renew every three years and evidence of competence practice, self-reflection and professional development during that period.

It said there should be significantly more supervision and a maximum ratio of one manager to ten officers.

The report said the workforce faces “unprecedented challenges” stemming from staffing cuts made from 2012 onwards, which has led to significant loss of experienced staff. This led to the rapid recruitment of staff who were not sufficiently trained to work in overcrowded and increasingly violent jails.

Charlie Taylor, the chief inspector of prisons, has warned of a changing trend in recruitment, with new recruits significantly younger than a decade ago and some hired straight from school. Historically, he said, prison officers would be hired from the services or armed forces.

Pia Sinha, chief executive of the PRT, said: “Any attempts to resolve the crisis within prisons need to be in lock-step with measures to reform the workforce. Without an engaged, trained and supported workforce, the government will struggle to enact any measures to bring about ordered, safe and purposeful prisons.”

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# From carbon to calcium, how vegan diets stack up

Yennah Smart, Anna Dowell

The livestock industry produces a fifth of global greenhouse gas emissions, so it makes sense that people have begun to eat more plant-based alternatives.

But while these reduce meat consumption, how much do they help the environment? According to a recent study by the University of Oxford, popular products such as oat milk and vegetarian sausages, for example, were found to have fewer climate benefits than unprocessed foods such as peas and beans.

Beef has the greatest carbon footprint of any protein-rich food. A high-tech solution, lab-grown beef, still produces 2.77kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per serving compared with 3.61kg for regular beef — cutting emissions by a third. In comparison, traditional meat alternatives such as tofu or tempeh contribute less than 0.2kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per serving. They are also healthier.

However, achieving a balanced diet while eating plant-based food requires more effort, since meat is typically more nutrient-dense than its vegetarian or vegan counterparts. One serving of poultry contains 45 per cent of your daily protein, whereas a serving of tofu contains just 18 per cent.

Processed meat substitutes such as Linda McCartney vegetarian sausages or Quorn nuggets have surged in popularity among environmentally and health-conscious consumers. But while many products emulate the texture of meat, such as veggie burgers, and may make it easier for some people to give up meat, their environmental impact varies.

Beef burgers contribute 14 times more greenhouse gas emissions than veggie burgers and also use 32 times more land to produce one serving. But processed pork products, such as bacon and sausages, produce about three times less greenhouse gas than beef burgers. Their plant-based alternatives are marginally less environmentally friendly than veggie burgers, which means that moving to pork alternatives has less of an impact.

Production of veggie sausages and soy bacon contributes more green-

house gas emissions than veggie burgers and they also require 70 per cent more land.

The environmental impact of different dairy alternatives also varies. It takes nine times the amount of water to produce a serving of almond milk than a serving of oat milk, and the intensive almond farming industry is killing large numbers of the bees that are essential for pollination. But all vegan milk alternatives produce less than half of the greenhouse gas emissions per serving of cow's milk and use significantly less water and land.

Plant-based milks are fortified with calcium and other vitamins to ensure consumers get enough nutrients. Brands such as Oatly and Alpro provide 15 per cent of the recommended daily intake of calcium per serving.

Almond milk is the most calcium-rich milk, with 33.2 per cent of your daily recommended amount per 100g, followed by soy milk at 28.18 per cent and dairy milk at 15.73 per cent.

Oat milk, the trendiest milk alternative, is bought regularly by almost a quarter of the population in the UK. Perhaps surprisingly, it is high in fat, 8g per 100g, as well as carbohydrates, 16g per 100g, which may cause blood sugar spikes. In comparison, dairy milk provides 5g of fat per 100g and 0g of carbohydrates.

Price is a big obstacle in the move to meat and milk alternatives, particularly for plant-based processed products.

Switching to a vegetarian full English breakfast would mean spending a little bit more as veggie sausages are 42 per cent more expensive per serving than pork sausages and veggie bacon is 98 per cent more expensive than pork bacon. However, some brands are increasingly selling their plant-based products at a more competitive price. Richmond sells meat-free sausages for just 20p more per pack than their pork variety.

Unprocessed plant-based foods continue to be a good way to keep costs low, with beans, peas and soy beans all costing 8p per serving. Even when looking at caloric intake, 200 calories' worth of beans costs 18p, whereas the same measure of poultry costs 64p.

Plant-based milk alternatives have a higher price, with even the least expensive plant-based milk costing 50 per cent more than cow's milk.

Ultimately, it is better for the environment to eat or drink any of these alternatives than meat or dairy, but some of the trendier vegan imitations provide less nutrition for more money than unfashionable, unprocessed beans.

## Hungry for answers

1. What requires more water to produce?

- A) Beef  
B) Lab-grown beef



2. What is cheaper per serving?

- A) Veggie sausage  
B) Pork bacon

3. Which type of milk contains more calcium per serving?



A) Cow's milk  
B) Almond milk

4. Which of these foods contain more protein per 100g?

- A) Poultry  
B) Beans

5. Which type of milk contains more fat?

- A) Low-fat milk  
B) Oat milk

Answers: 1A (Lab-grown beef needs 60 per cent of the water needed to produce beef); 2A (7p cheaper per serving); 3B (Almond has almost 50 per cent more calcium); 4B (100g of beans has 48 per cent of your recommended daily protein. Poultry contains 41 per cent); 5B (Low-fat milk has almost 3 times less fat than oat)

## Sweet treats can be healthy (but lay off sugary drinks)

Kaya Burgess Science Reporter

Sweet treats such as pastries are not nearly as dangerous for your health as sugary drinks, and may even be good for you in moderation, a study has found.

Scientists in Sweden found no correlation between an increased consumption of treats and the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Their findings even suggested that "consuming occasional treats was associated with better [health] outcomes than no treats at all". They did, however, find a clear link between sugary drinks and an increased risk of ischemic stroke, atrial fibrillation and heart failure.

The study, published in the journal *Frontiers in Public Health*, concluded: "The findings indicate that not all sources of added sugar are equally harmful to health." Researchers examined three categories of sugary items: sugar-sweetened drinks; treats such as pastries, ice cream and chocolate; and

toppings including honey, jam and marmalade.

They examined the dietary habits of 69,705 people aged 45-83, with 25,737 given a diagnosis of cardiovascular disease during the 22-year study period. Those who had more than eight sugary drinks per week had a 19 per cent higher risk of ischemic stroke, an 18 per cent higher risk of heart failure and an 11 per cent higher risk of atrial fibrillation compared with those having one or fewer.

In a surprising finding, however, the study appeared to show that heart disease risk went down as the consumption of sugary foods went up. It suggested that those who had two or fewer sweet treats per week had a higher risk of stroke than those who had more than 14 per week. Suzanne Janzi, a PhD candidate at Lund University and an author of the study, said: "Context matters", adding: "Treats are often enjoyed in social settings or special occasions, while sweetened beverages might be consumed more regularly."

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# Moscow's secret war across Europe

The novichok attack in Salisbury was part of a campaign spanning a continent by Unit 29155, Fiona Hamilton reports

Two hours from the Bulgarian capital of Sofia, the small town of Lovnidlol is virtually indistinguishable from others that dot the countryside of the eastern European nation.

One moment in its recent past stands out, however — an enormous explosion that tore apart a munitions depot on its outskirts in November 2011.

Fires raged for days after a series of blasts but it caused barely a murmur beyond Lovnidlol — apart from within the government in Georgia, attacked by Russia three years earlier and awaiting munitions that were due to be shipped from that very warehouse.

The international significance of that incident was appreciated only years later, as detectives and security officials investigated the 2018 nerve agent attack in Salisbury. They zeroed in on Russian officers with links to a unit of the GRU military intelligence agency.

Intelligence efforts, bolstered by open source investigations from Bellingcat and its independent Russian media partners, exposed Unit 29155, whose operatives targeted Sergei Skripal in an assassination attempt.

As the investigation intensified, Lovnidlol emerged as one of the earliest examples of their work. What became apparent was a pattern of carnage, destabilisation and sabotage across the continent. Following last week's closing statements at the public inquiry into the Salisbury attack, The Times details each of the incidents which have been attributed to 29155.

## THE SALISBURY POISONINGS

In March 2018 Skripal, a former GRU officer and double agent for the UK who settled in Salisbury after a prisoner swap, went out for a meal with his daughter Yulia. The pair collapsed in the town centre, targeted with the nerve agent novichok, a Soviet-era weapon whose use would result in international condemnation. They fell seriously ill yet survived. Nearly four months later Dawn Sturgess, 44, a mother of three, died after applying the novichok to her skin, thinking the discarded substance was perfume. Her death is the subject of the continuing public inquiry.

Within months counterterrorism police identified the suspects as Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov, who had travelled into the country on Russian passports, but the names they were using were clearly aliases. It was the men's infamous appearance on Russia Today, the state broadcaster, that enabled detectives to establish their real identities. Commander Dominic Murphy told the inquiry he was "shocked" when the men came out to claim they had been on a tourist trip to Salisbury to see the spire of the cathedral.

Officers were able to compare photographs of the men, obtained by Bellingcat, and examine passports and money transfers to confirm their real identities as the GRU's Colonel Anatoliy Chepiga and Alexander Mishkin.

Chepiga appeared on place settings and in photographs at the wedding of the daughter of Andrei Averyanov, the head of 29155, at a lake near a military base, sitting at table one in March 2017.



Colonel Anatoliy Chepiga, far left, and Alexander Mishkin told the Russian media they were in Salisbury to see the cathedral's "famous spire". Their GRU unit is believed to have bombed an arms depot in Bulgaria, below

## ARMS DEALINGS

The Russian men allegedly responsible for the Salisbury poisonings were suspected of other attacks too. Scotland Yard was able to establish the team's travel included Tajikistan and Ukraine in 2012 and 2013, and Prague, Vienna and Milan in 2014.

While none of these have been linked publicly to sabotage, the Lovnidlol blast is believed to be the earliest attributable to 29155. According to The Insider, an independent website reporting on Russian affairs that collaborates with Bellingcat on open source reporting, the unit was set up in 2008 with around 60 operatives to carry out offensive sabotage operations across Europe.

Lovnidlol was a significant early operation, in which Chepiga is alleged to have been among the officers targeting the munitions depot. According to multiple reports the weaponry was destined for Georgia; Russia had invaded three years earlier, resulting in the formation of two breakaway regions, and the political situation remained febrile.

The following years were marked by sabotage operations in the former Soviet states of the Czech Republic and Bulgaria, which retained stockpiles of Soviet-era munitions, apparently attempting to stop the flow of weapons to Georgia. 29155 operatives are accused of targeting the depot in the eastern town of Vrbeice in the Czech Republic in 2014. In April 2015 Unit 29155 was linked by Bellingcat, using Osint (open-source intelligence), to the attempted assassination of Emilian Gebrev, a Bulgarian arms dealer. His company, Emco, stored munitions in Lovnidlol. In 2021 Czech authorities announced they had evidence of Russian involvement in Vrbeice, and subsequently expelled 18 diplomats.

## FOMENTING UNREST

29155's efforts went far beyond blasts at munitions depots. Authorities believe that in 2016, its operatives were involved in a failed coup attempt in Montenegro. Serbian nationalists, said to have Russian backing, were accused of plotting to overthrow the government and prevent Montenegro from joining Nato.

More destabilisation efforts were to follow, with officers from 29155 said to have been at independence demonstrations in Catalonia in 2017.

According to a report by the Royal United Services Institute think tank, 29155 was also involved in attempts to destabilise Moldova. When Russia's federal security service attempted to provoke violence during national commemorations but failed, GRU officers were brought in.

Working with Serbian recruits, in particular supporters of a Belgrade-based football club, they were also said to have engaged in attempts to provoke violent protests. It also failed.

## ONLINE AND BEYOND

29155 has also been linked to Havana syndrome, the name given to a range of mysterious symptoms including brain injuries that have been experienced by US diplomats in recent years.

It also emerged in 2020 that operatives from 29155 were suspected of offering bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing coalition forces in Afghanistan as peace talks took place.

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), an arm of Government Communications Headquarters, believes that the unit is a "capable cyberactor" which illustrates "the importance that

Russian intelligence places on using cyberspace to pursue its illegal war in Ukraine and other state priorities".

In September the NCSC, and allies from nine other countries including the US, took the unusual move of calling out 29155, warning that its activities included collecting information for the purpose of espionage, stealing and leaking sensitive information and undertaking "systematic sabotage".

John Foreman, the UK's defence attaché in Moscow between 2019 and 2022, said President Putin liked 29155 because "it's a high-risk, potentially high-reward unit".

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## News

## 'I was groomed after joining yoga class'

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**Alex Farber** Media Correspondent

A university tutor has claimed that she was groomed and sexually exploited after joining a yoga studio with links to a guru at the centre of an international human trafficking investigation.

Miranda, who has opted to withhold her surname, said that she experienced "inappropriate and hyper-sexualised" behaviour as she spoke out against Gregorian Bivolaru.

The 72-year-old Romanian was charged in France last year for crimes including "organised abuse of weakness by members of a sect" and is wanted in Finland on human trafficking charges.

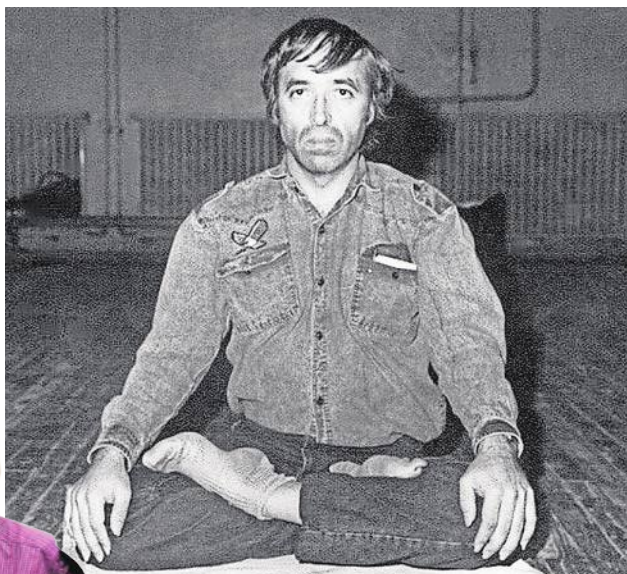
Miranda, from Oxfordshire, said that she wanted to prevent other people from repeating her mistakes.

"I wanted to believe that whatever they were doing, even if it seemed gross to me, and inappropriate and hyper-sexualised, was for some spiritual reason that I couldn't yet understand," she told the BBC podcast *The Bad Guru*.

"The only thing I can do now is to speak about this and to put my reputation and everything else on the line.

"But I want truth and justice and for people to not be hurt."

Miranda, now in her late thirties, said she



Gregorian Bivolaryu, the yoga expert, and left in police custody

was drawn into Bivolaru's world in 2017 when she signed up for classes at the Tara Yoga Centre, off Old Street in central London. The centre is an affiliate of the Atman federation, a UK-registered organisation which promotes the use of sexual energy in spiritual

practices. She attended a "Polarity Retreat", organised by the centre in Somerset that summer, where she claimed that female participants were encouraged to take part in sexualised rituals, including dancing in their underwear in front of male guests, to improve their spiritual development.

One of the teachers invited her to a Romanian yoga festival the following year, run by another Atman affiliate.

Misa, where she was asked to surrender her phone and passport and vow on a Bible not to disclose the details of any events.

The festival, which attracted around 6,000 people, escalated into a sexually-charged atmosphere featuring pornographic videos, a hyper-sexualised Miss World-like competition and organised group sex rituals which included drinking other participants' urine, according to Miranda.

She said that in order to attend she had to supply naked photographs of herself so that Bivolaru could read her "aura".

Misa has denied it asked for nude photos or that its camp created a sexualised atmosphere.

It told the BBC that it promotes "refined, elevated, uplifting, spiritualising eroticism, which is the exact opposite of raw, instinctual, even degrading sexuality".

Cat McShane, who led the BBC investigation, said that she had heard "worrying accounts of coercion and sexual exploitation for profit" about activities linked to Bivolaru over four years.

"There is an expectation that yoga is supposed to be good for you, so you let your guard down," she said. "The women I met are intelligent women, who quite unremarkably joined a yoga class. But what happened to them is anything but unremarkable."

Tara Yoga Centre and the Atman federation both said that they “unequivocally condemn all forms of abuse”

Both said they had been advised not to comment further due to legal proceedings.

# Dementia was faked, claims Al Fayed's son

**Sam Lovett**

Mohamed Al Fayed faked having dementia to avoid being prosecuted for sexual assault, his youngest son has claimed.

Omar Fayed, 37, said his father "got off the hook on the grounds he was mentally incapacitated [but] afterwards it was back to business, he was as sharp as a tack," he told *The Mail* on Sunday.

The billionaire Harrods owner faced multiple allegations from women in the years before his death, but no charges were brought. A total of 111 victims have now made claims against him, with the youngest said to have been aged 13.

The Metropolitan Police is investigating allegations that Al Fayed, who died last year aged 94, sexually abused and raped women over more than three decades. Police have not commented on the dementia claim.

Much of the abuse is alleged to have taken place when Al Fayed owned Harrods between 1985 and 2010 and has only come to light following a BBC documentary broadcast in September.

Fayed suggests the best opportunity to prosecute his father was missed when allegations emerged in 2017 and 2018, saying he wished the "investigation had been able to take its course when he was still alive". He got "dirty old man vibes" from his father, and "knew about the call girls", he said adding he now felt "a degree of relief" that the allegations were coming to light.

# Bond girl on a mission to get children out of orphanages

THE TIMES  
THE SUNDAY TIMES  
CHRISTMAS  
APPEAL



David Sanderson Arts Correspondent

For Olga Kurylenko the orphanage was far from the glamour of James Bond.

"There were just tons of beds next to each other with nothing besides them," the actress whose breakthrough role was in the 2008 film *Quantum of Solace* said. "No toys, no books, just empty. It looked like a cemetery."

"I just could not believe there were human beings there."

The newborn section of the orphanage on the outskirts of Kyiv was even sparser. "These are kids under the age of one who have just been abandoned," Kurylenko said. "They are growing up without love, nobody is hugging them or touching them in a compassionate

way." From that day 15 years ago Kurylenko enlisted with the Hope and Homes for Children charity as one of its global ambassadors and resolved to do whatever she could to help end the scourge of orphanages.

She said visiting the orphanage had brought back memories of her own poverty-scarred childhood in Ukraine where she was brought up by her single mother. "We ate grains," she said. "But we were eating those grains together. I felt that we could dream together, we talked together about me growing up and making something of my life. Which I did."

"And it made me think that poverty is one thing but non-love is a completely other thing. It is better to be poor and loved than to be rich and unloved."

Even before Russia's invasion in February 2022, Ukraine had an "orphanage problem" with more than 100,000 children confined in 700 state-run orphanages, the highest rate in Europe.



Olga Kurylenko, 45, who starred in *Quantum of Solace*, wants to reunite families

Kurylenko said she dreaded to think how many more children had been "abandoned" since the full-scale invasion began.

The 45-year-old said she had wholeheartedly bought into Hope and Homes for Children's policy of attempting to close orphanages and reuniting children with family members or secure foster families. Its figures show that 5.4 million children are in orphanages across the world even though about 80 per cent of them have surviving family members.

Kurylenko said there were a variety of reasons why parents felt they had no choice but to place a child in an orphanage.

"Maybe they feel they can't feed them because they are poor. They just think that their kids will be better taken care of and that they are doing the right thing," she said. "Perhaps it's a teenage mother who was ashamed or thought she was too young to cope. But she might just need to be taught; to learn how to take care of them."

The Hope and Homes for Children charity deploys family tracing experts, social workers and health workers in an attempt to place children back with families because, its mission statement says, "they need the love, nurture and protection of a family to thrive".

Children who grow up in orphanages, the charity states, "routinely suffer violence, abuse and neglect".

A growing body of research has pointed to the cognitive and developmental delays in children who experience neglect in their younger years.

Kurylenko, who has a nine-year-old son, Alexander, said it would be impossible for orphanage staff members to provide the attention the young children needed.

"My kid wants me all the time," Kurylenko said. "I understand what he needs for his growth; for his entertainment. But I find it hard being a parent for one child. It is demanding. So how could two people [in an orphanage] possibly give time and love to tons of kids? It is impossible."

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H A R C U S  
P A R K E R



**Nimbys are sometimes right, prime minister**

**Libby Purves**

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# Comment

## England loses shape in this regional rejig

Behind Labour's drive for a council of regions and empowered mayors lies a shrouded attack on English nationhood

**Matthew Parris**



As children we enjoyed those puzzles where (for example) you had to spot the cat in a drawing of a tree. The moggie's outlines would be ingeniously folded into the shapes of leaves and branches. You had to look past these primary shapes and spot a hidden, secondary shape: a cat.

This year I've been playing with a grown-up puzzle: a map of the United Kingdom's regions. If you peer through the tangle, an identifiable shape begins to show. That shape is a whole country. We call it England. But you have to look hard because England is cut up into regions while Scotland and Wales are integral and undivided countries.

A determined attempt is under way by politicians to fragment this England further so that you can't see it any more beneath the welter of "English regions" they're devising. Thus is concealed a proper country.

This is more sinister than simple localism, or the localist case would be extended to Wales and Scotland too, whose undoubted regions find no reflection in devolved administrations. No, today's devolutionists have a different agenda: divide and rule. They fear the weight of an undivided England within our union.

So when Gordon Brown proposes splitting England into devolved regions, smell a rat. And when the Labour Party manifesto promises a "new Council of the Nations and

Regions", but the regions comprise what used to be England, take notice because the concept of a council of the nations and regions is a category error.

And scrutinise an Institute for Government (IFG) publication from May entitled "How the next government should complete the job of English devolution". If the premise is that "to deliver meaningful and balanced economic growth" an incoming Labour government must extend "devolution" to 85 per cent of England, then why not Scotland and Wales? Both fall more naturally into regions than England. Why doesn't the economic logic apply?

This passion for decentralisation deserts its new converts as they cross into Scotland or Wales. North of the border, the word "devolve" means giving a nation new powers. South of the border it means taking a nation's powers away.

In England, little of this goes with

There are 25 elected English mayors. How many can you name?

the grain. There is massive and swelling public confusion about our shape-shifting local government structure. If you'd care to do your head in, try reading the UK government guidance entitled "Local authority, combined authority, and county combined authority election cycles in England".

Here's the list, some contiguous, some overlapping: county councils; London borough councils; district councils; metropolitan districts; unitary authorities; county combined authority elected mayors; metro mayors; mayors of the City of London and of the Isles of Scilly ...

you'd need a doctorate to master it. I'll hazard a statement: in English local elections not one voter in a hundred could give you even a broadly accurate summary of today's structure or powers of local government, beyond mumbling something about potholes and rubbish collection. And remember that, on average, less than one person in three bothers to vote at all in local elections.

It is into this mess, and maybe even in hopes of simplification, that enthusiasts for English devolution wade, spouting fanciful language about "the English regions". Two points must at once be made. First, England does not fall into regions. In some urban and rural parts, locals feel a discernible attachment to something resembling a region but most people identify more strongly with county, city and nation.

The West Midlands and Yorkshire deserve their capital letters. The northeast looks more like a region from the outside than from within. "The northwest" works better for weather forecasters than anyone in search of a pan-regional identity. In some big cities like Manchester there's distinct local identification. But though bureaucrats and railway companies have devised names like East Midlands, the southeast or southwest, and romantics may talk about the Marches, few local breasts swell with pride at these names.

Second, regionalisers undoubtedly do believe in this stuff, but more recent converts among think-tankers and political plotters have an ulterior motive for English (only) devolution: a collective shudder at English nationhood. Their project to achieve the comprehensive fragmentation of England into regional or city mayoralties is well advanced. That IFG report says we're 54 per cent of

ROGER JACKSON/GETTY IMAGES



**Peter Walker's 1972 Act redrew map of local government in England and Wales**

the way there. But Greater London, Tees Valley, the West Midlands and Greater Manchester were the low-hanging fruit. For the rest, the assumption by theorists that if you draw a region on a map, voters' sense of place and identity will swiftly follow, is horribly wrong. If achievable at all, it needs centuries. Tories of my age still spit at the name of Peter Walker's 1972 Local Government Act, which so brutally kicked aside ancient English loyalties to county.

There will be a few successes. Andy Street made the West Midlands work as an idea. Andy Burnham did the same for Greater Manchester. Greater London's mayorality is well established. As for the others, voters with direct experience may judge. When referendums are held on whether to

have an elected mayor, voters often reject the idea.

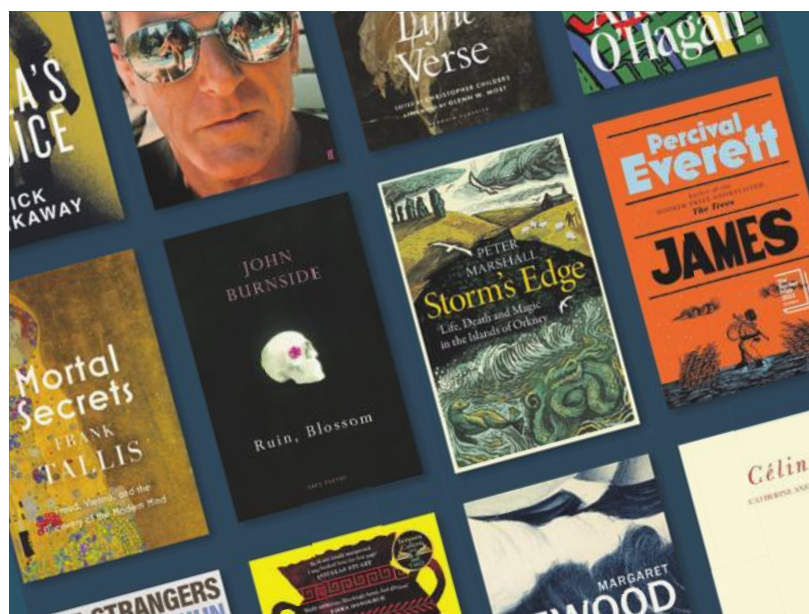
I read that there are now 25 elected English mayors. How many of their voters could name them? For the East Midlands, where I live, I confess that until today I couldn't. We had no referendum, perhaps because regionalists knew we would reject the idea. Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire (our "combined county authority") are different places with different needs and no collective memory in combination.

Remember: somebody once thought police and crime commissioners were a good idea. But you can't just graft these things on to places and expect them to take. England and Englishness are a deep-rooted cultural fact. Whether or not they are allowed to be a geographical fact — whether or not we are allowed to call ourselves a country — the cat, though concealed, will still be there, implicit.

I'll leave you with an example. Rachel Reeves's budget has just given Scotland an extra £3.4 billion, the vast majority of which comes from English taxpayers. The Scottish government promptly decided to spend it on restoring the winter fuel payments for Scottish pensioners: the benefit English pensioners have lost. Has England no voice to say this — we, the country Gordon Brown thinks is just a bunch of regions? Devolve all you like but beneath the flimsy tissue of your new paper map there are solidities that will endure.

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## Comment

# You can't just pin boys' struggles on Andrew Tate

Toxic misogynists are able to exploit the 'manosphere' only because of teens' unfettered access

**Tomiwa Owolade**



@TOMOWOLADE

The boys are not all right. They haven't been for a long time. And most of us agree it has something to do with the internet. This is why the government has issued guidance to teachers on what to do about boys in the classroom. The education secretary, Bridget Phillipson, wants to tackle the problem of misogyny among teenage boys. Too many of them are beguiled by men online who preach hatred of women and far-right politics.

These radicalised boys pose a risk to their female teachers and to teenage girls. According to Phillipson: "As dangerous misogynists on the internet are teaching boys to view women and girls in an offensive and derogatory way, we can teach something better." Online figures like Andrew Tate present themselves as role models to boys. We can show another way.

This is a common message. And a powerful one. We should all be worried about the popularity of "influencers" like Tate. "Incel" was an obscure word ten years ago. Now it is familiar shorthand for a set of attitudes and conjures a resonant image: the teenage boy or young man, in his room, glued to his computer screen and railing against the injustice of a world in which he

does not have supremacy over women. It is a culture as much as it is an ideology.

But there is a far more widespread problem affecting teenage boys than the misogyny of online influencers. Its implications for the future are too important to ignore.

The crisis of boys is to a great extent a problem of the internet. We have a tendency to view the online world in terms of the passionate emotions it generates. This is where we get it slightly wrong. The problem among so many teenage boys is not an excess of intense emotions. It is their sense of apathy.

Their dopamine has been so tickled by Instagram and YouTube, Snapchat and TikTok, there is little left for anything else. Their motivation is ruined, their capacity to concentrate on texts in class is compromised. They are not angry. They suffer instead from *acedia*, an ancient term that describes a lack of energy in the

### Freed by the internet to seek satisfaction, boys roam to disaster

world, drifting from one feeling to another, unable to find long-lasting satisfaction and contentment.

A report from the National Literacy Trust last month found that only 35 per cent of eight to 18-year-olds in Britain enjoy reading in their spare time, the lowest level since the trust started measuring this two decades ago. A mind that becomes accustomed to short videos will struggle to have the patience

required for reading a book; novels can't compete with TikTok. The report also found that this problem is especially acute for boys: only 28 per cent enjoy reading in their free time compared with 40 per cent of girls.

Girls are ahead of boys in terms of reading ability in every developed country in the world. Their brains mature quicker. As the author Richard Reeves puts it: "The parts of the brain associated with impulse control, planning, future orientation, sometimes labelled 'the CEO of the brain', are mostly in the prefrontal cortex, which matures about two years later in boys than in girls."

I can think of no greater danger to development of the executive function of boys — the part of their brain that allows them to plan future goals and objectives — than the online landscape that offers instant gratification at a time when their brains need careful cultivation.

Freed by the internet to roam to whatever satisfies them in the short term, they roam to disaster. Take pornography. There is an argument that porn is bad because it makes teenage boys and young men want to hate and abuse women and girls. This is certainly part of a worrying picture. But a bigger part is the feeling that sex with real people is not enough.

The fantasy — it is perfect — is more attractive than the reality. So it is to the fantasy that these boys and men seek their pleasure. The fantasies are just a few clicks away, and so instead of putting in the effort to make themselves more attractive, they retreat into the safety of their fantasies. This quickly makes them

feel good but ultimately numbs them to the deeper satisfaction to be found in relationships.

Historians of the future will look back at this time not as the age when many young men railed against women and girls, but as the time when many of them gave up on being active members of society.

We increasingly resemble the kind of place Aldous Huxley depicted in his dystopian satire *Brave New World*. In the novel characters take a drug called soma, which allows them moments of bliss to compensate for their boring lives. This is their

### Emotions have been overfed, destroying ambition and vitality

comfort, and we too live in a society that is too comfortable for its own good. *Acedia* is the emotion of the overindulged and overfed, not the malnourished and marginalised. And it destroys ambition and vitality, drive and curiosity, the very qualities that provide meaning and direction to boys and young men.

As the character John the Savage from *Brave New World* puts it: "I don't want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin."

We have our own somas; we call them smartphones. Going after the toxic misogynists of the "manosphere" only gets us so far. To properly tackle the crisis of teenage boys we should ban them from having smartphones.



## Timid approach to weight loss drug fails obesity test

**Daniel Susskind**

The good news is that the weight-loss jab, Mounjaro, is to be rolled out in England. The bad news is that the NHS has been given 12 years to do it. For a drug that promises to help tackle one of the biggest public health catastrophes in Britain, this is strikingly unambitious.

Obesity is out of control in the UK. Among adults in England it has almost doubled since 1993. The country is now the most obese major nation in Europe. Worse, the problem is particularly bad among the poor and the young. By the age of 11, about one in four children are obese.

This trend is a tragedy for individuals and a huge burden on wider society. The costs of obesity are estimated to consume about 8 per cent of the NHS budget. Recent work by the Tony Blair Institute found that, by pushing productivity down, it costs the UK economy a further £8.9 billion a year.

Every government since 1992 has recognised the problem. But nothing has worked: 14 health strategies,

### The Mounjaro rollout is being hampered by a lack of ambition

almost 700 policy recommendations, yet the trend has continued upwards.

And so, this ought to be a moment of great excitement. Clinical trials find that people who took Mounjaro lost, on average, about 21 per cent of their body weight. That is in line with results for other "semaglutide" medications (like Ozempic). For context, WeightWatchers' promotional material celebrates that its participants might lose 5 per cent.

Instead, the reaction is tepid. Of course we should be cautious. The drugs are new and the side-effects must be better understood. But these are reasons for caution and careful observation, not for moving glacially, limiting the availability of the drug to those with "highest clinical needs" at a time of national crisis.

What is frustrating is that the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, which provides guidelines to the NHS, understands this. As it notes, the problem is not that the drugs do not work or that their side-effects are unknown, but that they are so effective the NHS will be overwhelmed with demand.

In short, the problem is a lack of ambition. Yet, if we are bold, we can do great things. Think of the Covid-19 vaccination: at the start of the pandemic, experts told us it would be a decade before we had a vaccine, yet in practice we had three within nine months. We need the same spirit again. At the moment, we are slumping to the occasion.

Daniel Susskind is an economist at Oxford and King's College London

## Juliet Samuel Notebook

### Hotel suite with the faint echoes of Profumo

The Russian "spy ring" busted in a Euston flat somewhat lacks the glamour of older scandals like the Profumo affair, whose protagonists were hopping between magnificent Whitehall palaces and country estates. Last week I visited one of those buildings, the Old War Office, which has been impressively renovated and reopened as a Raffles hotel and was hosting The Spectator's annual parliamentarian of the year awards. One attendee, on mentioning that he used to work in the building during its past life, was invited up to see his former office, which had previously been used by John Profumo himself as war minister.

The office and its antechambers are now a suite hired out for £27,000 per night, a price at which it is nonetheless in remarkably high demand. But when our visitor asked about the whereabouts of the handsome desk he used to

use, the very same on which Christine Keeler recounted having sex with her ministerial lover, the hotel staff couldn't say. Perhaps it wasn't ergonomic for modern working practices.

### Pens to the sword

God save us from the march of education technology, or "ed tech", and its prophets.

Sharon Hague, a senior executive at the Pearson Edexcel exam board, claims that many exams will be all-digital by 2030, in part because pupils don't like writing by hand any more. Hague told the newspaper that the change would be "driven by the students themselves" — much like a crashed Mini.

Meanwhile, another study, this one out of Norway and published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, finds that when students write by hand their brains make more connections than when they type. The medium in which we learn matters and "digital skills", as Sharon Hague calls them, are

nothing compared to cognitive capacity. That is one reason why a bunch of authors were auctioning handwritten first lines of famous novels last week to promote handwriting, a solid cause.

Still, "onscreen learning" does have its upsides for the ed tech industry. The more exams are digitised, the easier it is for the boards setting them to use the data for AI products and services, which can in turn tie schools in to their services further.

No doubt there are subjects that can benefit from a screen, like coding, obviously, or for specific purposes like visualising chemical molecules in 3D. The Department for Education ought to be stepping in to ensure any changes are driven not "by students", teacher convenience or corporate advantage but by genuine educational improvement only obtainable by screen.

We need to unwind a lot of the so-called progress rushed through because of Covid.

### Dairy doubts

The usual crowd is pouring scorn on consumer worries about a new additive

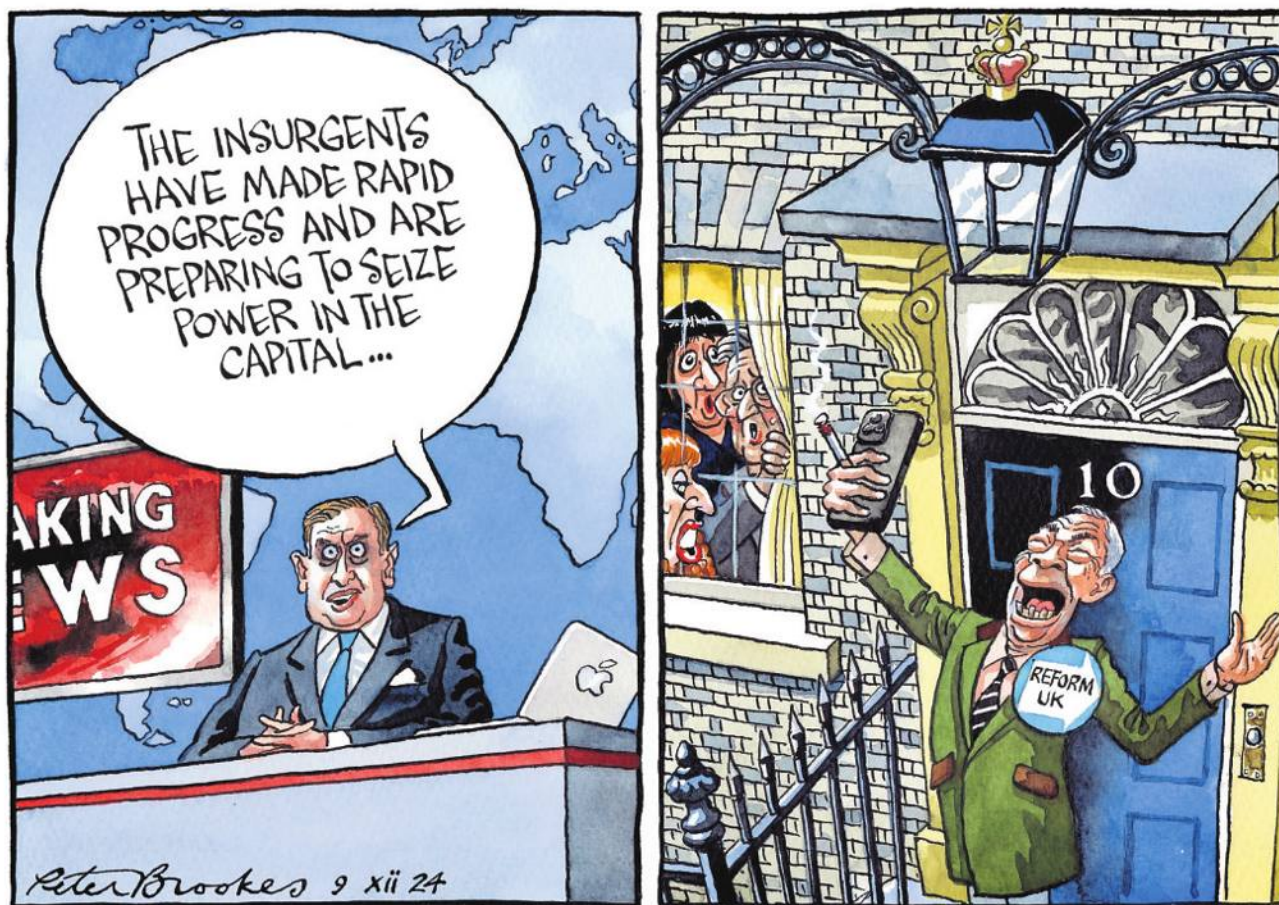
given to dairy cows to reduce their climate-warming flatulence. The science, they tell us, shows we should trust dairy companies when they put additional chemicals in our food that have nothing to do with human health but are there to hit corporate green targets.

I am obviously no believer in wild notions that Bill Gates is poisoning our milk, but the patronising invocation of that old chestnut — "trust the science" — grates. It also doesn't persuade those with vaccine hesitancy, so why would it work with foodstuffs?

Just this week a US congressional inquiry highlighted internal emails from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Washington that cast light on its handling of Covid. They showed NIH scientists, including an adviser to Anthony Fauci, directing messages from Peter Dzasak, the British scientist at the centre of Covid lab leak claims, away from their government email accounts, apparently to avoid Freedom of Information scrutiny. "I deleted them [emails] quickly and hopefully didn't reply to any," one email reads.

Instead of ordering everyone to "trust the science", the smarty-pants brigade should admit what they're really saying: "Trust the scientists." To which I say, in light of the past four years, I'm not sure I do.





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# Nimbys are sometimes right, prime minister

Riding roughshod over communities is a big risk for Labour — listening to objectors can mean plans are less resented

**Libby Purves**



@LIB\_THINKS

I doubt it was wise for the prime minister, fresh from dismaying farmers, employers and pensioners, to throw down the gauntlet to nimbys. He accused “blockers and bureaucrats” of suffocating progress and wants a fight. Local resistance to buildings large and small sees him squaring up, barely stopping short of, “Ya feel lucky, do ya? Go ahead, make my day!”

The Clint Eastwood moment was at least a change from Sir Keir’s familiar worried-nanny look but I am not sure it will do any good. Citizens don’t like being told to shut up and eat what they’re served. And the more insecure people feel, the harder they dig in when they feel ignored. Resentful barking isn’t leadership: government has to inspire as well as boss.

Nimbyism is complicated because Britain is a patchwork of settlements, landscapes and neighbourhoods with individual qualities and needs. Moreover, attacking regulations is also complicated. I refer you to the Grenfell inquiry’s view on how David Cameron’s “bonfire of red tape”

contributed to the disaster: “The government’s deregulatory agenda ... dominated the department’s thinking to such an extent that even matters affecting the safety of life were ignored, delayed or disregarded.”

Respect regulation: it saves lives. As to local nimbyism there are two main strands to consider, the first being housebuilding. Of course Sir Keir is right about the crisis (though taking no sharp action on the immigration which aggravates it, and ruling out digital ID to reduce it). He promises a “sweeping overhaul” of planning, to end delays and bypass local councillors over proposals for dwellings, prisons, industry and infrastructure. But when his deputy Angela Rayner gaily speaks of

Housing is often driven by rich investors rather than local-area builders

“unblocking the clogged-up planning system”, she too should remember that this clogging is not a tangle of matted hair in the plughole, but people. People legally elected by the neighbourhood and familiar with it. The cartoonish view of the nimby is always a selfish affluent householder fretting about views and house prices, but the reality is more likely to be a reasonable, collegiate

concern for transport links, schools, GPs and the loss of green spaces. Or irritation at a developer’s reluctance to create affordable housing and consider locally appropriate appearance rather than lazy boilerplate uniformity. The system certainly needs speeding up, and often better planning officers. But local voices and “social value” rules on development both deserve respect. Condemning “case-by-case” consideration, a popular Westminster gripe, ignores the fact that cases often really are different.

Of course it can be emotionally hard to accept the growth of your neighbourhood and assume the worst (taste the hero’s Thirties fury in Orwell’s *Coming Up for Air*). But settlements have always grown and flourished by growth, ask any town’s local historian. The difficulty of late-stage capitalism is that housing “development” is now less likely to be driven gradually by small local builders who know the turf than rapidly by massive rich investors, often international, who never lived there and never would.

When it comes to infrastructure, Sir Keir had a good weapon in citing the sort of over-precious environmental concern that spent £100 million on the HS2 tunnel for a bat species which exists on half a dozen other UK sites and has no particular record of colliding with trains. But here the

need is not for jeering contempt but prompter dispatch and a frank discussion of priorities regarding people, bats, birds and newts.

That brings us to big projects and the promise that ministers are considering “designating certain areas of the country as sites for types of key infrastructure”. On the Suffolk coast we know perfectly well what that means: a green light for the Sizewell C nuclear power station and reckless onshoring of North Sea

Thanks to a volunteer pressure group we can all enjoy national parks

power links (some of that power, ironically, from the coal-burning continent) through a protected and fragile coast. The roads are lined with both protest posters and yellow coded signs for incoming lorries.

As a small child I remember rows over Sizewell A; as a returning local in the 1980s, the same about Sizewell B. Now it’s C, and I suspect the same outcome. But government should understand that annoying arguments can be useful. One former official, experienced over years in dealing with these rows from the other side, reflects that he ended up liking protesters more than his bosses. Because edifices, road and pylon

schemes that were originally drawn up as unnecessarily damaging to wildlife and landscape were gradually finessed and ended up better designed and less resented.

Achieving that was not due to gung-ho government but to careful democratic campaigns by well-informed locals and environmental specialists. That takes time, but whether it’s a power station, prison, sewage works or massive electricity-consuming data centre (a problem insufficiently talked about) it gets improved. No project is likely to be well served by government just closing down opposition and rolling over, dazzled, to the will of some massive, often foreign-owned development company.

So I wish the PM hadn’t preened about his readiness to fight. For the truth about nimbyism at every level is that protesters are sometimes right. Often a community or campaign, whose anxiety and hope span more than four years, sees further ahead than politicians watching the next poll. Even laying aside great causes like suffrage, note that it was a volunteer pressure group from 1936 to 1945 that gave us national parks, that an 1871 protest movement is the reason you can picnic in Epping Forest, and that any town with a breathable green space has tales of those who fought to save it. We are citizens, not blockages.

## Letters to the Editor



### Welby's farewell

The Archbishop of Canterbury's ill-judged farewell speech to the House of Lords in the wake of the John Smyth affair is indicative of a more general malaise in most denominations of the present-day Church ("Welby sorry for 'hurt' caused by speech", news, Dec 7). Archbishop Welby seems to consider himself hard done by in carrying personal responsibility for the handling of Smyth's crimes, which were committed under the shelter of religion and which the archbishop and others clearly sought to play down. Many such cases show senior figures in the Church apparently believing that in hiding such crimes from public view they are somehow protecting the Church and thus defending a higher power, and that this absolves them from charges of misconduct. Until the senior clergy set aside such ideas, the Church will not restore its damaged reputation. **Peter Hollindale**  
York

Sir, Of course I pity Justin Welby's diary secretary for all the inconvenience his resignation has caused, but I pity the victims of clerical abuse even more ("Victims dismayed as Welby tells Lords: Pity my diary secretary", news, Dec 6). I also deeply resent the way in which evil-doers within faith groups have tarnished the image of so many good and hardworking clergy. To a lesser extent, they are victims too. But let's also give praise to Helen-Ann Hartley, the Bishop of Newcastle, and those like her, who have had the courage to do what we all advocate but often fail to fulfil: speak truth to power, however uncomfortable. **Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain**  
Oxford

### Incel culture

Sir, There was a telling absence in Bridget Phillipson's intervention ("Teachers told to spot toxic incel culture in class to prevent attacks": parents. We have little hope of tackling such hateful ideologies if the only action takes place inside school gates. Far better to address the root cause: parents' failure to police their children's exposure to harmful content. **Max Bruges**  
Teacher, Dubai

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## PM's housing plan and barriers to building

Sir, As organisations working on social and environmental protections, we share the prime minister's urgent commitment to tackle Britain's housing crisis (news & comment, Dec 6). However, his characterisation of regulators as mere "blockers and bureaucrats" misses an opportunity to reset Britain's approach to regulation. After years of being hollowed out and undermined, our regulatory bodies need renewal, not rhetoric that undermines their vital purpose.

Well-resourced regulators with the power to enforce rules effectively are essential to delivering the homes Britain desperately needs — ensuring they are safe, decent and built to last. Proper safeguards and standards create the stability that drives investment and ensures businesses can plan for the future. Far from holding projects "to ransom", proper oversight helps create the conditions for sustainable growth — protecting communities from flooding, preventing costly safety failures and giving developers the certainty they need to build at scale. With investment in enforcement and a clear duty to protect the public interest, regulators can help to unlock the new generation of homes this country needs. We stand ready to work with the government to make this a reality.

**Beccy Speight**, chief executive, RSPB; **Rupert Read**, co-director, Climate Majority Project; **Richard Benwell**, chief executive, Wildlife and Countryside Link; **Josie Cohen**, Pesticide Action Network UK; **Joan Edwards**, Wildlife Trusts; plus a further six signatories at [thetimes.com](https://thetimes.com)

Sir, Brian Wood's view (letter, Dec 7) over-simplifies the nature of development to which nimbys object. In my experience as a planning consultant nimbys do not want any development at all. Switch five large expensive houses for ten, two-bed affordable properties and the same nimbys will come back with fresh planning angles — too many houses, no need, too dense, increased crime, not enough school places etc. To say that smaller, more affordable housing would be "accepted without opposition" is detached from the reality of most cases. Feedback from the coalface is that people do not want new housing developments in their back yard and they will raise every angle to try to prevent it, no matter how tenuous.

**Daniel Addis**  
Chartered planner, Addis Town Planning

Sir, In all the debate about housing,

we have heard very little about building quality, smaller and well-equipped homes for older people who want to downsize. Such homes need to be built within walking reach of shops and services, not somewhere isolated out in the country, and to offer a basic warden system. Plush, so-called retirement villages are simply too expensive for many of us. The building of such homes would release thousands of larger properties, ideal for young families.

**Peter Johnson**  
Durham

Sir, You report Sir Keir Starmer as identifying as absurd the expenditure by HS2 of millions on a bat tunnel. It is worth noting the derivation of this expenditure. The EU insists, despite vastly different conditions in member states, on cross-European environmental standards. These protected bats in the wild, but it is difficult to identify "the wild" in the UK so this became bats in general. A key step in preventing absurdities such as the one noticed by the prime minister is to take advantage of our having left the EU and replace EU environmental standards with ones suitable to our country. **Timothy Straker KC**  
London WCI

### M15 and the police

Sir, You report that Ken McCallum, the director-general of M15, is being forced to make "uncomfortable choices" about where to focus the service's efforts ("M15 shifts focus from terrorists to rogue states", news, Dec 7). The UK, he said, had finite resources to deal with threats from hostile states while dealing with counterterrorism. Earlier in the week, the prime minister reset his plans to change the face of Britain, including committing 13,000 extra officers to neighbourhood policing. Most of them will be community support officers and volunteer special constables, not fully trained. Crucially they will provide a visible police presence. This smacks of political expediency: neighbourhood policing looks good. However, it fails to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The work of M15 is, for good reason, not visible. Yet its task in securing a safe Britain is becoming ever more vital in the face of threats from hostile states — and it needs the government's unwavering

commitment. Resources pledged to support neighbourhood policing would be better directed towards M15 and M16. **Robin Laurance**  
Oxford

### Track record

Sir, Your correspondent suggests that "the nationalised British Rail was utterly inefficient and poorly run" (letters, Dec 7). It most certainly wasn't. It was an integrated organisation providing passengers with tickets that were valid on any train between the locations specified. In terms of management it was a lean, mean, fighting machine which, because of decades of government underfunding, had developed the ability to bring projects to fruition with minimal funds. Projects such as the 14-mile Selby diversion of the east coast main line were delivered on time and slightly under budget. Parts of the network turned a profit under dynamic managers such as Chris Green. British Rail provided its own engineering expertise, replaced

bridges using breakdown cranes, built its own trains and so much more.

Its sandwiches may have been awful but the public got the best possible railway it was possible to deliver with the funding that decades of government had provided. **Mike Pinder**  
York

### Trump's America

Sir, Gerard Baker states that "because almost every item of news that happens in America is transmitted instantly ... in every corner of the planet, the rest of the world can be easily tricked into thinking that it knows America and that America is really just like the rest of us" (comment, Dec 6). On the contrary, many items of news received from America leave the rest of the world, certainly those of us in the UK, utterly bewildered, and appear to reflect a culture that often seems alien. Donald Trump's election only confirms that. **Peter Gray**  
Edinburgh

## GIFT BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

FROM THE TIMES DECEMBER 9, 1924

Gift books are not necessarily those which have Christmas written all over them, or are specially printed and bound to make suitable presents. The most unlikely books find their way into Santa Claus's liberal sack. Certain publishers and booksellers, for instance, have shoals of telegrams from women before Christmas for new medical books to be sent to their doctors — for lack of any other ideas on the subject.

He would be a difficult man to please for whom something suitable could not be found on the tempting shelves of the bookshops at present.

Some of the earlier books of the year are holding their own in competition with the newcomers. It is pleasant to know that one of these is *The Book of the Queen's Dolls' House*, profits from the sale of which are to be devoted by her Majesty to charitable objects. Mr Rudyard Kipling, who has collected *The Two Jungle Books* into one volume to bring all the Mowgli stories together and selected his *Songs for Youth* for a book which Leo Bates has illustrated in colour, continues to stand in a class by himself among the favourite authors of the day. St Joan is also in constant demand and has increased the vogue for Mr Bernard Shaw's other works.

The most popular books are numerous enough among our modern masters of letters to warrant the belief that our standard of literary taste is improving. Nothing has been more pronounced in this respect than the success of *The Forsyte Saga*, over 60,000 copies of which have been sold.

*The White Monkey*, in which Mr Galsworthy continues the fortunes of some of the same characters, bids fair to repeat that happy experience. A similar success is assured for Mr Masefield's epic of adventure, *Sard Harker*, which is certain of its place among the Christmas favourites in the realm of fiction.

The gardening enthusiast is unusually well supplied this season. The choice ranges from the comprehensive treatise on the theory and practice of modern gardening, *My Garden Book*, in which Mr John Weathers gathers the fruits of 40 years' experience, to the late Sir Frank Crisp's *Mediaeval Gardens*, reproducing the rare collection of prints and paintings which not only testifies to the collector's enthusiasm, but forms a remarkable gallery of medieval art.

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### Nurses in training

Sir, I enjoyed apprentice-style nursing training like Margaret Brothwell (letters, Dec 5), in my case at St Mary's Hospital, Paddington. I started in 1962 with 48 other 18-year-olds; nearly all of us remained in nursing until our retirement. Your correspondents have omitted to mention that not only did we not have to pay for our training (like today's unfortunate "students"), but were given accommodation, food, a uniform plus laundry and paid £9 at the end of each month in recognition of the fact our work — night and day — was essential to the hospital.

**Mary Moseley**  
London W4

### Cathedral challenge

Sir, Perhaps the team that did such an amazing job on Notre Dame in just over five years (news & leading article, Dec 7) could be transferred to Barcelona to complete the Sagrada Família restoration, which has taken 140 years already with no sign of a final completion date.

**Keith Atkinson**  
Teddington, Middx

### Cutting emissions

Sir, The additive that reduces methane production by cows should be required in human food too (news, Dec 4; letters & leading article, Dec 5). If it reduces the aroma in (usually male) teenage bedrooms in the morning it would be a boon to mankind.

**Charles Pointon-Taylor**  
Penn, Bucks

### Set the fur flying

Sir, Ann Treneman's question about fur coats (Notebook, Dec 7) reminded me that 15 years ago during a very cold spell, my father-in-law appeared in a black Astrakhan coat designed for coach trips which he had inherited from his grandfather. He lamented the fact that it was no longer as warm as it used to be. His stepmother had stolen the mink lining to make a fur coat and replaced it with sheepskin. **Edward Moss**  
London SW12

### Sign language

Sir, My favourite incorrect road sign (TMS, Dec 7) was one by roadworks in Cardiff city centre saying "look left" for English-speaking pedestrians and "look right" in Welsh. I have always wondered against whom the contractors had a murderous grudge. **Stephen Knight**  
Barnet, Herts

### Written off

Sir, Further to Dr Peter Moore's letter on the demise of handwriting (Dec 7; news, Dec 6), in one of my husband's school reports from 1963 his English master wrote: "Roger should try writing with the other foot." It didn't improve things at all. **Sue Abrahams**  
Bridgnorth, Shropshire

Sir, When I was a young pharmacist in the 1980s the local doctor called in to ask for my help. He had woken in the night and written himself a note. He couldn't read it and thought that I might be able to.

**Beryl Bevan**  
London W7

## Daily Universal Register

World: Eurogroup meeting of finance ministers, Rachel Reeves to attend; Golden Globe awards nominations announcement.

## Nature notes



The glossy ibis is a striking waterbird: plump and dark, with a long, curved bill and feathers that in sunlight are as iridescent as a

petrol spill. Breeding in south and southeast Europe, Africa, Australia, Asia and the Caribbean, they are scarce visitors to the UK but young birds are sometimes seen, especially in autumn — and sometimes they stay on here until spring. Climate change is causing glossy ibises to expand their range north, and after two unsuccessful nesting attempts, in 2014 and 2016, they bred in Cambridgeshire in 2022, and probably will again; before 2000 they rarely bred in France but are now well established there. Look out for them in wet, lowland or marshy areas, probing for invertebrates with their bills. MELISSA HARRISON

## Birthdays today



**Dame Judi Dench**, pictured, actress, *Shakespeare in Love* (1998, Oscar), 90; **Edward Argar**, Conservative MP, shadow health and social care secretary, 47; **Joan Armatrading**, singer-songwriter, *Love and Affection* (1976), and trustee, The Prince's Trust Council, 74; **Joshua Bell**, violinist, music director, Academy of St Martin in the Fields, 57; **Beau Bridges**, actor, *The Fabulous Baker Boys* (1989), 83; **Susan Bullock**, soprano, 66; **Lord (David) Currie of Marylebone**, economist, chairman, Advertising Standards Authority (2017–Nov 2024), 78; **Martin Fraser**, diplomat, ambassador of Ireland to the UK, 55; **Sonia Gandhi**, president, Indian National Congress party (1998–2017, 2019–22), 78; **David Harsent**, poet, *Loss* (2020), 82; **Lord (Ben) Houchen of High Leven**, Tory mayor of the Tees Valley, 38; **Sir Peter Jackson**, lord justice of appeal, 69; **Jean-Claude Juncker**, president, European Commission (2014–19), 70; **Caroline Lucas**, the UK's first Green Party MP, 64; **Pekka Lundmark**, president and chief executive, Nokia, 61; **John Malkovich**, actor and film producer, *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988), 71; **Donny Osmond**, singer, *Puppy Love* (1972), 67; **Elsie Owusu**, architect, founder (1989) and principal, Elsie Owusu Architects, founding chairwoman, Society of Black Architects (1990–92), 71; **Keri-Anne Payne**, British two-time 10km open-water world champion and Olympic silver medalist, 37; **Sir Ernest Ryder**, master, Pembroke College, Oxford, lord justice of appeal (2013–20), 67; **Emma Sergeant**, artist and portrait painter, 65; **Tim Steiner**, chief executive, Ocado Group, 56; **Lord (Jonathan) Sumption**, justice of the UK Supreme Court (2012–18), historian and writer, 76; **Dame Emma Thomas**, film producer, *Oppenheimer* (2023), 53; **Joanna Trollope**, novelist, *Mum & Dad* (2020), 81.

## On this day

In 1854 the Crimean War poem *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, by Alfred (later Lord) Tennyson, was published in *The Examiner*. He had read an account of the charge in *The Times*, reporting “a hideous blunder”, a line that became “Some one had blundered”.

## The last word

“Sometime they'll give a war and nobody will come.” Carl Sandburg, Pulitzer-prizewinning American poet, *The People*, Yes (1936)



## Farewell to a Monster

Syria will bid good riddance to Bashar al-Assad, who has terrorised his people for too long. There are no guarantees, though, that his successor will be an improvement

After half a century of brutality at the hands of his family and 13 years of bloodshed perpetrated by his army, no one can regret the fall of Bashar al-Assad, one of the most merciless and amoral dictators of the modern era. He has detained, tortured, disappeared and murdered his critics, bombed his country's cities, attacked thousands of civilians with chemical weapons, and targeted and killed journalists who have sought to expose his crimes to the world. It is little wonder that Syrians were dancing in the street yesterday at news that he had fled, jubilantly chanting: “Assad is gone!”

With hindsight, it seems faintly absurd that Assad was once fêted by western leaders as a reformer, treated to the privilege of a state visit and a meeting with the Queen shortly after he replaced his barbarous father. When popular scorn for the younger Assad's repressive rule spilt on to the streets in the form of pro-democracy protests in March 2011, Syria entered a long and grinding civil war that would claim over half a million lives and displace millions of Syrians from their homes. Multifarious divisions between factions and rebel forces, together with the brutalising terror of the Islamic State group, bred chaos. Yet with Russian and Iranian backing, Assad was able to secure his

position by 2020 and an uneasy stalemate persisted for several years.

Amid economic misery and persistent opposition from rebel militias, Assad's grip on power turned out to be feeble, as the pace of events in recent days has shown. The rebels prosecuted their offensive in less than a fortnight. First they pressed through northwest Syria. Two days later they took Aleppo. Then came Hama last Thursday, and Homs and Damascus over the weekend. Assad's forces needed little persuading to abandon their posts, and his defences quickly melted away.

The dictator's swift defeat was enabled, too, by the frailty of his friends in Moscow and Tehran. Both are weakened and distracted by other conflicts. Russia's energies have been consumed by the war in Ukraine and, perhaps, some early whispers about the shape of the peace. Iran and its regional proxies are weakened, too, following Israel's recent successes in its own offensive against Hezbollah, Iran's regional puppet militia.

Yet Syria's future governance is, at best, uncertain. The former al-Qaeda affiliate Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the group leading the offensive against Assad, would hardly have been Britain's first choice for the Syrian leadership. It is trying to

present itself as a credible force for governing a post-Assad Syria but the group's leader has called for the introduction of Islamic law in the country and his erstwhile admiration for the 9/11 attackers is a matter of public record: the reassurances of moderation ring hollow.

There are legitimate concerns about intensifying the terrorist threat to the West from the region, and HTS fighters are not the only Islamists worth worrying about. Isis, which holds pockets of territory in the East of Syria, rushes to fill vacuums in this region like a noxious gas. Even apart from Islamist forces, the range of groups vying for territory in Syria is dizzying. HTS has its stronghold in the northwest. In the northeast are Kurdish groups, in the southwest there are Druze factions, in the southeast are Syrian opposition forces and in the east are pockets of territory already controlled by Isis.

Whether Assad is in power or not, this is hardly a country on the brink of stable rule, and Syria enters this period of uncertainty in the context of a particularly febrile atmosphere in the Middle East. The Syrian people, and the international community, can justly celebrate what has ended: but they may be cautious, too, of what has begun.

## Reversal of Fortune

The flagging economies of northern Europe can learn from the resurgent south

The day after the French government was brought down by a vote of no-confidence last week, and its prime minister Michel Barnier dislodged, tens of thousands of French civil servants went on strike. Although Mr Barnier's budget was stalled, they were nonetheless protesting against measures in it, including a proposal to reform sick pay in the public sector. Meanwhile Marine Le Pen, the leader of the hard-right National Rally party, and her rival Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the hard-left France Unbowed, were surveying the devastation which they had unleashed upon the political centre, their wrath also triggered by a shared refusal to accept Mr Barnier's prescriptions for reining in French government spending.

It is a difficult truth of government that it is always more unpopular to take benefits away from an electorate than to withhold them in the first place. France, which has long had both bountiful state assistance and a strong tradition of public protest, is particularly vulnerable on this count. But it is also a fact of life that a country, like a household, must live within its means, or eventually be exposed to a range of unpredictable con-

sequences. A large proportion of French voters have long been in denial about the latter: France's budget deficit is predicted to exceed 6 per cent of GDP this year, more than twice that permitted by EU rules. Yet driving down the debt is proving politically impossible. The danger for France, the EU's second-biggest economy, is that it becomes synonymous with ingrained fiscal irresponsibility. On December 2, the yield on Greek bonds fell below that on French ones, meaning that investors considered Greece a safer bet.

Times have certainly changed. In the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008, a stricken Greece was at the centre of Europe's debt crisis: from 2010 to 2015 it needed three rescue packages, along with harsh austerity measures. Other eurozone countries such as Spain, Portugal, Ireland and, to a lesser extent, Italy, were also badly affected, partly because of high levels of existing debt and other structural weaknesses. Yet this group of countries, often known by the unflattering acronym of Piigs, have made a significant recovery in recent years, thanks to EU assistance and targeted reform. In 2023 their economic growth rates were

higher than those of France or Germany, the countries at the heart of the eurozone.

In an unpredictable global economy it is difficult to predict for how long the Piigs's momentum will continue. What is certain, however, is that the iciest economic wind is presently blowing north, along with the reputation for stubborn profligacy which once battered the south. Nor does the problem stop at France: Austria, Germany and the Netherlands, once well regarded for fiscal discipline, have also run up widening deficits in recent years. The governments of both France and Germany are presently in spectacular chaos over disputed spending plans, with low predicted growth in their economies. Yet demands on their strained budgets are only set to intensify, not least in countering the expansionist ambitions of Vladimir Putin, and potential trade tariffs imposed by an incoming President Trump. In such circumstances, sober early realism offers a faster way out of trouble than the corrosive illusion that all comforts can be afforded in perpetuity. That is one lesson, at least, which the European north could learn from the painful past experience of the south.

## If I Only Had \$28m

A richly storied pair of slippers has sold for an eye-watering sum

Many of us harbour a little guilt at the price tag of the most extravagant item in our wardrobe: a particularly glamorous dress, dashing suit or, perhaps, an indulgent pair of shoes. Yet even the most conspicuous collector of designer brands would look like the embodiment of frugality itself when set against the recent purchase of one particularly desirable pair of slippers in the United States. A pair of ruby slippers worn by Dorothy (as portrayed by a young Judy Garland) in *The Wizard of Oz*, the 1939 classic, has sold for some \$28 million.

To be fair to the buyer, these shoes — taken from the feet of a wicked witch who had been crushed under the weight of a farmhouse — are possessed with powerful magic capable of protecting the wearer from evil, warding off enemies and, perhaps most importantly, providing rapid teleportation home (there's no place like it) upon three short clicks of the heels after a particularly heavy night out. They are pricey, true — but the saving on Uber journeys cannot be left out of account.

Extraordinarily, this is not even the only pair

left: four sets survive. Yet this pair has a particularly colourful history. So desirable were the shoes that, while on display at the Judy Garland Museum in Minnesota in 2005, they were stolen in a smash-and-grab by a burglar who pleaded guilty to the theft just last year. The slippers were eventually recovered by the FBI in 2018, and authenticated by experts at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington. Best to keep them safe from now on: after all, rather a lot of brains, heart and courage have gone into getting them back.

# World

## Ukrainians fear betrayal as Trump pushes for peace

### Ukraine

George Grylls Kyiv

In a cemetery on the outskirts of Kyiv, a grieving mother drinks vodka by her son's grave.

For Lyudmila Bordus, 46, the concession of Ukrainian territory to a Donald Trump-imposed peace deal would mean a terrifying possibility: that her son's death was in vain. "The pain only gets worse with time," she says, swaying unsteadily in the freezing mist.

A champion kickboxer, Maksym Bordus died at the age of 23 during Ukraine's counteroffensive last summer, a time of giddy optimism when some predicted Kyiv's troops might advance all the way to the Black Sea.

Now, the front lines are unravelling and Ukraine's threadbare army is in retreat. Russian troops conquered an area larger than London in November at a staggering cost of 1,500 casualties a day, according to western intelligence.

Even President Zelensky has abandoned hope of recapturing Russian-occupied territory in the east. "Our army lacks the strength to do that," the Ukrainian president admitted in a recent interview. "We do have to find diplomatic solutions."

Leonid Kuchma, the 86-year-old former president of Ukraine, understands better than most the perils of diplomacy with Moscow.

In 1994, he signed the Budapest Memorandum, an agreement forcing Ukraine to surrender its Soviet-era nuclear arsenal in exchange for security guarantees from the US, UK and Russia.

Two decades later, Kuchma was part of the negotiating team for the Minsk agreements, a peace process championed by Francois Hollande and Angela Merkel to end the war in Donbas. The agreements were repeatedly violated by Russia until President Putin abandoned them altogether in February 2022.

Many Ukrainians nurse a bitter sense of betrayal towards Minsk and Budapest, and Zelensky is unlikely to be forgiven for an unsatisfactory peace deal.

On the 30th anniversary of the Budapest Memorandum, Kuchma, Ukraine's longest-serving president, blamed the West's unwillingness to stand up to Russia for the failure of previous peace treaties thrust on Ukraine.

Now, he says nothing short of Nato membership for unoccupied parts of the country will suffice. "Genuine security guarantees for Ukraine do not require dozens of sheets of paper," he told The Times. "Four letters are enough: N-A-T-O."

Trump has promised to halt the fighting within "24 hours" of his inauguration on January 20 and has appointed an envoy to Russia and Ukraine who favours freezing the conflict along current front lines.

Lieutenant General Keith Kellogg, 80, believes by withholding weapons from Ukraine until Zelensky agrees to peace talks and simultaneously threatening the Kremlin with increased arms supplies, the US can force both sides to the table.

Andriy Yermak, Zelensky's chief adviser, met Kellogg and Mike Waltz,

the incoming national security adviser, in Washington last week. Zelensky and Trump held talks in Paris this weekend before the reopening of Notre Dame.

At stake is more than just the future of Ukraine, according to Kuchma. Having sat on the other side of the table from Putin countless times, he believes Russia's longest serving leader since Stalin wants to rewrite the world order — and subjugating Ukraine is just the first step. He urges the West not to repeat the blunders of Neville Chamberlain at Munich in 1938.

"Do I really need to remind the world what happened after Munich? Having sacrificed their first victim [Ukraine] to the aggressor, does the West really want to see Poland, for example, under attack once again?"

A majority of Ukrainians favour ending the war as soon as possible and 52 per cent support a deal, according to a recent poll by Gallup. But the question of negotiations remains taboo in Kyiv, a month after the election of Trump.

One Ukrainian MP who demanded an end to war was arrested for treason. He was not named by prosecutors, but was widely identified as Yevhenii Shevchenko, a former member of Zelensky's party. Shevchenko was accused of holding unofficial talks with President Lukashenko of Belarus, and he was detained a week after he sent a letter to

Trump criticising Ukraine's "slide into dictatorship".

Over a cup of black tea in his office in Kyiv, Yuriy Boyko, 66, one of the few politicians willing to discuss a peace settlement, describes how his home town in Luhansk had been ravaged.

"I have no place to return to. My town is totally destroyed," he says. "Most people in Ukraine really want peace. They want to stop this war because they are suffering. Especially the frontline towns like Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv."

Widely seen as the pro-Russian candidate in the 2019 Ukrainian presidential elections, Boyko's party, Opposition Platform — For Life, was banned by Zelensky after the full-scale invasion.

During the election campaign, Boyko visited the Kremlin a week before polling day, accompanied by Viktor Medvedchuk, the Ukrainian godfather to Putin's child. A recent investigation by Ukrainian media found Boyko's wife still owns a \$2 million apartment in Moscow. However, Boyko dismisses accusations of divided loyalties and points to the fact that, unlike Medvedchuk, he stayed in Ukraine after the invasion. "I'm not interested in what happened to the [Moscow] flat. It's nothing for me," he says. "We had our choice on 24th February 2022. [Some] of us [who were] as you say 'linked to Russia' are living in Russia today."

## Zelensky reveals toll of war

George Grylls

President Zelensky has said that 45,000 Ukrainian soldiers have died in the war as he warned Donald Trump he would agree only to an "enduring" and "just" peace.

The Ukrainian president held talks with Trump at the reopening of Notre Dame in Paris on Saturday, the first face-to-face meeting between the pair since the US elections last month.

Trump has threatened to cut off the supply of US weapons to Ukraine and promised to end the war within "24 hours" of entering the White House on January 20.

After his meeting with Zelensky, Trump said Russia had been weakened by the ousting of President Assad of Syria. He said he knew Vladimir Putin well and told the Russian president that it was "time to act" after the loss of 600,000 Russian troops.

"Zelensky and Ukraine would like to make a deal and stop the madness," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "They have ridiculously lost 400,000 soldiers, and many more civilians. There should be an immediate ceasefire and negotiations should begin."

"Too many lives are being so needlessly wasted, too many families destroyed, and if it keeps going, it can turn into something much bigger, and far worse. I know Vladimir well. This is his time to act. China can help. The World is waiting!"

The casualty figure in Ukraine was previously a closely guarded secret and it appears that Trump was referring to the total number of Ukrainian dead and wounded when he announced the figure of 400,000.

After Trump's post, the Ukrainian president said 43,000 Ukrainians had been killed in action and 370,000 wounded, although he said half of the injured had returned to the front. Estimates for Ukraine's death toll vary. The website UA Losses, which publishes the names and ages of dead soldiers, puts the figure at 65,000. The Economist magazine claims 60,000 to 100,000 have died.

Zelensky is lobbying for Nato membership to be offered to unoccupied parts of the country as part of a ceasefire deal. This would mean a further Russian attack would invoke the defensive alliance's Article Five clause of mutual self-defence.



Boyko says a peace deal cannot repeat the mistakes of Budapest and Minsk. His former political ally, Medvedchuk, was once a back channel between Moscow and Kyiv and asked whether he would be willing to help broker a truce himself, Boyko says "of course", describing it as a "noble task". He clarifies that he expects the US to lead discussions, commending Trump's appointment of Kellogg. "It must be international negotiators — Americans, United Kingdom. It's impossible for us to speak to Russians."

Already Putin has shown his desire to dictate terms, issuing a list of demands that includes the annexation of Zaporizhzhia to supplement territory captured from Ukraine; the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from frontline regions; the abandonment of Kyiv's ambitions for Nato membership. Zelensky has denounced Putin's opening bid as a "revival of Nazism".

Despite Putin's maximalist demands, some Ukrainians believe that not everything is in Russia's favour. The surprise offensive in Kursk this summer has given Zelensky a toehold of Russian territory to use as a bargaining chip in talks, provided his troops can hold on to it that long, and the production of Russian tanks is likely to collapse next year, according to analysis provided to Ukrainian intelligence, which suggests Putin has gambled everything on last-minute gains before Trump's inauguration on January 20.

"This is the deadline for Russia to seize as much territory as possible, so Moscow is going all-in, throwing all its reserves into a frantic offensive and not counting on the insane losses of its troops," says Kuchma.

The central promenade of the Lisove cemetery in Kyiv is a forest of fluttering flags. In the faint distance, grave-diggers, shrouded by mist, make fresh excavations.

Despite Zelensky's contentious decision to lower the mobilisation age from 27 to 25 this year, Kyiv's most pressing problem remains its lack of troops. The US has questioned why mandatory conscription is not as low as 18.

Visit a cemetery anywhere in Ukraine, however, and the scale of the suffering becomes clear. Once they have tended the weeds, shed tears and exhausted the neighbourhood gossip, bereaved relatives hover beside their loved ones' graves, reluctant to leave.

"If these talks do go ahead and our president gives away Donetsk and Luhansk, it will be so sad. Look how many people died to liberate them," says Yanna, 30.

From Pokrovsk, a frontline town in Donetsk at risk of capture, Yanna is laying a wreath with her mother, Natalya, 50, on the anniversary of her husband's death. Roman Dutchak, 31, from Luhansk, was trained in Britain. The father-of-two lay in a coma for four months before succumbing to injuries from a mortar shell last year.

"There's no way we can get our land back," Natalya tells her daughter, ruefully. Yanna disagrees. "There's always a way," she says.

Additional reporting by Vika Sybir



## Prayer for unity offered at Notre Dame

The message was not necessarily addressed to President Macron sitting in the front row at Notre Dame cathedral, nor to other French politicians watching on television. But they may all do well to heed it anyway (Adam Sage writes).

"The ravines between men can be filled," said the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Paris, in his sermon at the inaugural Mass after the cathedral's restoration. "The mountains of pride can be planed. The tortuous lies can give place to joy and truth." Monsignor Laurent Ulrich was speaking at a moment



PASCAL LE SEGRETAIR; JULIEN DE ROSA/GETTY IMAGES

The new altar at the restored Notre Dame was consecrated in the presence of Emmanuel Macron

church seized upon Notre Dame's inaugural Mass yesterday to show that it had clarity of vision.

The cathedral had officially been reopened the previous evening in the presence of Trump, Zelensky, Prince William and about 40 other world leaders.

The next morning, about 170 bishops were present, along with 106 priests from the diocese of Paris and 2,000 handpicked worshippers, for the consecration of the new 800kg bronze altar made by Guillaume Bardet, the French furniture designer.

Ulrich placed the relics of five saints born in the 18th and 19th centuries on Bardet's work. He anointed the altar with holy chrism — perfumed oil said to represent the "sweet fragrance of God's love" — before placing five incense burners on it and declaring it to be a "source of unity for the Church".

The service lasted more than two hours, and included the Lord's Prayer in Latin, readings from the books of Baruch and St Paul, and the singing of *Agnus Dei*.

An organic wine from the Loire Valley was served after the vineyard owners wrote to the archbishop offering their bottles free of charge. They seem to have won him over by explaining that they were not only fervent Catholics, but used no pesticides.

However, Macron did not get to taste the wine. Given that the French state has been officially secular since 1905, he would have risked an almighty row if he had taken communion. In this respect, France is the exact opposite of Trump's America.

The president will put aside such religious affairs today, when he will receive left-wing parties for talks about the next French prime minister. But there is no guarantee that they, or indeed any of France's other movements will take on board the archbishop's message and put aside their differences to help Macron find a new government.



laden with paradox for Macron. On the one hand, here he was, for the second time in one weekend, celebrating the reopening of Notre Dame five years after its near-destruction by fire.

The speed of the cathedral's restoration is a considerable achievement upon which Macron has sought to capitalise with a diplomatic coup that involved bringing together president-elect Donald Trump and President Zelensky for an encounter at the Élysée before they headed to the 12th-century edifice.

Yet for the French president, the psalms, the prayers and the singing of the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah* will give way this week to the earthier task of finding a new prime minister.

With Michel Barnier having been ejected following a no-confidence motion after just three months in office, and none of the possible

successors able to command a majority in parliament, Macron is struggling to find a way forward. He will need all the help he can get, and may be grateful for that of Ulrich.

"I am praying for my country, which is looking to the future with uncertainty," said the archbishop in something of an understatement. If the politicians are stumbling around in deep fog, the French Catholic

# Mystery deepens over Briton's killing in China

Playboy son of jailed Communist leader says his parents had no part in Neil Heywood's death, writes Richard Spencer

For a decade the downfall of Bo Xilai, one of the best-known Communist Party leaders, and its connection to the death of the British businessman Neil Heywood has been one of the great mysteries of Chinese politics.

Now Bo Xilai's son — or an X account bearing his name and believed to belong to him — has given the family's side of the story for the first time. The account, said to belong to Bo Guagua, 36, implied that his mother, Gu Kailai, had been framed for Heywood's murder by a senior policeman.

He did not impute political motives, but said his father's simultaneous ousting from the top ranks of the Communist Party, where he had been a member of the politburo, was unjustified. Intriguingly, the account claimed that contrary to most analysis and popular opinion, his father, the most senior figure to be purged for years, was not an enemy of President Xi.

"My father had pledged his unrestrained support for Xi early on and never sought to compete against him," he said in two long posts, one in English and one in Chinese, on X.

Bo Guagua has never granted interviews, but long-term China-watchers believe that the X account is his.

"My parents' imprisonment also had nothing to do with him [Xi]," he went on. "Yet, there are still those trying to compose political drama out of it. The above points are my brief response — believe or not, up to you."

Bo Xilai was one of the most prominent Chinese leaders of the early 21st century, singled out for his charisma at a time where discretion and a self-effacing demeanour were valued.

As China's commerce minister during the first term of Hu Jintao, the former president, the tall and suave Bo Xilai wore a blazer and bright tie, in contrast to the dark suits and red ties of other leaders. He formed a bond with Lord Mandelson, when he was European Union trade commissioner, as they discussed a row over textile tariffs that became known in the West as "bra wars".

He then joined the politburo and was sent to be party secretary in Chongqing, a fast-growing metropolis in southwest China with a reputation for corruption and criminality, which he made a high-profile attempt to tackle.

However, in late 2011 Heywood, a businessman who knew the Bo family, was found poisoned in a hotel room in Chongqing.

The next spring, Bo Xilai was dropped from the politburo and it emerged that his wife was under suspicion of having killed Heywood. It was alleged by numerous sources that Heywood and Xu Ming, a Chinese business-

man, had handled the Bo family's wealth, which had been corruptly acquired, and for reasons linked to this Heywood had been killed.

Gu was convicted of his murder and Bo Xilai, protesting to the end, was convicted of corruption. Both are serving life terms in prison.

Bo Guagua said his mother was innocent and was set up by the police chief that his father had brought in to help to clear up Chongqing's criminal underworld, who had become "power-hungry". "I do not believe that someone with her grace and intelligence would resort to murder," he said. He said it was the police chief who had invited Heywood to Chongqing, and lodged him at the hotel where his body was found.

Bo Guagua said that neither he nor anyone else had been able to find any trace of the family's supposed billions of dollars in assets and pointed out that his mother had been one of Beijing's most successful lawyers in her own right, accounting for their prosperity.

He said the family had known Heywood only slightly. Rather than arranging for Bo Guagua to study at Harrow in the UK, as commonly stated, they met Heywood only when their son was in his third year — the coincidence of there being an Old Harrovian working in the



Bo Guagua, 36, claims that his mother was framed for the murder of Neil Heywood, a British businessman

city where Bo Xilai was mayor being the reason for an invitation to meet.

The family had rejected Heywood's suggestion that they introduce him to figures who could help his business, Bo Guagua said.

As for his father's alleged corruption, he said he could have enriched himself in Chongqing but chose to confront the criminals instead. He admitted, however, that his father had appeared aloof and arrogant.

In China's opaque system, it is hard to assess the truth of Bo Guagua's claims. They are also personal — he is keen to play down his own reputation as a playboy who idled away his undergraduate days at Oxford with parties and girls.

He said that while he was, for a while, barred from his college, he had reformed his character and completed his degree. "True, I was a playboy and I am partial to beautiful women," he said.

"But to claim that I wheeled around in Ferraris and attended restaurants in a tux is reminiscent of trite fantasies of a Korean soap opera."

## World

# Pope suffers bruising encounter with a table

## The Vatican

Philip Willan Rome

The Pope has appeared in public with a bruise under his chin after falling and hitting his face on a bedside table.

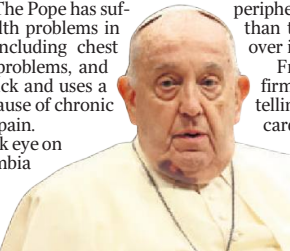
A Vatican spokesman said the bruise on the right side of the Pope's chin and a plaster on his neck were the result of a fall on Friday morning.

They were visible the following day when he created 21 new cardinals in a ceremony in St Peter's Basilica, bringing the number of cardinals aged under 80 and eligible to vote for his successor to 140, 110 of whom were created during his 11-year pontificate.

Francis, who turns 88 this month, appeared slightly fatigued during the ceremony. The Pope has suffered from health problems in recent years, including chest and intestinal problems, and walks with a stick and uses a wheelchair because of chronic back and knee pain.

He had a black eye on a visit to Colombia

The Pope fell and hit his chin



in 2017 after hitting his head on a support bar when his popemobile braked suddenly.

Among the clerics awarded a cardinal's red hat was the British Dominican preacher Timothy Radcliffe and the archbishop of Naples, Domenico Battaglia, who is known for his work in the city's slums. Battaglia was chosen at the last minute when Paskalis Bruno Syukur, an Indonesian bishop, turned down the appointment.

The Pope gave precedence to the cardinal-making consistory over an invitation to join world leaders in Paris for the inauguration of the spectacularly restored Notre Dame Cathedral. Church sources have suggested he preferred to concentrate on the peripheries of the world rather than those who wield power over it.

Francis appeared to confirm this interpretation, telling the newly installed cardinals that the church of Christ had no place for "the corrosive competition of this world".



Masked man Police in New York released images of a suspect sought over the killing of United Healthcare's chief executive. Brian Thompson, 50, was shot dead at a hotel in Manhattan as the medical insurance company held its annual conference

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## Dark and brooding? Not the Raymond Chandler I knew

### From our correspondent

KEIRAN SOUTHERN  
LOS ANGELES



"Call me Ray," the smiling, immaculately dressed writer said when he met 11-year-old Sybil Davis for the first time. Davis, 79, now a retired lawyer, is perhaps the last living person to have intimate memories of Raymond Chandler, the master of noir.

The daughter of his secretary, she came to love him as a father in the final two years of his life, and was only dimly aware of his fame.

A celebrated writer of crime fiction, Chandler created the archetypal noir detective in Philip Marlowe. In novels including *The Big Sleep* and *Farewell, My Lovely* he became arguably the first serious writer to use Los Angeles as his canvas, capturing the dark side of a growing metropolis in the 1930s.

Yet, by the time Davis's mother, a beautiful Australian named Jean Fracasse, answered a newspaper job advert in January 1957, Chandler's best days were long behind him. Widowed and battling alcoholism, he was working on his penultimate novel, *The Long Goodbye*, and in need of a secretary to force him to sit at a typewriter. Fracasse got the job.

Chandler would take her and her two children out to dinner at restaurants in La Jolla, the well-to-do neighbourhood of San Diego where he spent the final years of his life. Sometimes, it would be just the author and Fracasse's daughter. Davis speculates on these occasions that her mother had had enough of Chandler, having worked for him all day.

The other diners must have assumed they were father and daughter.

Chandler would tip the band to play his choice of music while leading Davis in a waltz, his favourite dance. "He would treat me as if I was an adult," she said. "The lady will have a Shirley Temple," Chandler would tell the waiter, ordering a non-alcoholic drink for his young companion.

Chandler, born in America but educated at Dulwich College, London, had a well-earned reputation as a drunk, having got a taste for booze as a soldier during the First World War. Like his father before him, he was an alcoholic. It cost him his job as a Los Angeles oilman in the 1930s, harmed the quality of his writing and ultimately contributed to his death at the age of 70 in 1959.

Yet, when in charge of the girl he fondly called "my Sybil", Chandler, who had no children, remained sober. "I saw a side of him that the public has never been told about, where he was not at all this suicidal, down-in-the-dumps drunk," Davis said. "He had a wonderful sense of humour. He loved to laugh. He was the antithesis of how he's been portrayed as being the gloomy, solemn, on-the-verge-of-suicide writer. I did not experience that in him at all. And you have to remember that I was a child, so probably had he been heavily drinking or anything like that, I would not have been permitted to be around him."



Raymond Chandler with Sybil Davis, who he referred to as "my Sybil"

Chandler had attempted suicide in 1955 in despair at the death of his wife, Cissy. He was well-known for having affairs with his secretaries, though his love for Cissy was never in doubt. After her death he developed a relationship with Fracasse. They were soulmates, according to Davis, but marriage was not to be. Her mother, who had spent years looking after her ailing husband, Davis's father, before his death, was not prepared to become a carer again.

Chandler proposed, Davis says, with his wife's wedding ring. She has a picture of her mother wearing the ring as well as the jewellery itself, part of the collection of items Chandler left to the family. Davis considered putting the ring up for auction but decided it was too precious to part with. Other items did go under the auctioneer's hammer in New York last week, including Chandler's typewritten list of "Things I Hate", which features "Irish songs", "golf talk" and "baggy trousers". He also listed "people" and "me". Those two were ruled out by hand, but perhaps fuel the contemporary perception of the writer as gin-soaked and miserable.

That is why Davis is sharing her memories, to counter a public image she insists is far from fair.

Their final meeting came shortly before Chandler's death. Even to a child's eyes he was a shadow of himself, having fallen ill while accepting an award in New York.

Chandler attempted to reassure the little girl, clearly shaken by his ill health, and gave her a hug. It was the last time they were together. Yet in many ways, Chandler has never left Davis.

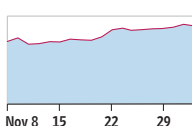
Fans frequently get in touch, amazed to be speaking to someone who shared a dance with their favourite writer. Davis welcomes the chance to keep the fire burning for him. "Chandler was quite something," she says. "And he followed me through my entire life."

# Business

## WORLD MARKETS (Friday's close. Change on the week)

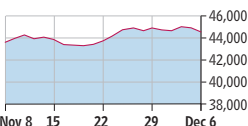
### FTSE 100

8,308.61 (+21.31) ▲



### Dow Jones

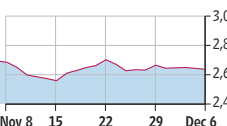
44,642.52 (-268.13) ▼



## COMMODITIES

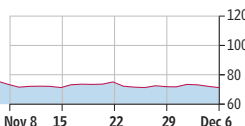
### Gold

\$2,639.40 (-21.17) ▼



### Brent crude

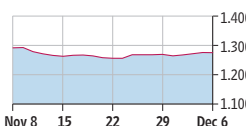
\$71.36 (-0.99) ▼



## CURRENCIES

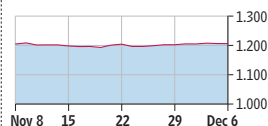
### £/\$

\$1.2744 (+0.0048) ▲



### £/€

€1.2063 (+0.0024) ▲



## Howzat! Brave Bison snaps up digital firm

A marketing company backed by Lord Ashcroft, the former Conservative Party treasurer, and the serial entrepreneur Luke Johnson is set to announce the acquisition of a digital partner to sporting assets including the Men's T20 World Cup cricket and Formula 1 motor-sport (Alex Ralph writes).

Brave Bison, the Aim-quoted company run by the sons of Michael Green, the former Carlton Communications boss, is expected to buy Engage Digital Partners for about £10 million in a cash-and-shares deal.

The acquisition, first reported by Sky News, would be the sixth since Oliver Green, executive

chairman, and Theo Green, chief growth officer, took charge in 2020 and would expand the company, valued at £28 million, to a group employing 350 staff in London, Manchester, Australia, India and Singapore.

Previous acquisitions have included Social Chain, the agency co-founded by Steven Bartlett, the podcaster. Clients include TikTok and Amazon Prime Video. It also pursued a takeover this year of its rival Mission Group.

Engage, which has been advised by KPMG, orchestrates support engagement campaigns, including for Real Madrid, New Zealand rugby and the International Cricket Council, which worked on this year's T20 World Cup.

Brave Bison declined to comment.



Engage Digital Partners works on campaigns for sporting assets such as the Men's T20 World Cup cricket

## Ashley warns against fire sale of assets by Boohoo

### Alex Ralph

Chief Business Correspondent  
Isabella Fish Retail Editor

Mike Ashley has described the co-founder of Boohoo as "egotistical" and accused the struggling fast-fashion group's board of creating a "catastrophic mess" through "gross mismanagement", as he intensifies his campaign to force his way on to it.

In a letter to "long-suffering" Boohoo shareholders before a vote on December 20 on whether to appoint Ashley, the founder of Frasers Group, and the restructuring expert Mike Lennon as directors, he said Debenhams should remain part of the Boohoo group and that "critical to that turnaround will be avoiding a fire sale of assets at knock-down prices".

There is a growing dispute between Manchester-based Boohoo and Frasers, which owns 28 per cent of the London-listed fashion retailer.

Boohoo announced the surprise departure of its boss John Lyttle in October, alongside a £222 million debt refinancing and a strategic review of options. The review has raised the prospect of a break-up of the retail group, whose collection also spans PrettyLittleThing, Dorothy Perkins, Burton, Warehouse and Wallis.

It has also raised speculation about the motivation of Ashley, including possible designs on Debenhams, in seeking to become Boohoo's chief executive and to oust Mahmud Kamani, a co-founder.

Kamani was removed from his role as chairman and made executive vice-chair last month after Frasers expressed concerns over his leadership. Frasers, which owns Sports Direct, Flannels and House of Fraser, is also seeking a shareholder vote to remove Kamani as a director.

In his letter, Ashley said that Boohoo's shareholders should "have every right to feel angry and frustrated" at the board's "gross mismanagement" in driving the share price down 90 per cent in five years.

He wrote: "I see brands that are underperforming and no clear strategy to halt the decline. I see panic-driven mismanagement resulting in reckless decisions that are obliterating shareholder value and jeopardising the company's future. The recent game of musical chairs — appointing Dan Finley as CEO, Mahmud Kamani as executive vice-chairman and Tim Morris as chairman — is the epitome of chaos, a desperate attempt to mask dysfunction at the top."

Ashley said he met last week with Continued on page 32

# Economy 'likely to shrink' as budget gloom spreads

● Business confidence at lowest in two years ● Bosses 'hesitant' to increase hiring after tax rises

Jack Barnett Economics Correspondent

Rachel Reeves's budget has been blamed for causing business confidence to slide to its lowest point in nearly two years, prompting analysts to warn that the economy will end the year in contraction.

An index compiled by BDO, the consultancy, which tracks optimism among British businesses, slipped by 5.8 points over the past month to 93.5, the lowest point since January last year. It was the largest month-on-month fall in the index since August 2021.

A tracker of economic output compiled by BDO also dipped by 3.2 points to 94.7 last month, its weakest reading since October last year. Any figure below 95 indicates contraction.

Paul Dales, chief UK economist at Capital Economics, said: "With the economy having grown at the snail's pace

of just 0.1 per cent in the third quarter, such falls in business confidence increase the risk that the economy will contract in the fourth quarter. That would be a 'milestone' that the government could do without."

The gloomy outlook was underlined by separate figures from the Recruitment and Employment Confederation revealing a sharp fall in job vacancies and a pick-up in redundancies since the budget on October 30.

Inflation data this month could add to the sober outlook, with analysts predicting that UK consumer prices are accelerating, making it harder for the Bank of England to push on with further interest rate cuts. Economists at the consultancy Pantheon expect the rate of consumer price index inflation to have increased from 2.3 per cent in the year to October to 2.6 per cent in November. Sir Keir Starmer outlined

six "milestones" last week by which voters should measure his government's performance, in what was billed by commentators as an attempt to reset Labour's agenda.

The BDO research is the latest piece of evidence demonstrating the sour reaction businesses have had to Reeves's first budget. The chancellor lifted taxes by £40 billion, including a £25 billion rise in employers' national insurance contributions, which could lead to higher inflation, weaker wage growth and curb hiring, economists have warned.

Recent research from the Institute of Directors and the Bank of England demonstrated similar trends to the BDO analysis, with the pair warning that sentiment had deteriorated.

Ellie Henderson, an economist at Investec, said: "Corporates appear to have become hesitant to expand staffing

levels or replace departing employees." Although the tax increases run the danger of damaging the economy in the long term, the higher government spending that they have financed will lift growth this year and next. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development said this month that GDP would expand by 1.7 per cent next year, up from its previous projection of 1.2 per cent.

A Treasury spokesman said: "With our public services crumbling and an inherited £22 billion fiscal black hole, we had to make difficult choices to fix the foundations of the country and restore desperately needed economic stability. By doing this, more than half of employers will either see a cut or no change in their national insurance bills, there will be £22.6 billion more for the NHS and workers' payslips will be protected from higher tax."

## Business

## Need to know

**1** If the voice on the line as you book a sunshine break sounds a little robotic, there could be a simple reason. HotelPlanner.com, one of Britain's biggest hotel booking websites, is using AI travel agents — and says most customers don't realise they're not speaking to a human. In their first month at work, the robots have fielded 40,000 holiday inquiries and billed customers £150,000 for room reservations. **Page 9**

**2** Rachel Reeves's budget has been blamed for causing business confidence to slide to its lowest point in two years, according to an index compiled by BDO, prompting warnings that the economy will end the year in contraction. **Page 31**

**3** Mike Ashley has described the co-founder of Boohoo as "egotistical" and accused the struggling fast-fashion group's board of creating a "catastrophic mess" through "gross mismanagement", as the retail tycoon intensifies his campaign to force his way on to it. **Page 31**

**4** Brave Bison, a marketing company backed by Lord Ashcroft, is set to announce the acquisition of Engage Digital Partners whose clients include the Men's T20 World Cup cricket and Formula 1. **Page 31**

**5** De Beers, Anglo American's diamond business, is battling a fall in demand and prices as the downturn in luxury spending has been compounded by the rise of lab-grown versions. So De Beers is pursuing the potential for fake diamonds in a different way, to drive forward industries ranging from oil and gas to smartphones.

**6** Donald Trump has said that he will not try to oust Jerome Powell, the Federal Reserve chairman, when he takes office as US president next month.

**7** Progress on increasing ethnic diversity in the boardrooms of Britain's largest public companies has stalled, raising concerns about a "one and done" mentality in response to a government-led drive. **Page 34**

**8** Vacancies fell at the quickest pace since the early stages of the pandemic last month as hiring contracted sharply, research by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation and KPMG shows. **Page 37**

**9** The High Court will hear arguments this week that the City regulator was wrong to exclude thousands of companies from a redress scheme for victims of the mis-selling of interest rate "swaps" to small and medium-sized businesses by high street lenders. **Page 37**

**10** If the boozy Christmas knees-up is dead, nobody appears to have told those enjoying a Tuesday afternoon pint in the City of London's Leadenhall Market. "We're currently 30 per cent up in Christmas bookings on last year," Simon Dodd, chief executive of Young's pubs, says. Sales are 16 per cent up across the group's sites in the capital, despite warnings of terminal decline in the hospitality sector because of working from home. **Page 37**

# Lab-grown diamonds add

The business is betting on industrial applications as it confronts a downturn in luxury spending and a collapse in prices, writes Emma Powell

When the starting gun was fired on the radical break-up of Anglo American, the boss of the 107-year-old mining giant was frank that carving out De Beers would be the most challenging part of the plan he laid out to defend against a takeover approach by BHP in May.

The trophy diamonds business, which is set for either an IPO or sale, is battling a fall in demand and prices, as the recent downturn in luxury spending has been compounded by the steady rise of lab-grown versions in the jewellery industry.

De Beers is pursuing the potential for fake diamonds in a different way, not to sit on the end of a finger or around the neck, but to drive forward industries ranging from oil and gas to smartphones. From its main research and development site in Harwell, Oxfordshire, Element Six, part of the De Beers group, can recreate the extreme heat and pressure that forms diamonds over billions of years deep within the ground, in a matter of hours.

From there, it can tweak the form and chemical composition of the diamonds, altering their purity to draw out different properties. It now makes about 20,000 products across its five primary manufacturing sites around the world.

The business can trace its roots back to the postwar period, when Ernest Oppenheimer, the German mining entrepreneur who founded Anglo American, had a literal "lightbulb moment". He initially began searching for ways to use the non-gemstone quality produce of its mines and found that diamonds could be used in the manufacture of the tungsten wires used for lightbulb filaments. Eyeing the industrial opportunity, its labs made its first synthetic diamond in 1958, five years after a Swedish lab became the first in the world.

At first, this was achieved through high heat and pressure technology, heating carbon to about 1,500°C and applying a pressure of about 55,000 times the average air pressure at sea level, a weight the company likens to turning the Eiffel Tower on its head and placing

it on top of a coke can. It has since added another process, which uses heat to break down methane and hydrogen to form diamonds within a specialised chamber.

Greater longevity than traditional materials is one advantage that Element Six points towards for fake diamonds; another is the uniformity with which they can be grown, in high volume, to fit a particular purpose.

Element Six makes most of its money from its abrasives business, which grows diamonds used to help with more efficient drilling, cutting, polishing and grinding. The oil and gas and mining industries are major customers, as are the automotive and aerospace sectors, which use tools adapted with synthetic diamonds to machine components.

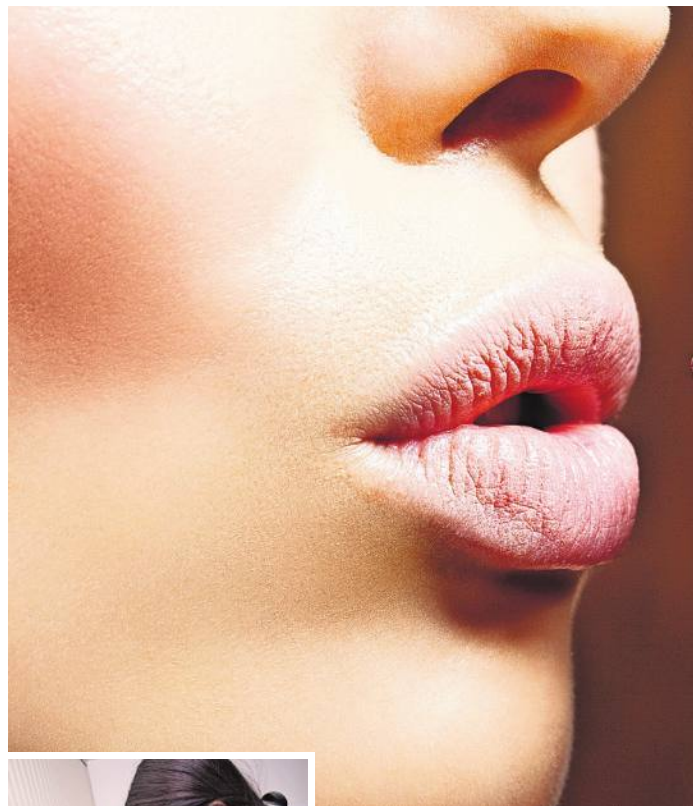
It has become the largest western supplier of synthetic diamonds for abrasive uses, with a market share ranging anywhere from 15 to 40 per cent, depending on the industry, according to Siobhán Duffy, chief executive of Element Six.

"It's very important as we go forward with our strategy, to protect that core and to continue to grow the markets we can in that space, to ensure we then have money to invest in the new and developing technologies," she says.

Adaptation is becoming increasingly important as some of its key industries, like oil and gas and car manufacturers, face fundamental challenges in the drive to decarbonise. However, it has moved into newer markets, including developing diamond discs that can sit inside huge data servers to help spread and extract heat to prevent machines ultimately failing.

The durability of diamonds is well known, but they can also conduct heat five times more efficiently than copper. That also has the potential to open up more opportunities with the tech sector, particularly as the boom in artificial intelligence means more power is required, the company believes.

Element Six must not only grapple with evolving secular trends, but also growing competition from China and India, which are the largest producers



De Beers, which is being primed for an



of lab-grown diamonds. Growing diamonds in labs removes the element of luck and risk involved in mining the real thing, but it also means they are without the scarcity value of genuine diamonds. Over the past eight years, the price of the average one-carat lab-grown diamond has fallen by 82 per cent, according to estimates by Paul Zimnisky, an independent diamond industry analyst. That is compared with a 33 per cent fall in the mined stones.

Duffy says: "When it comes to lab-grown for jewellery it is very different to the price points in the industrial space because it's a different proposition and it's different engineering that under-

## Trump: I won't try to oust Fed chief

Mehreen Khan Economics Editor

Donald Trump has said that he will not try to oust Jerome Powell, the Federal Reserve chairman, when he takes office next month.

The US president-elect, who has had a rocky relationship with America's chief interest rate setter, played down speculation that he might try to jettison him. "No, I don't think so. I don't see it," Trump told NBC News when asked if he would seek to remove Powell, whose term ends in 2026.

He said that he did not think that Powell, who he has sparred with over interest rate levels, would go quietly. "I think if I told him to, he would. But if I asked him to, he probably wouldn't."

Analysts are bracing themselves for a difficult relationship between the White House and the Fed, with Trump policies regarded as inflationary and therefore requiring a tougher monetary response.

Trump campaigned on a promise to lower mortgage rates and other borrowing costs for US households,

while pledging to implement tariffs on imports. Last month Powell said that he would refuse to leave office early if Trump tried to oust him, arguing that it was "not permitted under the law".

Trump said in August that he felt he should have a say in the Fed's decisions, an indication of his interest in infringing on its independence.

The president-elect's policies risk driving US inflation to as high as 8 per cent and pushing the world's largest economy into recession, a leading think tank has warned. Paul Mortimer-Lee, a US economist and research fellow at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, said that the tariff plans, the threat to deport millions of immigrants and pledge to cut taxes were "unambiguously inflationary".

Mortimer-Lee, a former official at the International Monetary Fund and the Bank of England, said: "The proposed policy package by Trump is likely to be ill-considered, rushed and damaging to the US and global economies."

The US has been the best-performing economy in the G7 group of demo-

cracies for the past two years and Trump's election victory has supercharged the value of the US dollar and stock prices as investors line up for a growth boom from hundreds of billions in proposed tax cuts and deregulation.

Mortimer-Lee predicted that any growth-boosting measures would be outweighed by the negative impact of sweeping tariffs, a plan to deport up to 20 million migrants and reduced government spending. These policies would slash 1.25 percentage points off GDP growth in the first full year of the Trump presidency and push the economy close to recession, he warned.

The institute's analysis expects Trump to undermine the independence of the Fed, putting political pressure on the central bank to keep interest rates low, stoking inflation and causing a loss of global confidence in the dollar. Mortimer-Lee said that a weakened Fed would result in "the initial shocks to prices from [Trump's] other policies to feed through to second and third-round effects. As a result, inflation could rise to 7 or 8 per cent by 2027."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

Ashley warns Boohoo

Finley, who had served as Debenhams' chief executive since 2022, and they discussed the "enormous potential to scale" its brand.

Responding to the letter, a spokesman for Boohoo said Ashley was seeking a board seat for "his own interests, not those of Boohoo's shareholders", adding: "Fraser's track record of leveraging investments in companies for its own commercial advantage is plain for all to see. Boohoo's independent board, on the other hand, is focused on maximising value for all its shareholders."

Last week Frasers, which has bought up stakes in retailers including Asos, Hugo Boss and Mulberry, downgraded its own full-year profit forecast, blaming lower consumer confidence and budget measures, which further weakened its share price. The stock is down by about 28 per cent this year and Frasers is being demoted from the FTSE 100 as part of a quarterly review of London's main listings indices.

Separately, three police forces have recently confirmed they are investigating claims of stalking of Boohoo executives and "corporate espionage".

# polish to De Beers

GETTY IMAGES



IPO or sale, has turned away from traditional jewellery to focus on practical uses

pins your end product." Nevertheless, industrial diamonds have also felt the pressure from greater competition from the east, which started back in the 1980s, driving down the prices for some synthetic diamond products.

Element Six believes that R&D can help it sidestep these pressures. Rather than being a supplier to toolmakers, it looks to get involved earlier on in the development process, which it says helps it add value.

Last year it began working with Amazon Web Services, the cloud computing arm of the American tech giant, to find ways of using synthetic diamonds to transfer data more securely over longer

distances. The company does not disclose its overall profits but says that it has been "consistently profitable", although it will say that earnings did take a hit more recently, after bouncing back sharply following the pandemic as manufacturers ran down stocks.

Amid tumbling synthetic gemstone prices, a stint growing diamonds for De Beers' short-lived Lightbox brand ended this year, with the business now running down stocks. The plant in Oregon that had been making the stones is now being revamped for industrial production, as De Beers attempts to draw a line between the markets for genuine diamonds and rapidly growing fakes.

## Nuclear plants 'can power 6m homes'

Emma Powell

A frontrunner in the competition to develop the first mini-nuclear power stations in Britain has said it would aim to build enough plants to power six million homes by 2050.

GE Hitachi, a joint venture between GE Vernova, the American energy equipment manufacturer, and Hitachi, the Japanese conglomerate, is vying to win taxpayer funding for its BWRX-300 design, a boiling water reactor technology.

"Being able to deploy six gigawatts, maybe 20 units in the UK, is aggressive but reasonable for us," said Nicole Holmes, the executive leading the talks between the North Carolina company and Great British Nuclear, an arm's-length, state-backed body that is leading the selection process. Each of its units has a capacity of 300 megawatts, enough to power 300,000 homes.

Nuclear power has dwindled to 14 per cent of the UK's electricity mix, down from 25 per cent in the late 1990s. Hinkley Point C in Somerset is the first plant

to be built in more than two decades, but is running billions of pounds over budget and has been beset by delays.

Advocates of small modular reactors, which can be built in factories, say they offer a faster and more cost-effective way of boosting Britain's supply of nuclear electricity, which can provide a baseload of power as more intermittent renewables come on to the system.

Contracts are expected to be awarded to two technology providers to each build one unit initially, with the winners announced in spring.

Great British Nuclear has asked the four providers on the shortlist — the others are Rolls-Royce, Holtec and Westinghouse — to set out the cost of providing 1,500MW of nuclear capacity to demonstrate the economies of scale they can deliver from building more units. For GE Hitachi that would equate to about five mini-nuclear plants.

A "double-digit" percentage reduction in the cost of manufacturing the fifth unit compared with the first would be possible, Holmes said. "Each unit that you progress, as your skilled labour be-

## Sell-off plans lose their edge

Behind the story

**A**s Anglo American approaches the halfway point of its break-up plan, it has yet to set out how it will offload the most troublesome piece of its sprawling operations (Emma Powell writes).

De Beers, which is 85 per cent-owned by the FTSE 100 miner alongside Botswana, is expected to be the final business to be separated under the restructuring.

However, plans for either a sale or a multibillion-pound IPO have been complicated by a deep downturn in the diamond market. Aside from the rise in production of lab-grown alternatives, luxury spending has continued to slide, worsened by a slowdown in the Chinese economy.

Average realised prices fell by 25 per cent last year to \$147 a carat, although selling some higher-value diamonds this year has lifted the average to \$160 a carat by the end of September. In response, De Beers has cut production levels. Output since the start of the year is 21 per cent lower than last year earlier, at 18.9 million carats.

In October, Anglo said that a sustained decline in luxury spending could push it to cut its diamond production further this year, with any recovery in the market expected to be "protracted" as processors of the precious gems worked through their mounting stockpiles.

Shareholders are split on whether executing the break-up by the deadline, which had been set for the end of next year, is more important than the price Anglo achieves on a sale or IPO. At the end of last year the business was valued at \$7.6 billion. George Cheveley, of Ninety One, a top-ten investor in Anglo, said in October that there was no expectation the company would achieve that valuation. He said: "You can't sit on something and hope for a better price. It generally doesn't get you a much better price."

comes more experienced... will benefit." The previous government said the cost of building the first two units would be about £20 billion, but the figure is due to be updated in the chancellor's spending review next year.

Questions remain about who will finance the construction and operation of modular reactors, as well as what stake, if any, the government will retain in the new plants. It is envisioned that once a final investment decision has been taken on the first modular reactors, private financing could be sought. The first small modular reactor is not expected to be generating electricity before 2035, too late to contribute towards Labour's 2030 net-zero goals.

Great British Nuclear had "an aggressive but realistic schedule" for developing the country's first small modular reactors, Holmes said.

GE Hitachi has a contract to develop the first BWRX-300 at Ontario Power Generation's Darlington site near Toronto, which is due to start construction next year and begin generating power by the end of 2029.

## The week ahead

The European Central Bank is expected to refrain from a bumper half a percentage point interest cut and carry out a more gradual monetary loosening as the bloc prepares for the incoming presidency of Donald Trump.

Analysts think the eurozone's central bank will reduce its main lending rate by 25 basis points or a quarter of a percentage point to 3 per cent on Thursday, as part of its latest attempts to stimulate growth in the face of slowly falling inflation.

Ratesetters are not expected to go for a larger monetary loosening after recent figures show that inflationary pressures are still present in the wage and services sectors of the economy. The ECB will also publish its latest staff estimates for growth and inflation which are expected to downgrade the economy's prospects.

Ricardo Amaro, lead economist at Oxford Economics, said the ECB would cut rates but "stick to its meeting-by-meeting data-dependency mantra and refrain from providing explicit guidance



Political unrest in France is adding to economic concerns in the eurozone

about upcoming decisions or the final destination for rates".

The eurozone economy is ending the year with a weakened growth outlook on the back of deteriorating growth and political uncertainty in France and Germany, high rates of household savings and falling business sector confidence.

### TOMORROW

Moonpig is expected to deliver an upbeat message to investors when it posts its half-year results.

The online card and gifting retailer has reported rising revenues and profits this year, setting the stage for another strong performance

before the peak festive postal period.

Moonpig recently said it was "well positioned to deliver sustained growth in revenue, profit and free cashflow". It said it expects double-digit percentage revenue in the 2025 financial year. The London-listed

retailer has announced plans to drive growth by expanding its gifting range and leveraging data-driven customer insights.

**Interims:** Moonpig, Solid State  
**Finals:** NCC  
**Trading updates:** Ashtead, Ferguson Enterprises

### WEDNESDAY

Tui, Europe's biggest tour operator, will report its full-year results on Wednesday. It should be a sunny set of numbers, given that the company reported record high sales in its first half. The group hinted in September that momentum was still going strong, and reiterated its guidance for its underlying operating profit to increase by at least 25 per cent year on year to €1.2 billion.

There may be some questions about how the group will face anti-tourism sentiment in popular destinations such as the Canary Islands and Barcelona, but the company has previously insisted that package travel does not deprive

locals of housing. Investors will also be watching its balance sheet closely, as the group aims to return to its pre-pandemic era credit

rating of BB/Ba. Credit rating agencies S&P and Moody's upgraded it to a B+ and B1

respectively in February. Earnings per share are expected to rise by 42 per cent to 105¢, according to analyst estimates compiled by FactSet, with pre-tax income expected to end the year up 55 per cent at €856.5 million.

**Interims:** Cohort, Optima Health, ProCook  
**Finals:** Tui  
**Trading updates:** British American Tobacco, S&U

### THURSDAY

Analysts and investors will be watching closely to see how Currys is navigating weaker consumer spending and the impact of budget-induced wage rises.

Last week Deutsche Bank downgraded shares in the electricals retailer to "hold" from "buy" over the potential impact of cost inflation on the electronic goods chain. It said this reflected "caution on the scale of the budget impact, both the magnitude of cost inflation and potential for return of category spending". In its last trading update, Currys reported 2 per cent growth in like-for-like revenue over the 17 weeks to August. Subdued conditions continued to cloud the Nordic region, the group said.

As in prior years, performance at De La Rue is weighted towards the second half of the year, with analysts at Investec saying they expect operating profit to be in the low single-digit range when the company releases its interim results this week.

**Interims:** 4Global, Currys, De La Rue, NewRiver Reit  
**Finals:** Benchmark, Carr's Group, RWS Holdings  
**Economy:** European Central Bank interest rate decision

### FRIDAY

**Economy:** ONS Monthly GDP estimates

## Business

# Small businesses turned down by loan scheme 'need feedback'

James Hurley

A government scheme designed to boost access to finance for small businesses is being undermined by "a fundamental misunderstanding" of why companies are being turned away for loans, according to one of the operators of the service.

The bank referral scheme obliges nine major banks to refer small companies they turn away for credit to independent platforms that link them up with alternative sources of finance.

An official review published alongside October's budget found that the

scheme secured loans for only one in 20 companies referred to it.

The initiative, launched in November 2016, has arranged 5,387 deals worth about £128 million, with an average deal size of about £24,000. Gross bank lending to small and medium-sized enterprises in the second quarter of this year was £4 billion.

Before a consultation on the future of the programme, Funding Xchange, one of three platforms that receives referrals under the scheme, said that 94 per cent of businesses referred by banks failed to secure finance because so many of them were not "fundable".

Funding Xchange said its analysis of about 7,000 businesses declined for bank funding over the past 18 months found that about half had "readily fixable" issues that "could turn the 'no' they received into a 'yes'". It said: "Businesses are 'missing out' on more than £3 billion of potential funding when scaled to the full SME population, funding that would otherwise support the growth of businesses that are the backbone of the British economy."

Examples of the problems preventing companies from securing finance included excessive use of overdrafts, missing payments to suppliers, filing

accounts late with Companies House and filing accounts showing a net negative asset position, the analysis found.

The company warned that firms that were declined for funding were often receiving "little in the way of advice, leaving business owners confused and resigned to the fact that their business is 'just not good enough' rather than focused on the practical steps they can take to improve their position".

It added: "Unfortunately, most business owners lack the feedback and support to avoid these common pitfalls. Compared to the consumer lending space, there are few tools or services

that provide simple, impartial feedback on their profile before they apply for finance. As lenders have increasingly moved towards digital fulfilment, small business owners lack the informal personal support that in the past would have guided them on what a lender expects from the business to be able to extend a loan." It said the consultation scheduled for next year "provides an opportunity to address the underlying issues" with the scheme.

The Treasury has said that the proportion of businesses benefiting "in terms of acquiring finance has been smaller than expected".

## John Lewis owner brings Caffè Nero outlets into the mix

The owner of John Lewis and Waitrose is attempting to win back more shoppers by opening Caffè Nero coffee shops in its stores (Isabella Fish writes).

The John Lewis Partnership opened the cafés last week in five Waitrose shops — in Billericay, Godalming, Keynsham, Locks Heath and Stroud — offering coffee from Nero Roasting Company alongside Waitrose's food menu. A Caffè Nero outlet opened in the John Lewis in White City, west London, on Thursday.

The in-shop café concept builds on a partnership with Nero Group, which launched in 2021 to offer free hot drinks to My Waitrose loyalty card holders. Waitrose

had scrapped the free hot drink offer in 2018, but brought it back after a backlash.

The free hot drinks machines are available in 320 Waitroses and since the start of the partnership almost 25 million hot drinks have been dispensed.

Although some may question the need to offer sit-in coffees too, the John Lewis Partnership said the cafés were a natural extension of the partnership. The coffee will be served by baristas, it said, unlike the free coffee.

Charlotte Di Cello, commercial director for Waitrose, said: "We know our customers love to have the option of enjoying a coffee, snack or meal after their shop."

Will Stratton-Morris, UK chief executive of Caffè Nero UK, described the collaboration as a



Caffè Nero outlets, where coffee is served by baristas, have opened in five Waitrose shops and one John Lewis

"perfect pairing".

The John Lewis Partnership has been fighting hard to reclaim its crown as middle England's favourite retailer after a challenging few years

marked by declining profits and shifts in customer behaviour.

It has reintroduced its "never knowingly undersold" price pledge, invested in customer service

training and started revamping shops.

The partnership reported sales of £5.9 billion in the first half, up by 2 per cent year on year, while revenue was up by

2 per cent to £5.2 billion. The company said it was on track to deliver significantly higher full-year profit above the £42 million reported last year.

## Digital boom 'to push ad sales in UK past £40bn'

Emma Powell

Revenues earned by the British advertising industry are set to accelerate more strongly than anticipated next year, surpassing £40 billion in value, according to projections from the world's largest media-buying agency.

Digital advertising will help drive a 7 per cent increase in total media sales, GroupM has forecast, higher than its previous estimate of 4.4 per cent growth, and ahead of the European average.

The UK has the largest share of digital advertising revenue compared with other European countries — forecast to account for 81 per cent of the industry's total revenue next year.

Higher online advertising spending is also expected to push the global media industry past \$1 trillion for the first time, climbing by almost 8 per cent from this year.

Big technology companies such as Amazon, Google and Meta, the owner of Instagram, are likely to be the biggest beneficiaries of the rise in digital ads across the market and are expected to earn more than half of all advertising revenue this year.

GroupM is one of the largest agencies owned by WPP, which is the world's biggest advertising group and a constituent of the FTSE 100. Like its peers, its sales have suffered over the past year as companies have reduced marketing budgets in the face of an uncertain economic outlook.

However, the advertising house signalled a nascent recovery in the industry during the third quarter, as sales returned to growth, even if China's prolonged downturn continues to prove a drag on business.

The TV market has continued to grow at a slower pace, but is expected to grow by 3 per cent next year, up from a 1 per cent increase this year.

The decline in linear television sales is expected to continue, but to be offset by growth in the streaming market, which is set to expand from 24 per cent this year to 30 per cent of total TV advertising revenue in the UK.

Demand has been helped by the improving health of the UK economy amid a fall in cost inflation. The International Monetary Fund has forecast an acceleration in economic output to 1.5 per cent next year from 1.1 per cent this year. "The recent interest rate cuts may also have a positive effect, particularly for the creation of new businesses and investment in growth from established businesses, both of which can lead to growth in advertising investment," GroupM said.

# Progress on ethnic diversity in boardrooms runs out of steam

Alex Ralph  
Chief Business Correspondent

Progress on increasing ethnic diversity in the boardrooms of Britain's largest public companies has stalled, raising concerns about a "one and done" mentality in response to a government-led drive.

Despite a surge in efforts to improve minority representation on boards, of the 196 new directors appointed in the year to the end of April only seven, or 4 per cent, were from a self-declared ethnic minority background, according to an annual analysis by Spencer Stuart headhunters of the biggest 150 UK-listed companies.

That was a large drop on the 15 per cent last year and means 12.5 per cent of all directors (186 of 1,515) identify as having an ethnic minority background.

The seven include Ajay Kavan at

Dunelm, the retailer, and Angela Jain at Unite Group, which runs student accommodation.

A review of boardroom ethnic diversity headed by Sir John Parker, the veteran director, commissioned by the business department in 2015, led to a target for all FTSE 100 boards to have at least one director from an ethnic minority background by December 2021.

Ninety-six FTSE 100 companies were meeting the target during the period of Spencer Stuart's board index. The four that were not compliant, according to the research, included Diploma, which has since announced an appointment, and Frasers Group, which was approached for comment.

The deadline for FTSE 250 boards to follow suit is this month. Only a few of the 50 FTSE 250 companies in Spencer Stuart's sample were not meeting that

requirement. Those that appeared not to be compliant, according to the headhunter, included Balfour Beatty, which has since made an appointment, and Darktrace, which has since been acquired and delisted.

Shami Iqbal, UK managing partner at Spencer Stuart, said the slowdown in progress was disappointing. He said: "Diversity means having talent around the boardroom table representing a wide range of views and backgrounds, seeing this as a strength and leveraging this talent to the company's advantage. While the Parker review results show concerted action, boards must be careful not to adopt a 'one and done' mentality."

The research also found that boardrooms were getting older, with those aged over 50 now representing more than 90 per cent of all non-executive directors amid a "flight to experience".

Spencer Stuart said that its analysis "shines a light on the growing lack of age diversity on UK boards".

There has been "significant progress" to improve gender diversity, however, helped by the FTSE Women Leaders Review, an independent, business-led framework supported by the government, which is targeting female representation within the four senior board and leadership roles of chair, chief executive, chief financial officer and senior independent director.

Spencer Stuart's research found that 71 per cent of boards reported having at least one woman in these four roles, up from 60 per cent last year.

However, the progress was "uneven", with 43 boards still having men occupying all four roles, and in contrast to the 113 boards where men held both chair and chief executive roles, women held both roles on only three boards.

# Paul Johnson

Starmer has used strong language on housebuilding — now for action

“Perhaps the most impressive aspect of our new government has been not just its continued insistence on the importance of housebuilding, but its stated willingness to take on vested interests, to force things through, however unpopular that may be locally and however many people are upset.

Last week Sir Keir Starmer reiterated his commitment to building 1.5 million new homes by 2030.

Writing in this newspaper he appeared robust, radical and combative in that commitment. Hurrah. We have fewer houses per person, smaller houses and more expensive houses than almost any other comparable European country.

Correct problem identified. Stretching target announced. What about the solution? One concern stems from the failure of the prime minister to identify the right culprits. His beef in that article was with the “blockers and bureaucrats who have stopped Britain building”. In his speech he rounded on a civil service “comfortable in the tepid bath of managed decline”.

A lovely phrase. But it's not the bureaucrats and the civil service who have stood in the way of building, it's the politicians, local and national, Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat. They make the laws, they make the final decisions. Plenty of planning officers and numerous civil servants have despaired at the unwillingness of their political masters to back either specific developments or systemic reform.

The real question is, will this government make the genuinely radical changes that are needed to get this country building again? Despite the warm words, the combative language, the rhetoric — all of which I welcome — I rather fear the answer to that question will prove to be “no”. A report out last week from Anthony Breach at the Centre for Cities think tank explains why.

At heart the government appears to want to tweak and improve the existing system, not to fundamentally change it. Making what we have work better is good. But the Centre for Cities reckons that will not be anything like enough. They are hardly alone in that. The problem lies in the very nature of the system

introduced by the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. Discretion, uncertainty, capacity to block, is built into it. Further constraint, complexity and uncertainty has been layered upon this original Act, and it is these layers that the government seems to want to peel away, not the system itself. But even if we manage as much private housebuilding as at the peak periods over the past 70 years, before most of the additional burdens were imposed, we are likely to fall a good 400,000 short of the 1.5 million target.

The problem is much worse than that. It is worse in the quantitative sense that even 300,000 new homes per year won't be enough to make up our shortfall. More importantly, it matters where the houses are built. Our system is especially restrictive in places like London and surrounding areas where need — both social and economic — is greatest.

Private housebuilding in London has never recovered to even half the level it was in the interwar period. It has been almost completely unaffected by the huge surge in house prices and booming population of recent decades. Look across the country and there is literally no correlation between house prices — the fundamental indication of demand — and housebuilding, the obvious supply response. Our planning system is quite obviously a huge drag on our economy, and on our standard of living.

At first sight that makes the recent reduction in London's housing target from 100,000 a year to 80,000 look barmy. If there is anywhere in the country where targets should be rising it is London. But these targets are purely notional. Neither is



Drastic reform is needed to enable the housebuilding required in London



remotely attainable under the present system. That is not to say impossible under any system, far from it. There is plenty of scope for more building, but the London Plan and the rest of the current rules stand in the way. Making any building easier would also make building social housing easier. The case for more direct subsidy here is strong. It should replace the appallingly inefficient and costly system of cross-subsidy from private housebuilding. But there is no world in which that will be affordable at a rate which does all or most of the work. Private housebuilding must play the key role.

So what sort of reform do we need? Quite simply the repeal of that 1947 Act and its replacement with the sort of zoning systems that exist in every other G7 economy and across much of the anglosphere. You set rules for different neighbourhoods and if those rules are adhered to then building is allowed. Most of the costly discretion and uncertainty of the present system could be removed.

This sort of reform is the only way to get serious building where it is most needed — in London and other high-cost areas. It would also open up our housebuilding market, currently dominated by a few big players because only they can bear the costs and risks imposed by our crazy planning system. Then there's the green belt. Using just 2 per cent of green belt land around railway stations could make space for two million suburban homes. Retaining the green belt in anything like its present form is absolutely not compatible with the current discretionary system if we want to build all those additional houses.

In any case, we need to use our land rationally, not simply exclude large areas from development because of a designation imposed 70 years ago. There is much else that needs to change, both big and small. But without a complete overhaul of the whole basis of our planning system we are never likely to build enough homes in the right places. I'm delighted to hear the radical language, Sir Keir. Let's match it with equally radical action.

Paul Johnson is director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies. Follow him on @PJTheEconomist

Sir Robin Budenberg

## Unleash the power of our universities to kick-start the economy

There is an old saying that goes “if you want to build a great city, create a university and wait 200 years”. The UK is already the second most popular global choice for university students and four of our universities rank in the top ten in the world — to the immense benefit of our cities, regions and nations.

Given that universities have long been recognised as engines of regional economic growth — a priority for the government's impending industrial strategy — now must be the right time to focus on what fuels those engines.

Universities are the beating heart of the business communities which surround them. Their innovation, scientific research and technological breakthroughs, often in partnership

**‘Countless companies depend on the strength and success of our university and higher education sector’**

with business, make them regional gateways for industrial growth. London Economics, the consultancy, and Universities UK, which represents 141 universities, have found that every £1 invested into UK universities generates £14 of economic benefit. They estimate that higher education research increases private sector productivity by £40 billion each year.

The acceleration of devolution, with greater powers to metro mayors and regional leaders, presents a timely opportunity for universities to play an integral role in regional policymaking, growth and innovation.

Lloyds Banking Group and PwC UK, both with deep and long-standing relationships across the higher education sector, have at this pivotal moment co-authored a report to help address the question of how our universities can make an even greater contribution to regional regeneration and growth, and strengthen their own financial position in the process.

The report sets out five fundamentals.

● First, universities should explicitly

recognise that playing an active civic role in their region is core to their purpose and not ancillary to their teaching and research. Many UK universities rightly have national and international ambitions, but their regional roles can be the foundation for these aspirations.

● Second, universities need to collaborate with regional higher and further education institutions, public bodies and business. The

Manufacturing Technology Centre is an excellent example; founded by three universities in the Midlands — Birmingham, Nottingham and Loughborough — it works with a dozen more, supported by business partners contributing millions towards tomorrow's engineers.

● Third, universities can simplify engagement with prospective partners, supported by staff who are experts in collaboration and business development.

● Fourth, universities can benefit from modern leadership and management practices which motivate academic staff towards greater agility, commerciality and risk tolerance.

● And finally, universities need to articulate better both the costs and the significant value of what they create — both financial and societal — and broaden the use of their existing physical assets, intellectual property and relationships. Only by understanding and leveraging the value of their expertise and assets can universities increase their impact and help secure their long-term financial sustainability.

Given its relationship with 70 per cent of UK universities, Lloyds understands the financial and strategic challenges they face and is committed to help resolve them. The Crown Estate has signalled potential to invest up to £1.5 billion nationally in science and innovation facilities over the next 15 years.

It is in everyone's interests to unleash the catalytic power of universities in our communities and commerce. Countless current and future companies depend on the strength and success of our university and higher education sector, which we should all do more to partner, empower and protect.

Sir Robin Budenberg is chairman of Lloyds Banking Group and the Crown Estate

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# Job vacancies fall at quickest pace since early in the pandemic

**Jack Barnett**  
Economics Correspondent

Vacancies fell at the quickest pace since the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic last month as hiring contracted sharply.

According to research by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation and KPMG, the professional services firm, redundancies gathered momentum last month and demand for new staff deteriorated substantially.

It underscores that the labour market continues to weaken amid restrictive interest rates and tax rises.

The pair's permanent placement in-

dex, which measures whether businesses expanded or trimmed headcounts, dropped to 40.7 last month from 44.1, the weakest reading since August last year. Any reading below 50 signals a contraction in hiring. Temporary staff employment was also negative.

The data highlights that the pool of available permanent and temporary staff is rising rapidly while vacancies fall at the fastest since August 2020. Such a dynamic should put downward pressure on pay growth by strengthening competition for jobs between workers. However, the survey indicated that wage pressures remained stubborn.

James Smith, developed markets

economist at ING, the Dutch bank, said: "This is the latest reminder that the jobs market has cooled appreciably in 2024. The weakness in permanent hiring tallies with official payroll data."

There were reports from "some firms" that Rachel Reeves's decision to increase employer national insurance contributions to 15 per cent from 13.8 per cent prompted them to curb salary settlements.

Figures from the Bank of England this month showed that more than half of companies planned to raise prices in response to the £25 billion national insurance contributions increase.

Neil Carberry, chief executive of the

Recruitment and Employment Confederation, said: "It should be a surprise to no one that firms took the time to reassess their hiring needs in November after a tough budget for employers."

A substantial decline in response rates to a survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics has led to accusations that its labour market figures are wildly inaccurate. As a result, economists have turned to alternative data sources, such as the employment confederation-KPMG report on jobs, to track workforce trends.

This month the ONS conceded that the transition to a new labour force survey — designed to address accuracy

issues — could be delayed until 2027, much later than the previous target of the middle of next year.

Policymakers at the Bank of England have said that uncertainty over the level of unemployment has complicated their interest rate decisions.

Central bankers try to slow economic activity when there is high inflation by lifting interest rates, which typically pushes up unemployment. There is a risk of keeping rates too high for too long if official unemployment data is wrong.

The Bank has lowered borrowing costs twice this year to 4.75 per cent from 5.25 per cent and is expected to deliver four quarter-point rate cuts next year.

## City workers in party spirit give pubs fresh hope

**Andy Silvester**

If the boozy Christmas knees-up really is dead, nobody appears to have told those enjoying a Tuesday afternoon pint in the City of London's Leadenhall Market.

By now, advance parties from neighbouring offices have been sent down as emissaries to claim the prized standing tables outside the Lamb Tavern, while on the pub's third-floor restaurant party-hatted revellers are squeezing the last drops from their tab. In a few hours' time, the cobblestones outside the Lamb and its neighbouring establishments will be almost entirely lost under a sea of City boys and girls toasting December's wind-down.

Perched on a stool by the bar is Simon Dodd, chief executive of Young's pubs and the man with his (figurative) name above the door of the group's 278 pubs. It's fair to say he's sceptical that Brits are, en masse, abandoning the big festive do for more HR-approved celebrations.

"We're currently 30 per cent up in Christmas bookings [on last year]," he says. "In London, it's absolutely huge. We've got massive corporate bookings in [other London pubs] the Oyster Shed, the Guinea Grill, Smith's of Smithfield."

"And think about this year, the weather's been awful. Rain in April, rain in May, rain in June, we didn't win the Euros, the rugby team won one game against Japan, so people are thinking, you know what? I'm going to enjoy myself. I'll worry about it in January."

The Lamb bears it out. The insurers

and brokers who populate Leadenhall Market's drinking dens all year round — and who, uniquely among the City's industries, still seem to view regular pub visits as a key right of their employment — rack up an average of 1,850 pints on a normal Thursday. In the seven weeks running up to Christmas, that reaches up to 2,550.

With the pub filling up around us, it's no wonder Dodd, 50, looks chipper. His LinkedIn profile suggests he has chosen a very on-the-ground style of management; rarely a week goes by without a report on his latest whistlestop pub tour. But it's in London that Young's is recording the strongest growth; sales are 16 per cent up across the group's sites in the capital, compared with about 5 or 6 per cent outside. That comes despite the sometimes breathless warnings that London's hospitality businesses were set for terminal decline thanks to the rise in working from home.

Things have changed — that Thursday is now the big night out rather than a Friday is well known — but people, Dodd reckons, are still hard-wired to celebrate down the local.

"I think things have just evolved," he says. "If we were talking five years ago, we wouldn't have had seven rosés on our wine list. And rosé wouldn't have



Leadenhall Market in London is a barometer of the increased activity that makes Simon Dodd, below, optimistic for Young's

been bigger than red wine. But it is. And at Christmas, the magnums come out."

Whether London's drinkers will maintain their thirst into the new year remains an open question in the industry. The price of a pint continues to increase and many believe that, at some point, Brits will surely begin balking. Rachel Reeves's recent budget changes — raising employers' national insurance and the minimum wage — won't have helped matters, with the additional costs adding £11 million to the wrong side of Young's balance sheet. Emma McClar-

kin, chief executive of the British Beer and Pub Association, described the budget as a "deep and painful wound" for the industry.

Dodd says: "Every company works out how to minimise passing costs on to the consumer. I remember the coverage of the £5 pint."

"Now we're talking about heading towards a £10 pint. We're nowhere near that, but I think our job is to work out how you can be more efficient, how you play with your range at the bar, to ensure you don't pass on a lot of the costs. Our sector has had a lot of costs in the last few years, there's no doubt about it."

Does he feel as if the government is listening to the sector?

"As much as anyone else," Dodd smiles, in the knowledge that even the boss of a pub company with a pint in his hand needs to remain diplomatic at

times. Dodd is looking forward to 2025 regardless. Workers coming back to the office four days a week — and soon, many think, five — will help, but shoppers and tourists have also begun to fill his tables. Friday is once again the second busiest day of the week for Young's, which gave up its brewing arm in 2011 and is now purely focused on pubs and rooms. The company spends £18 million a year on maintenance, a decent amount of which is spent keeping the lavatories in good order ("it's becoming more important for men too, now"), and Dodd is focused on ensuring his establishments remain "proper pubs".

"If you're a well-invested pub, you have great teams, you're evolving your offer all the time, your food's fresh, British, as long as you keep doing that, consumers will come back."

## Victims of banking 'swaps' scandal to have their day in court

**James Hurley**

The High Court will hear arguments this week that the City regulator was wrong to exclude thousands of companies from a redress scheme for a multi-billion-pound banking scandal.

A final hearing in a judicial review of the Financial Conduct Authority's (FCA) handling of compensation for victims of the mis-selling of interest rate "swaps" to small and medium-sized businesses by high street lenders is due to begin tomorrow.

The case includes claims that the Treasury influenced the regulator to

exclude about one in three swap transactions from a compensation scheme amid concerns that the bill for banks, including those bailed out by the government, was too high.

The review relates to the wholesale mis-selling of so-called swaps, or interest rate hedging products, by high street banks. These products were marketed as protection against the risk of rising interest rates but left tens of thousands of companies with disastrously high costs when rates fell after the financial crisis, causing many to lose their livelihoods. A redress scheme set up by the Financial Services Authority (FSA),

the FCA's predecessor organisation, paid out £2.2 billion.

However, in 2021 an independent review by John Swift QC concluded that the regulator had failed in its duties when it introduced a "sophistication test" that froze out about one in three businesses that were mis-sold swaps.

The decision is thought to have affected about 5,000 customers. The FCA estimates that this saved lenders between £200 million and £3 billion in compensation costs. The all-party parliamentary group on fair banking is challenging the FCA's refusal to accept Swift's findings and claims its failure to

require any further redress for excluded customers "is flawed and unlawful".

A spokeswoman for the FCA said: "The decision in 2012 to limit the scope of the redress scheme was reasonable. We also believe our decision in 2021 not to seek to use our powers to require any further redress to be paid to customers was the correct one."

The regulator feels the redress scheme got money to companies as quickly as possible and that it carefully considered how it should respond to Swift. It believes it acted lawfully.

The case includes claims that companies were frozen out following the

amendment of a sophistication test that was changed, in Swift's words, "at the stroke of a pen" in response to lobbying by banks and the Treasury in light of concerns from ministers that the redress scheme was too expensive.

Swift concluded that the redress scheme remained under the control of the regulator despite Treasury attempts to influence it. The parliamentary group has claimed that the sophistication test was the product of "discussions between the FSA, the banks and HM Treasury" and had no basis in the rules governing the regulator.

The Treasury declined to comment.

# Darts maker hits bullseye with private equity deal

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Family firm that makes Red Dragon 'arrows' for champions has sold a large stake to Inflexion, writes **Richard Tyler**

**T**he family that makes the Red Dragon darts used by Luke Humphries, the world champion, has hit the bullseye after it sold a majority stake to Inflexion, a private equity firm, for tens of millions of pounds.  
The Nodor Group, based in

Bridgend, south Wales, is home to the premium Winmau and Nodor dartboards, made from sisal fibres from plants grown in Kenya, as well as Red Dragon tungsten darts, and has ridden a surge in the popularity of the sport since the pandemic and the rise of Luke Littler, the teenage prodigy. The interest is so great that Barry Hearn, the sports promoter, believes darts could "be bigger than golf" in ten years.

The game's top stars, including Humphries and Littler, are preparing to battle it out at the World Dart Championship that starts in London on Sunday and Nodor has decided that the timing is right to bolster its team with a private equity partner. The terms of the deal are undisclosed but given that Nodor made pre-tax profits of almost £20 million last year and has grown significantly this year, the family owners will receive a big sum for their shares.

Vince Bluck, the managing director, and his wife Fiona, the commercial director, are reinvesting and staying with the business, which was set up by Vince's father, a Ford motor company engineer, in 1973. Vince Bluck's younger brother, Alex Bluck, who runs the product development and manufacturing side of the business, is retiring.

The company posted revenues of £48 million last year and is understood to be approaching £70 million this calendar year. The three "arrows" in the "lipstick" performance (a 180 score) is down to a shift in its market, from the game being played in pubs to boards and darts landing in people's homes. Players even compete remotely against each other, using scoring apps, Vince Bluck said.

His company is eyeing the digitisation of the game, with more sophisticated boards and apps, as one area for growth.

The origins of darts are thought to be in the 15th century with English archers throwing broken arrows at blocks of wood in between battles.

At the turn of the 20th century, darts was played on elm boards. These had to be soaked each night to repair the holes. Ted Leggatt, the founder of Nodor, came up with "no odour" modelling clay in 1919 and applied the new material to a dartboard. That idea did not take off but his patented "bristle" version, developed with a Kent publican using rope ends, did. The "clock" pattern dartboard emerged as the global standard in the 1930s. After the war, Harry Kicks, a rival maker, launched his own boards, drawing on wife's name, Winifred Maud, for his brand: Winmau, pronounced "Win-more".

John Bluck started his business in the 1970s after realising that a set of premium tungsten darts, typically selling for £30, was out of reach for most of its target market, working men. He used his knowledge of engineering developed at Ford's factory in Bridgend to develop a lower-cost dart that could be made more efficiently. Such was the heat required to melt the tungsten, as he worked on



Vince Bluck, left, managing director of

his prototypes using a homemade furnace in his garage, it drew so much power from the local grid that the surrounding street lights in Bridgend would dim, his son recalls.

Gill Bluck, John's wife, went through the Yellow Pages in the local library to identify all the pubs, darts and sports clubs around the country and sent out flyers. The response was overwhelming, Vince Bluck recalls: "She used to handwrite tens of thousands of envelopes using the names and addresses in the Yellow Pages. It took off overnight. They couldn't make enough, dispatch enough. They would go down to the local post office and come back with sacks full of orders, cheques, cash and postal orders every day." The Red Dragon darts



T ANNUAL GUIDES

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DIMITRIOS LEGAKIS/ATHENA

# My aloe vera and the lesson it offers for our economy

**Caroline Plumb**



I have a confession to make: I am a terrible gardener. More specifically, I have an appalling track record of keeping houseplants alive. I forget to water them for weeks and then panic and try to compensate for the lack of attention.

As any horticulturalist knows, this approach is a recipe for disaster. You cannot tip a bucket of water over a withering plant and expect to see any growth. The only way to produce something healthy is through daily care and gradual improvement.

I wonder if Rachel Reeves keeps house plants. The chancellor's first budget felt like the economic equivalent of drenching a parched aloe vera and hoping it results in growth. The sweeping tax hit on business will fund vast investment in public services and infrastructure, but at what cost to the private sector? And what confidence do we have that the spending plans will stimulate the economy?

The Office for Budget Responsibility doesn't have much faith. It concluded that the budget measures are unlikely to increase economic growth over the next five years. This view seems reflected by the owners of small and medium-sized businesses I listen to — the feeling among owners and entrepreneurs remains pretty bleak.

So where from here? How does business regain confidence? I think most company owners and chief executives believe in the need to rebalance investment, and many are supportive of tax rises to invest in public services. But without a vision and some clear signals that business-friendly conditions lie ahead, the prospects for economic growth are about the same as for my poor houseplants.

The role of any business leader is to articulate a vision, instil confidence among colleagues, then set out a plan for getting to where you want to be. There needs to be some excitement, some cause for optimism. You can't cut, apologise or tax your way to success.

Of course, when times are tight and growth seems uncertain then the role is a tricky balance of instilling confidence in the direction while being demanding about controlling spending. You can sail stormy seas if there is a destination and a convincing picture of why it's worth sailing there.

Unfortunately, stormy seas are difficult to navigate with policies such as the hike to employers' national insurance. The impact of this increase is in effect to tax people and encourage investment in

assets. Full expensing on capital allowances means you can buy a laptop, or piece of machinery, or a robot, and offset it all against tax. If you employ people to do that job then the future national insurance increase coupled with new workers' rights legislation suddenly makes it a lot more expensive. Either intentionally or otherwise, these policies encourage investment in automation, technology and offshoring. If it is people versus machines, it is a clear win for the machines when it comes to tax.

To level the playing field for "Team Humans", businesses can start to think more creatively about how they reward employees: perhaps more use of tax-efficient salary sacrifice to provide pensions, electric vehicles, cycle-to-work and share incentives.

The challenge then is one of both growth and efficiency. And when you are spending money, especially if you are spending £40 billion, expect to have all eyes on how that money is being spent. This, perhaps, is the other worry for the businesses being taxed today — an uncertainty around whether the money being raised is going to be invested well.

One solution is to invest carefully and in stages rather than spend too fast. Start-ups and growing companies are used to raising money from outside investors in "rounds" — seed, series A, series B, etc. Each one with larger bets after milestones are met and the investment thesis proven.

Sir Keir Starmer seems to like milestones too, having used the word repeatedly in setting out his six targets for the country, from building homes to reducing NHS waiting times. I doubt there can be many people who aren't behind these outcomes. There is

clearly a plan to spend; now to show that it will be done efficiently.

So Starmer has set out the strategy for the cost side of the profit and loss account, but what is the plan for the top line? How will the investments deliver growth or raise our dire productivity? Absent an articulation of this, it is hard to see how business confidence can be restored.

If you squint hard and look for silver linings, one potential positive is that during difficult times, tough decisions come into clear focus. Things you might have been putting off because they are uncomfortable suddenly become urgent, and that is generally a very good thing for efficiency.

That is a crumb of comfort, but brings me back to my horticulture problems. What I really need is a good gardener, someone I feel confident will nurture my previously neglected plants. Please think twice before tipping a bucket of water over my aloe vera.

Caroline Plumb is a serial entrepreneur and chief executive of Gravita, a tax, accountancy and advisory firm



Nodor Group, and Fiona, his wife, the commercial director, are staying, while Alex Bluck is retiring; Luke Humphries, below

company that John and Gill Bluck built proved such a success that in 1983 it bought Nodor, and then, in 2001, its rival Winmau.

Production of the dartboards and darts moved to Kenya in the 2000s to be closer to raw materials and reduce operating costs.

Nodor produces 30,000 sets of darts and 20,000 dartboards a week from its factories in Kenya, all managed from its head office in Bridgend, where it employs 100 of its 1,000-strong team.

All the recent world champions use its darts, from Humphries, through to Michael van Gerwen, Peter "Snakebite" Wright and Gerwyn "the Iceman" Price. Little, the 17-year-old who won the World Series of Darts finals this year, uses Target darts, made by a rival company based in Harlow, Essex.

Bluck is looking forward to the return of the ITV show *Bullseye* this Christmas for a special presented by Freddie Flintoff, the former cricketer. The game show, fronted between 1981 and 1995 on a Saturday evening by the late Jim Bowen, drew 20 million viewers at its peak. Nodor and

Winmau boards and darts featured on the show. "It was a huge, huge rivalry between the two companies," says Bluck, 53, who joined his father in the business in 1993.

Vince Bluck recalls one order from Philip Morris, the tobacco company, in the 1970s that resulted in Nodor delivering 500,000 dartboards to America over two years, all in the Marlboro cigarette colours. In Britain, boards with Hamlet Cigar branding could be found in pubs and clubs. Today, trendy brands such as Supreme, the youth street fashion label, sell branded dartboards.

Bluck said Nodor had been self-financed and built through "hard work", with the needs of the business blurring with family life. "It is all-consuming," he said.

Bluck has set up a base in Dallas, Texas, and expects the private equity firm to be able to help them do more there.

"The US is one of our key target markets. We have got to where we have with sheer determination ... To get to the next level we need that expertise that a major player like Inflexion can bring to the table."

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Business

EQUITY PRICES

**Dividend yields** Please note dividend yields are supplied by ICE Data Services. The yield is the sum of a company's annual 12-month dividend payments divided by the last day's closing share price.  
**12-month high and low** High/low prices for UK equities and investment trusts are based on intra-day figures.

| Mkt cap (million)             | Company               | Price (p) | Wkly (%) | Yldt (%) | P/E   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-------|
| <b>Automobiles &amp; Part</b> |                       |           |          |          |       |
| 1,039.27                      | Aston Martin Lag      | 111       | + 5      | ...      | -3.6  |
| <b>Banking &amp; Finance</b>  |                       |           |          |          |       |
| 2,593.61                      | abrdn                 | 140½      | ...      | 10.4     | ...   |
| 3.00                          | Acuity RM             | 2         | ...      | ...      | -1.4  |
| 8,331.49                      | Admiral               | 2720      | + 157    | 3.9      | 24.5  |
| 6.02                          | ADVF                  | 13        | + 1½     | ...      | -4.5  |
| 1,902.15                      | AJ Bell               | 460½      | - 14     | 2.7      | 22.5  |
| 64,126.20                     | AMC Corp              | 2965½     | - 1153   | 0.7      | ...   |
| 149.32                        | Arbutnot              | 922½      | - 7½     | 5.1      | 4.1   |
| 1.56                          | Argo Group            | 4         | ...      | ...      | -0.1  |
| 1,225.91                      | Ashmore Group         | 172       | - 3      | 9.8      | 12.3  |
| 46,518.80                     | Australia & NZ        | 1562      | - 35½    | 6.9      | 13.9  |
| 12,946.50                     | Aviva                 | 483½      | - ½      | 7.1      | 12.8  |
| 60,111.70                     | Banco Santander       | 388       | + 23½    | 3.4      | 23.4  |
| 2,051.97                      | Bank of Georgia       | 4615      | - 70     | 5.0      | 5.2   |
| 38,178.60                     | Bardays               | 264½      | + 1      | 3.1      | 9.6   |
| 0.89                          | Blue Star Capital     | 0         | ...      | ...      | -0.1  |
| 278.07                        | BP Marsh & Pines      | 750       | + 30     | 1.4      | 6.5   |
| 3.19                          | Braveheart Inv Grp    | 5         | +        | ...      | -1.9  |
| 3,055.29                      | Bridgepoint Grp       | 371½      | + 25½    | 2.4      | 21.3  |
| 392.58                        | Chesona               | 260       | - 8      | 9.3      | 21.0  |
| 190.55                        | City of London Grp    | 376       | - 14     | 8.8      | 13.7  |
| 343.41                        | Close Bros            | 228½      | + 4½     | ...      | -3.8  |
| 790.87                        | CMC Markets           | 285½      | + 9      | 3.6      | 17.1  |
| 27,943.00                     | Deutsche Bank         | 1400½     | + 66     | 2.7      | 15.8  |
| 3,267.98                      | Direct Line Ins Grp   | 249½      | + 14½    | 2.4      | 15.7  |
| 916.30                        | EPC-Hermes Hldgs      | 62½       | - ½      | ...      | ...   |
| 44.51                         | EF S Special Opes     | 151       | - 4      | ...      | -0.84 |
| 8.28                          | Fidus                 | 70        | ...      | 1.4      | 10.1  |
| 104.69                        | Forexint Ventures VCT | 95½       | ...      | 2.2      | 2.7   |
| 55.05                         | Frankel Topping       | 43        | - 1      | 3.2      | 30.7  |
| 443.06                        | Georgica Capital      | 1120      | - 62     | - 62     | - 2.6 |
| 157.92                        | H&T Group             | 359       | - 1      | 4.9      | 7.4   |
| 66.72                         | Hansard Global        | 48½       | + 1½     | 9.2      | 12.8  |
| 5,186.67                      | Hargreaves Lans       | 1093½     | ...      | 4.0      | 17.7  |
| 168.79                        | Hellas U/W            | 233       | + 14     | 2.6      | 10.8  |
| 3,827.27                      | Hiscox                | 1126      | + 76     | 2.6      | 7.0   |
| 133,840.00                    | HSBC                  | 743½      | + 10½    | 6.4      | 8.2   |
| 3,434.44                      | IG Group              | 966½      | + 9      | 4.8      | 12.2  |
| 438.23                        | Impax Asset Mgmt      | 330½      | - 3      | 8.4      | 11.6  |
| 6,411.34                      | Intermediate Cp       | 2206      | + 88     | 3.6      | 13.3  |
| 288.23                        | Intl Personal Fin     | 131½      | - 1      | 8.1      | 6.1   |
| 2,338.03                      | Intl Public P'ships   | 124½      | - 1½     | 6.7      | 2.0   |
| 3,780.65                      | Investec              | 586       | + 15½    | 6.1      | 5.6   |
| 7.07                          | Investment Co         | 385       | + 9      | ...      | -8.1  |
| 472.56                        | IP Group              | 48½       | + 4½     | 2.6      | -2.9  |
| 22.14                         | Jarvis Securities     | 49½       | - 1½     | 10.6     | -5.6  |
| 474.41                        | Jupiter Fund Mgmt     | 86½       | + 3      | 7.6      | -34.3 |
| 1,676.47                      | Just Group            | 161½      | + 18½    | 1.4      | 14.3  |
| 1,680.03                      | Lancashire Hldgs      | 659       | + 24     | 11.7     | 6.2   |
| 13,995.70                     | Legal & General       | 237½      | + 16½    | 8.7      | 32.3  |
| 306.51                        | Liontrust Asset Mgmt  | 472½      | + 35     | 15.2     | -66.5 |
| 74.91                         | Livemore Inv Grp      | 45½       | 73       | 7.2      | 7.2   |
| 32,171.60                     | Lloyds Banking        | 53½       | 5.5      | 7.0      | ...   |
| 13.64                         | LMS Capital           | 116½      | 5.5      | ...      | ...   |
| 60,398.70                     | London Stock Exchange | 116½      | + 95     | 1.1      | 81.8  |
| 4,806.10                      | M&G                   | 201½      | + 3½     | 9.8      | -1.2  |
| 2,467.81                      | Man Group             | 207½      | + 2%     | 6.2      | 13.3  |
| 17.66                         | Manx Financial Grp    | 14½       | 3.1      | 3.2      | 3.2   |
| 1.64                          | Marchele Capital      | 1½        | ...      | ...      | -8.6  |
| 625.85                        | Metro Bank            | 93        | - 10½    | ...      | 6.7   |

| Mkt cap (million) | Company               | Price (p) | Wkly (%) | Yldt (%) | P/E  |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------|----------|------|
| 753.97            | Ibstock               | 191½      | + 5      | 2.7      | 35.4 |
| 810.59            | James Halstead        | 194½      | + 14½    | 4.4      | 19.4 |
| 1,119.46          | Keller                | 1534      | + 46     | 3.1      | 12.5 |
| 11,027.80         | Kingspan Group        | 6063½     | + 14½    | 0.7      | 20.8 |
| 4,424.93          | Land Securities       | 594       | - 9      | 6.7      | ...  |
| 134.05            | Life Science REIT     | 38½       | + 1½     | 5.2      | ...  |
| 9.39              | London & Assoc Prop   | 11        | + 1      | ...      | -2.4 |
| 3,855.08          | LondonMetric Prop     | 188½      | - 5½     | 6.1      | ...  |
| 17.68             | Macau Prop Opd Fd     | 28½       | - ½      | ...      | -1.1 |
| 817.09            | Marshall's            | 323       | + 6      | 2.6      | 43.6 |
| 95.08             | Michelmshs Brck       | 101½      | - 3½     | 4.5      | 9.7  |
| 2.75              | Mindfair              | 0½        | ...      | ...      | -0.5 |
| 1,847.01          | Morgan Sindall        | 3850      | + 45     | 3.1      | 15.1 |
| 343.11            | Mountview Estates     | 8800      | - 300    | 6.0      | 12.1 |
| 301.00            | NewRiver REIT         | 880       | + 4      | 8.2      | ...  |
| 61.83             | Palace Capital        | 214       | - 8      | 7.0      | 12.9 |
| 55.64             | Palmer Securities     | 320       | 3.8      | 12.6     | ...  |
| 4,118.85          | Persimmon             | 1287½     | + 29½    | 4.7      | 16.1 |
| 1.71              | Plaza Centers         | 25        | ...      | ...      | -0.1 |
| 3,855.08          | Primary Health Prop   | 94½       | - ½      | 7.3      | ...  |
| 53.19             | Real Estate Inv       | 30½       | + 1½     | 7.4      | -5.6 |
| 1,548.01          | Safestore             | 708½      | - 36     | 4.3      | ...  |
| 1,607.49          | Savills               | 1112      | + 38     | 1.9      | 37.1 |
| 5.81              | Secure Prop Dev & Inv | 4½        | ...      | ...      | 0.8  |
| 10,166.00         | Segro                 | 751       | - 29     | 3.8      | ...  |
| 2,691.48          | Shelfbury Capital     | 137½      | + 1½     | 2.4      | 3.0  |
| 228.04            | SIG                   | 19½       | ...      | ...      | -5.1 |
| 856.21            | SigmaRock             | 76½       | - 1½     | ...      | 38.8 |
| 1,318.34          | Sirius Real Estate    | 87½       | + ½      | 5.8      | 12.0 |
| 39.00             | Smart (U)             | 125       | 2.6      | 2.6      | 29.4 |
| 45.04             | Steppe Cement         | 16        | +        | ...      | 9.2  |
| 4,541.78          | Taylor Wimpey         | 128½      | - 2½     | 7.5      | 13.0 |
| 62.99             | Town Centre           | 130       | - 2      | 3.8      | ...  |
| 1,593.82          | Travis Perkins        | 750       | - 10½    | 1.5      | 41.4 |
| 3,410.93          | Tritax Big Box        | 137½      | - 1½     | 5.5      | ...  |
| 555.08            | Tritax Eurobox        | 68½       | + ½      | 6.2      | ...  |
| 4,130.29          | Unite Group           | 845       | - 37     | 4.3      | ...  |
| 2,220.85          | Vistry Group          | 649½      | + 13½    | 4.8      | 10.4 |
| 390.09            | Warehouse REIT        | 82½       | - 1½     | 7.8      | ...  |
| 1,043.99          | Workspace Group       | 54        | - 19     | 5.2      | ...  |
| ...               | Wynnstay Props        | 710       | 3.7      | 14.1     | ...  |

| Mkt cap (million) | Company           | Price (p) | Wkly (%) | Yldt (%) | P/E  |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|----------|------|
| 29.04             | Portmeirion       | 207½      | - 10     | 1.7      | -3.4 |
| 15.33             | Provest           | 0½        | ...      | ...      | -2.6 |
| 366.99            | PZ Cussons        | 85½       | + 6½     | 4.2      | -6.3 |
| 34.30             | REA               | 78½       | + ½      | ...      | -3.0 |
| 8.89              | Tandem            | 162½      | - 5      | ...      | -7.2 |
| 51.50             | The Character Grp | 227½      | + 1      | 6.9      | 15.2 |
| 290.75            | Trealt            | 475       | + 73     | 1.8      | 14.6 |
| 0.99              | Ultraproduct Grp  | 2½        | + ½      | ...      | 2.6  |
| 114,654.00        | Unilever (NY)     | 4627      | 3.1      | 21.6     | ...  |
| 114,630.00        | Unilever          | 4626      | - 75     | 3.2      | 21.6 |
| 44.81             | Victoria          | 39½       | - 3½     | ...      | -0.4 |

| Mkt cap (million) | Company            | Price (p) | Wkly (%) | Yldt (%) | P/E   |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-------|
| 0.31              | Assoc Brit Eng     | 15        | ...      | ...      | -5.2  |
| 419.38            | Avon Technologies  | 1386      | - 26     | 1.3      | ...   |
| 2,636.69          | Babcock            | 521½      | + 8      | 1.0      | 15.9  |
| 37,107.10         | BAE Systems        | 1229½     | + 2½     | 2.5      | 20.1  |
| 10.56             | Braime A N/V       | 1100      | + 100    | 1.3      | 6.8   |
| 9.36              | Braime Group       | 1950      | 0.8      | 12.0     | ...   |
| 12.27             | Caffrys            | 450       | 2.2      | 10.2     | ...   |
| 41.11             | Cap XX Ltd         | 0½        | ...      | ...      | -0.5  |
| 114.73            | Castings           | 264       | + 8      | 7.0      | 6.9   |
| 21.06             | Checkit            | 19½       | ...      | ...      | -4.6  |
| 477.18            | Cohort             | 1025      | - 5      | 1.4      | 27.1  |
| 40.68             | Dowhurst           | 1100      | 1.5      | 17.6     | ...   |
| 22.03             | Dialight           | 100½      | - ½      | ...      | -1.8  |
| 8.11              | Feedback           | 18½       | - 1½     | ...      | -0.7  |
| 126.35            | Gooch & Housego    | 490       | + 31     | 2.7      | -18.8 |
| 518.26            | Goodwin            | 6900      | + 40     | 1.9      | 30.7  |
| 10,523.80         | Halma              | 2772      | + 64     | 0.8      | 44.7  |
| 1,685.28          | Hill & Smith       | 2095      | + 30     | 2.1      | 24.4  |
| 3.63              | Image Scan         | 2½        | ...      | ...      | -1.7  |
| 4,701.68          | IMI                | 1836      | + 16     | 1.6      | 20.1  |
| 0.23              | Inspire Energy     | ...       | ...      | ...      | -0.5  |
| 557.95            | Judges Sci         | 8400      | 1.2      | 5.6      | ...   |
| 7.70              | LP                 | 57        | 1.8      | 8.7      | ...   |
| 7,328.17          | Melrose            | 549½      | - 5      | 1.0      | -7.5  |
| 756.30            | Monro Advanced     | 266       | + 45     | 1.5      | 16.0  |
| 145.85            | Moxac              | 485       | - 20     | ...      | 37.0  |
| 164.07            | MS Intl            | 1020      | + 30     | 2.1      | 14.4  |
| 1,201.44          | Orford Instruments | 2070      | + 10     | 1.0      | 23.6  |
| 15,295.10         | Phillips Elec      | 2052½     | - 69½    | ...      | -48.5 |
| 0.67              | Pipetronics        | 1½        | + ½      | ...      | ...   |
| 13.73             | Pressure Tech      | 35½       | ...      | ...      | -19.7 |
| 231.468           | Renishaw           | 3180      | + 50     | 2.4      | 23.9  |
| 110.00            | Renold             | 48½       | - 1½     | ...      | 2.0   |
| 49,872.20         | Rolls-Royce        | 586½      | + 27½    | ...      | 20.3  |
| 1.63              | Ross Group         | 0½        | ...      | ...      | -4.6  |
| 2,804.91          | Rotor              | 331½      | - 1½     | 2.2      | 25.1  |
| 61.69             | SD Group           | 59        | - 2½     | ...      | 14.4  |
| 645.90            | Senior             | 154       | + 8½     | 1.6      | 20.5  |
| 146.06            | Severfield         | 49½       | + ½      | 7.5      | 9.5   |
| 6,736.89          | SKF Group          | 1581      | 3.4      | 15.7     | ...   |
| 3,041.94          | Slingstys (HG)     | 300       | ...      | ...      | 13.5  |
| 6,048.94          | Smiths             | 1761      | - 10     | 2.5      | 24.4  |
| 70.45             | Smiths             | 123½      | - 11½    | ...      | 3.5   |
| 160.33            | Solera Enter       | 292       | + 32     | 7.9      | 7.4   |
| 2,557.40          | Spectris           | 2586      | + 56     | 3.1      | 18.4  |
| 5,355.29          | Spirax Group       | 7275      | + 105    | ...      | 22.6  |
| 4.90              | Surface Transforms | 0½        | + ½      | ...      | -0.0  |
| 5.10              | Tanfield           | 3½        | ...      | ...      | -1.81 |
| 382.54            | Thorne FW          | 326       | + 10     | 2.1      | 15.7  |
| 27.40             | Transense Tech     | 180       | + 2½     | ...      | -12.8 |
| 1,104.44          | Vesuvius           | 427       | + 9½     | 5.5      | 9.7   |
| 507.21            | Volex              | 279½      | - 9½     | 1.5      | 16.3  |
| 5,867.23          | Wairer             | 2280      | + 36     | 1.7      | 25.6  |
| 297.92            | XP Power           | 1258      | - 42     | ...      | -27.7 |
| 5.33              | Zytronix           | 52½       | + 1      | ...      | -3.4  |

| Mkt cap (million) | Company             | Price (p) | Wkly (%) | Yldt (%) | P/E   |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|-------|
| 165,171.00        | AstraZeneca         | 10654     | + 42     | 2.2      | 35.4  |
| 7.38              | Cambridge Nutri Sci | 3½        | - ½      | ...      | -31.0 |
| 4,812.91          | Convatec            | 234½      | - 1      | 1.3      | 46.8  |
| 23.95             | Creighton           | 35        | + 1      | 1.3      | -4.6  |
| 1.52              | Delix Medical       | 0½        | ...      | ...      | -0.7  |
| 47.77             | Eco Animal Health   | 70½       | - 1½     | ...      | 45.5  |
| 110.71            | EKF Diagnostics     | 24½       | - 1      | ...      | -46.0 |
| 100.53            | Futura Medical      | 33½       | - ½      | ...      | -15.9 |
| 1,084.29          | Genus               | 1642      | - 74     | 1.9      | ...   |
| 55,710.00         | GSK                 | 1341      | + 9      | 4.5      | 11.1  |
| 1.12              | Gunsynd             | 0½        | ...      | ...      | -0.3  |
| 33,950.10         | Haleon              | 375       | + ½      | 1.7      | 32.9  |
| 4,284.63          | Hikma Pharma        | 1931      | + 7      | 3.2      | 28.6  |
| 2,431.77          | Hutchmed China      | 279       | + 10     | ...      | -2.6  |
| 5.05              | Immunopharma        | 1½        | ...      | ...      | -19.5 |
| 1,145.82          | Indivior            | 862½      | - 22½    | ...      | ...   |
| 12.10             | Inspiration Health  | 13½       | - 1½     | ...      | -1.5  |
| 9.16              | IXICO               | 10½       | - 1½     | ...      | -4.4  |
| 2.97              | IXO Pharma          | 0½        | ...      | ...      | -1.1  |
| 238.79            | NIOX Group          | 60        | - 3      | 1.7      | 23.5  |
| CHF181,830n       | Novartis            | CHF89.81  | - 3.46   | 3.7      | 29.6  |
| 1.37              | Ovoca Inc           | 1½        | ...      | ...      | -0.3  |
| 451.83            | Orford Biomedica    | 426½      | - 2      | ...      | -1.6  |
| 1.47              | Physicians          | 0½        | ...      | ...      | -2.6  |
| 7.85              | Proteome Sciences   | 2½        | ...      | ...      | -3.2  |
| 32,378.00         | Reckitt Benck       | 479       | - 151    | 4.2      | 20.5  |
| 7.01              | RUA Life Sci        | 11½       | + 1½     | ...      | -2.4  |
| 34.93             | Sareum Holdings     | 28        | + ½      | ...      | -6.7  |
| 8,568.93          | Smith & Neph        | 980       | - 17     | 3.0      | 31.8  |
| 898.91            | Spire Healthcare    | 22        | - 2½     | 0.9      | 42.4  |
| 9.51              | Synalgen            | 42½       | + ½      | ...      | -1.1  |
| 41.41             | Tissue Regenix      | 58        | + ½      | ...      | -30.4 |
| 15.92             | Totaly              | 0½        | - 1½     | ...      | -5.1  |
| 174.08            | Tristate            | 365       | - 60     | 3.7      | 26.7  |
| 1.99              | Valira              | 1½        | - ½      | ...      | -0.7  |

| Mkt cap (million) | Company        | Price (p) | Wkly (%) | Yldt (%) | P/E  |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|------|
| 1,501.97          | SSP            | 188½      | + 28½    | 1.9      | 55.3 |
| 1.88              | Tasty          | 1         | ...      | ...      | -0.1 |
| 0.49              | Webis Holdings | 0½        | ...      | ...      | -0.6 |
| 753.41            | Wetherspoon JD | 616½      | - 25½    | 1.9      | 15.2 |
| 5,265.32          | Whitbread      | 2988      | + 138    | 3.3      | 18.6 |
| 346.80            | Young & Co A&I | 912       | - 58     | 2.5      | 48.3 |
| 154.05            | Young & Co N/V | 640       | + 2      | 3.5      | 33.9 |

| Mkt cap (million) | Company         | Price (p) | Wkly (%) | Yldt (%) | P/E  |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|----------|------|
| 5.20              | Aeorema Comms   | 54½       | ...      | ...      | 5.5  |
| 20.65             | Altitude Group  | 28½       | - ½      | ...      | 29.1 |
| 16.78             | Arcontech Group | 125½      | + ½      | ...      | 15.7 |
| 7,523.03          | Auto Trader     | 845       | + 6      | 1.2      | 30.0 |
| 546.78            | Bloomsbury Pub  | 670       | + 6      | 2.2      | 16   |

INVESTMENT COMPANIES

| Mkt cap (million)               | Company              | Price Wkly (p) | Ytd%  | P/E       |       |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------|-----------|-------|
| 3.08                            | Bezzant Resources    | 0              | ...   | -0.3      |       |
| 103,102.00                      | BHP Group            | 2032           | - 48  | 5.4 16.6  |       |
| 16.08                           | Border & Shih Pet    | 1%             | - 1%  | -17.6     |       |
| 91.50                           | Bougainville         | 22%            | - 1%  | -57.9     |       |
| 60,461.80                       | BPI                  | 377%           | - 6%  | 6.3 5.5   |       |
| 5.69                            | Cadence Minerals     | 2%             | + 1%  | -1.4      |       |
| 5.86                            | Cadogan Energy       | 2%             | ...   | -6.1      |       |
| 157.56                          | Caledonia Mining     | 820            | - 30  | 5.4 -43.5 |       |
| 71.03                           | Caspian Sunrise      | 3%             | ...   | 8.5       |       |
| 307.06                          | Cent Asia Metals     | 168%           | + 6%  | 10.7 10.5 |       |
| 23.03                           | Chariot Ltd          | 2              | ...   | -1.2      |       |
| 2.83                            | Clontarf Energy      | 0              | ...   | -1.7      |       |
| 57.24                           | Condor Gold          | 28             | + 4   | -26.4     |       |
| 6.53                            | Corcel               | 0%             | ...   | -0.9      |       |
| 3.19                            | Crim Therapeutics    | 9%             | + 1%  | -0.1      |       |
| 644.99                          | DRD Gold             | 74%            | - 2%  | 2.3 11.1  |       |
| 5.81                            | ECR Minerals         | 0%             | ...   | -2.0      |       |
| 2.25                            | Empyrean Energy      | 0%             | ...   | -0.1      |       |
| 3,647.07                        | Endeavour            | 1494           | - 50  | 4.3 -82.8 |       |
| 199.44                          | EnQuest              | 10%            | - 1%  | -0.5      |       |
| 56.58                           | Eurasia Mining       | 2              | + 1%  | -10.4     |       |
| 9.11                            | Euro Oil & Gas       | 1              | ...   | -1.3      |       |
| 711.78                          | Farropa              | 119            | + 37% | -10.5     |       |
| 4,830.34                        | Fresnillo            | 655%           | + 9%  | 1.3 26.4  |       |
| 43.86                           | G3 Exploration       | 28%            | ...   | -6.1      |       |
| 4.88                            | Galatas Gold         | 4%             | ...   | -1.2      |       |
| 5.25                            | GCM Resources        | 1%             | ...   | -3.2      |       |
| 13.59                           | Gen Diamonds         | 9%             | - 1%  | -8.2      |       |
| 3.28                            | Getech               | 2%             | ...   | -0.3      |       |
| 46,118.70                       | Glencore             | 378            | - 2   | 2.7 14.2  |       |
| 10.18                           | Global Petrol        | 0%             | ...   | -4.7      |       |
| 9,833.81                        | Gold Fields          | 1098%          | - 16% | 2.9 ...   |       |
| 13.51                           | Golddot              | 8              | + 1½  | -4.8      |       |
| 7.15                            | Goldstone Res        | 1              | - 1%  | -2.4      |       |
| 949.56                          | Greatland Gold       | 7%             | ...   | -25.0     |       |
| 274.89                          | Griffith Mining      | 150            | + 8   | -23.8     |       |
| 301.85                          | Gulf Keystone        | 139%           | - 9%  | 8.9 -33.6 |       |
| 1,152.39                        | Hochschild           | 224            | + 10  | -28.5     |       |
| 498.12                          | Hunting              | 302            | - 1   | 2.7 5.2   |       |
| 14.78                           | Indus Gas            | 8%             | + 1%  | -0.9      |       |
| 5.02                            | Ironvelli            | 0              | ...   | -1.8      |       |
| 221.51                          | ITM Power            | 35%            | + 1%  | -8.2      |       |
| 141.52                          | Jubilee Metals       | 4%             | ...   | 27.6      |       |
| 1.61                            | Karel Diamond Res    | 1%             | ...   | -6.6      |       |
| 35.34                           | KEFI Gold and Copper | 0%             | - 1%  | -2.9      |       |
| 315.42                          | Kenmare Res          | 353%           | - 6%  | 12.0 3.2  |       |
| 12.83                           | Londore Res          | 4%             | + 1%  | -2.0      |       |
| 1.39                            | Landsowne Oil & Gas  | 0%             | ...   | -2.5      |       |
| 1.71                            | Leeds Group          | 6%             | ...   | -0.4      |       |
| 15.36                           | Lexington Gold       | 3%             | + 1%  | ...       |       |
| 95.92                           | Metals Exploration   | 5%             | - 1%  | -1.2      |       |
| 1.54                            | Native Resources     | 0%             | ...   | 0.0       |       |
| 1.12                            | Nostra Terra         | 0              | ...   | -0.5      |       |
| 6.44                            | Niostrom Oil & Gas   | 3%             | ...   | -0.1      |       |
| 10.97                           | Nirole Resources     | 0%             | ...   | -4.0      |       |
| ...                             | Ormonde Mining       | -              | 1%    | ...       |       |
| 12.68                           | Orossur Mining       | 5%             | + 1%  | -6.9      |       |
| 712.94                          | Pan African Res      | 37%            | + 2%  | 2.6 11.5  |       |
| 272.88                          | Pantheon Res         | 24             | - 1%  | -18.6     |       |
| 14.48                           | Parkmead Group       | 13%            | - 1%  | -2.9      |       |
| 52.05                           | Petra Diamonds       | 26%            | - 7%  | -0.8      |       |
| 1.84                            | Petrel Resources     | 1              | + 1%  | -4.3      |       |
| 25.23                           | Petro Mats           | 1%             | + 1%  | -4.3      |       |
| 56.16                           | Petrofac             | 10%            | - 1%  | -0.1      |       |
| 11.28                           | Plexus Holdings      | 10%            | + 1   | -3.8      |       |
| 306.88                          | Porvair              | 660            | + 6   | 0.9 19.0  |       |
| 27.78                           | Prospec Energy       | 6%             | ...   | -16.8     |       |
| 2.33                            | Proton Motor Power   | 0%             | ...   | -0.2      |       |
| 75.00                           | Quadrise             | 4%             | + 1   | -23.6     |       |
| 4.84                            | Reabold Resources    | 0%             | ...   | -0.6      |       |
| 2.40                            | Red Rock Res         | 0              | ...   | -0.2      |       |
| 22,295.70                       | Rio Tinto Ltd        | 600%           | - 54  | 5.5 12.3  |       |
| 61,693.90                       | Rio Tinto            | 4924           | - 12% | 6.9 10.1  |       |
| ...                             | Rome Resources       | 0%             | ...   | -36.0     |       |
| 76.87                           | Serahi Gold          | 101%           | + 1%  | -14.9     |       |
| 484.52                          | Serica Energy        | 124%           | - 4%  | 18.5 4.3  |       |
| 152,269.00                      | Shell                | 2478           | - 53% | 4.4 11.0  |       |
| 4.22                            | Shuka Minerals       | 7              | - 1%  | -1.7      |       |
| 13.52                           | Sound Energy         | 0%             | ...   | -1.7      |       |
| 10.09                           | Solar Energy         | 7%             | - 1%  | -2.2      |       |
| 16.58                           | Stara Energy         | 0%             | ...   | -7.2      |       |
| 1.94                            | Sunrise Resources    | 0              | ...   | -3.8      |       |
| 6.41                            | Synergia Energy      | 0              | ...   | -15.3     |       |
| 2.60                            | Tertiary Minerals    | 0%             | ...   | -2.3      |       |
| 3.24                            | Thor Energy          | 0%             | ...   | -0.8      |       |
| 107,780.00                      | Total Eng SE         | 4495%          | - 72% | 5.7 6.6   |       |
| 6.67                            | Tower Resources      | 0              | ...   | -3.6      |       |
| 306.06                          | Tullow Oil           | 21             | + 1%  | -3.5      |       |
| 3.25                            | UK Oil & Gas         | 0              | ...   | -0.1      |       |
| 3.05                            | URU Metal            | 185            | + 50  | -0.8      |       |
| 1.76                            | Vast Resources       | 0%             | ...   | -0.0      |       |
| 9.10                            | Westmount Energy     | 0%             | ...   | -1.7      |       |
| 445.55                          | Wood Group (J)       | 64%            | + 11% | -5.1      |       |
| 9.42                            | Woodbois             | 0%             | ...   | -1.1      |       |
| 5.14                            | Xtract Resources     | 0%             | ...   | -8.6      |       |
| 47.27                           | Zephyr Energy        | 2%             | ...   | -16.4     |       |
| Professional & Support Services |                      |                |       |           |       |
| 77.29                           | 1Spatial             | 69%            | + 1   | -63.2     |       |
| 141,910.90                      | 4imprint             | 5040           | - 10  | 3.6 17.0  |       |
| 212.01                          | Andrews Sykes        | 506%           | - 11  | 5.1 12.0  |       |
| 27,897.10                       | Ashtead              | 6400           | + 110 | 1.3 22.3  |       |
| 42.03                           | Asseltech            | 29%            | + 1%  | -1.5      |       |
| 151.62                          | Begbies Traynor      | 9%             | + 7   | 4.2 ...   |       |
| 11,962.40                       | Bunzl                | 3588           | + 30  | 2.0 22.6  |       |
| 300.11                          | Capita               | 17%            | + 1%  | -1.7      |       |
| 4.93                            | CEPS                 | 23%            | + 1%  | -8.9      |       |
| 28.52                           | Christie Group       | 107%           | 0     | -7.3      |       |
| 46,670.10                       | Compass              | 2749           | + 58  | 1.7 42.6  |       |
| 11.32                           | OPP Group            | 123%           | - 1%  | -1.3      |       |
| 12.08                           | Core Security        | 88             | + 10  | 2.6 22.3  |       |
| 54,427.65                       | DCC                  | 5545           | - 180 | 3.6 16.8  |       |
| 219.63                          | De La Rue            | 112            | + 10  | -11.0     |       |
| 14.67                           | Dialex               | 28             | ...   | 5.4 -23.3 |       |
| 6,099.65                        | Diploma              | 4946           | + 86  | 1.3 47.1  |       |
| 694.73                          | DiscoverIE           | 721            | + 97  | 1.7 44.5  |       |
| 423.36                          | Essentra             | 147%           | + 2%  | 25 82.0   |       |
| 34,122.30                       | Experian             | 3710           | - 41  | 1.3 36.0  |       |
| 34,085.60                       | Ferguson Enterp      | 16980          | + 50  | 1.4 ...   |       |
| 30.67                           | FH Group             | 245            | ...   | 28 15.6   |       |
| 181.29                          | Hargreaves Servs     | 550            | + 6   | 6.5 14.6  |       |
| 7,788.83                        | Intertek             | 4826           | + 110 | 2.7 26.2  |       |
| 1,799.28                        | Int'l Workforce      | 168%           | + 2%  | 0.0 -7.9  |       |
| 600.21                          | Johnson Service      | 144%           | + 1%  | 2.2 22.6  |       |
| 45.55                           | Joinme               | 276%           | - 23  | -14.8     |       |
| 706.49                          | Kier Group           | 156            | + 9%  | 3.2 15.8  |       |
| 244.94                          | Latham (J)           | 1215           | + 40  | 2.8 10.8  |       |
| 416.84                          | London Security      | 3400           | + 150 | 3.6 17.9  |       |
| 282.06                          | LSL Property Servs   | 272            | + 15  | 4.2 -7.4  |       |
| 174.76                          | Macfarlane           | 109%           | + 4%  | 3.3 11.6  |       |
| 36.62                           | Maintaid Holdings    | 255            | + 4   | -6.8      |       |
| 5.13                            | Melvyn Intl          | 21             | - 1%  | -35.6     |       |
| 33.38                           | Mears Group          | 364            | - 1%  | 3.9 11.1  |       |
| 1,385.64                        | Mitie Group          | 109            | ...   | 3.9 11.1  |       |
| 2.50                            | MobilityOne          | 2%             | + 1%  | -1.8      |       |
| 7.27                            | Newmark Security     | 77%            | - 2%  | -54.2     |       |
| 3.01                            | Norman Broadbent     | 4%             | + 1%  | -9.0      |       |
| 7.49                            | Northorn Bear        | 54%            | ...   | 7.3 5.7   |       |
| 76.15                           | NWF Group            | 154            | + 4   | 5.3 8.4   |       |
| 1,175.14                        | PageGroup            | 357%           | - 2%  | 4.6 14.2  |       |
| 44.90                           | PCI-PAL              | 62             | - 4   | ...       | -35.6 |
| 5.62                            | Petabos              | 9%             | ...   | -5.0      |       |
| 2.21                            | PHSC                 | 21%            | - 1%  | 5.8 9.8   |       |
| 4.06                            | PowerHouse Energy    | 1              | ...   | -0.9      |       |
| 120.23                          | Record               | 60%            | - 1%  | 7.6 12.5  |       |
| 796.13                          | Renew Holdings       | 1006           | - 34  | 1.9 19.2  |       |
| 652.53                          | Renewi               | 810            | - 2   | 0.6 -22.7 |       |
| 10,317.80                       | Rentokil             | 408%           | + 14% | 2.2 27.0  |       |
| 349.16                          | Restore              | 255            | - 11  | 2.1 -11.3 |       |
| 245.76                          | Ricardo              | 395            | - 7   | 3.2 ...   |       |
| 244.57                          | Robert Walters       | 338            | - 9   | 7.0 -26.9 |       |
| 8.34                            | Roebuck Food Group   | 16%            | ...   | -2.8      |       |
| 3,462.93                        | RS Group             | 730%           | + 16  | 3.0 18.8  |       |
| 14.29                           | RTC Group            | 105            | ...   | 5.3 8.2   |       |
| 583.31                          | RWS Holdings         | 158%           | + 4%  | 7.7 -22.3 |       |
| 257.57                          | Science Group        | 463            | ...   | 1.7 38.3  |       |
| 1,510.19                        | Serco                | 147%           | - 9%  | 2.4 8.1   |       |
| 155.03                          | Smiths News          | 62%            | + 1%  | 8.2 5.9   |       |
| 22,299.10                       | Smurfit Westrock     | 4287           | - 37  | 2.2 ...   |       |
| 91.67                           | Software Circle      | 23%            | ...   | -25.5     |       |
| 33.95                           | Staffline Group      | 23%            | - 2   | -3.4      |       |
| 482.63                          | Threei               | 356            | - 2   | 4.7 8.4   |       |
| 54.98                           | Synectics            | 309            | + 1   | 1.6 24.1  |       |
| 16.05                           | Thrivision Group     | 9%             | ...   | -5.0      |       |
| 92.17                           | Tribal               | 43%            | - 4%  | 3.0 17.2  |       |
| 31.02                           | Vianet               | 105%           | + 3   | 1.0 -38.8 |       |
| 6.85                            | Westminster          | 2              | ...   | -2.2      |       |
| 762.21                          | ZIGUP                | 337%           | - 42  | 7.8 6.1   |       |
| Retailing                       |                      |                |       |           |       |
| 632.53                          | AO World             | 109            | + 2%  | ...       | 25.4  |
| 3,626.68                        | B&M European         | 361%           | + 14% | 4.1 9.9   |       |
| 181.91                          | Brown (N)            | 38%            | + 1%  | ...       | -     |
| 336.79                          | Card Factory         | 87%            | + 7%  | 5.9 6.7   |       |
| 624.14                          | CVS Group            | 870            | + 20  | 0.9 ...   | -     |
| 327.80                          | DFS Furniture        | 140            | + 1   | 2.9 -37.7 | -     |
| 2,309.56                        | Dunelm               | 1140           | - 4   | 3.8 15.3  | -     |
| 2,873.02                        | Fraser's Group       | 638            | - 98% | ...       | 7.4   |
| 2,820.21                        | Naked Wines          | 2758           | + 56  | 2.4 19.6  | -     |
| 318.76                          | Halfords             | 145%           | - 4%  | 5.5 18.7  | -     |
| 4,639.87                        | Homejoinery          | 844            | + 28  | 2.5 18.2  | -     |
| 3,086.95                        | Indocan              | 777%           | + 7%  | 4.6 11.9  | -     |
| 9.21                            | IQ-AI                | 1%             | ...   | ...       | -4.3  |
| 5,424.15                        | JD Sports            | 104%           | + 2%  | 0.9 13.9  | -     |
| 4,600.67                        | Kingsfisher          | 253%           | + 6%  | 4.9 13.9  | -     |
| 8,034.86                        | Marks & Spencer      | 391%           | + 9   | 0.8 17.9  | -     |
| 24.25                           | Mothercare           | 4%             | + 1%  | ...       | -7.0  |
| 41.89                           | Naked Wines          | 56%            | + 5%  | ...       | -2.3  |
| 12,477.40                       | Next                 | 10000          | - 80  | 2.2 17.4  | -     |
| 2,645.73                        | Ocado                | 317%           | + 1%  | ...       | -8.3  |
| 1,068.78                        | Pets at Home         | 232%           | ...   | 5.6 14.0  | -     |
| 295.32                          | Pinewood Tech Group  | 339            | - 4%  | ...       | -2.9  |
| 166.30                          | Saga                 | 116            | + 2%  | ...       | -1.4  |
| 6,273.81                        | Sainsbury's          | 267            | + 6%  | 4.9 45.3  | -     |
| 1,635.08                        | WH Smith             | 1255           | + 25  | 2.7 24.2  | -     |
| 22.59                           | Sosandart            | 9%             | ...   | ...       | -43.5 |
| 24,758.30                       | Tesco                | 366%           | + 1%  | 3.4 21.9  | -     |
| 78.28                           | Topps Tiles          | 39%            | + 1%  | 6.0 -6.0  | -     |
| 3.61                            | Aferian              | 3%             | ...   | ...       | -0.1  |
| 637.69                          | Alfa Financial       | 216            | - 4%  | 2.5 27.0  | -     |
| 0.02                            | Allied Minds         | 0              | ...   | ...       | -0.0  |
| 188.19                          | Aptitude Software    | 334            | - 3   | 1.6 46.3  | -     |
| 70.53                           | Bango                | 97             | - 2%  | ...       | -10.7 |
| 76.83                           | BATM Adv Coms        | 17%            | + 1%  | ...       | -80.7 |
| 78.13                           | Berkeley Res         | 17%            | - 1%  | ...       | -48.5 |
| 22.26                           | Blackbird            | 5%             | ...   | ...       | -8.6  |
| 119.24                          | Celebrus Tech        | 300            | - 2%  | 1.1 29.6  | -     |
| 46.31                           | Clrata               | 36%            | + 15% | ...       | -1.1  |
| 1.94                            | CloudCo              | 0%             | + 1%  | ...       | -0.9  |
| 2,437.24                        | Computacenter        | 2294           | + 66  | 3.1 13.1  | -     |
| 121.39                          | Concurrent Tech      | 141%           | - 2%  | 0.7 28.4  | -     |
| 110.11                          | Coreco               | 21%            | + 1%  | ...       | -     |
| 814.40                          | Craneware            | 2300           | - 110 | 1.3 87.5  | -     |
| 6.41                            | Crimson Tide         | 97%            | ...   | ...       | -21.7 |
| 34.45                           | CyanCondo Hlds       | 9%             | - 1%  | ...       | -6.8  |
| 1.74                            | Dillistone Group     | 8%             | ...   | ...       | -     |
| 2.61                            | EQTEC                | 0%             | ...   | ...       | -0.0  |
| 348.87                          | FDM Group            | 318            | - 5%  | 9.1 8.5   | -     |
| 568.63                          | FD Technologies      | 2015           | - 5   | ...       | -13.9 |
| 1,262.35                        | Filtronix            | 71             | - 2   | ...       | -49.0 |
| 958.47                          | GB Group             | 379%           | + 1%  | 1.1 -19.8 | -     |
| 35.13                           | Ilbia                | 21             | + 1%  | ...       | -6.9  |
| 10.37                           | Ingenta              | 71%            | - 4%  | 5.7 4.5   | -     |
| 96.26                           | Intercede            | 164%           | + 6   | ...       | -16.0 |
| 93.44                           | Ionat                | 83             | - 6   | 5.2 14.3  | -     |
| 121.49                          | IQE                  | 12%            | + 1%  | ...       | -3.8  |
| 38.47                           | K3 Business Tech     | 86             | + 23% | ...       | -15.9 |
| 191.50                          | LG Electronics       | 1114%          | - 97% | 2.8 ...   | -     |
| 37.54                           | MTI Wireless         | 43%            | - 1%  | 4.4 12.1  | -     |
| 29.48                           | Nanoco Group         | 15%            | + 1%  | ...       | -35.2 |
| 164.30                          | Netal                | 99%            | ...   | 0.9 27.6  | -     |
| 7.68                            | Northamber           | 28             | + 1%  | 2.1 -5.8  | -     |
| 78.43                           | Oxford Metrics       | 60%            | - 1%  | 5.4 ...   | -     |
| 12.32                           | Pennant Intl         | 28%            | + 1%  | ...       | -11.3 |
| 2,301.15                        | Playtech             | 744            | + 15  | ...       | -25.9 |
| 72.79                           | Pulsar Group         | 57             | - 2   | ...       | -6.3  |
| 2,329.67                        | QinetiQ              | 414%           | - 1%  | 2.0 17.1  | -     |
| 72.97                           | RIM                  | 87             | + 8%  | ...       | -2.5  |
| 13,261.50                       | Sage                 | 1316           | + 4   | 1.6 41.0  | -     |
| 140.96                          | Seeing Machines      | 3%             | ...   | ...       | -5.6  |
| 8.58                            | Shenavator Group     | 36             | + 1   | ...       | -4.0  |
| 3,140.50                        | Softcat              | 1572           | - 6   | 3.0 26.3  | -     |
| 4.16                            | Sorted Group         | 54%            | - 2%  | ...       | -48.5 |
| 1,040.98                        | Spirit Comms         | 179%           | + 8%  | 1.7 53.3  | -     |
| 96.20                           | SRT Marine           | 38%            | - 3%  | ...       | -7.1  |
| 20,343.00                       | Tele Ericsson        | 659%           | + 17% | 2.9 -0.0  | -     |
| 6.97                            | Touchstar            | 85             | ...   | 3.5 11.1  | -     |
| 2.37                            | Tracsis              | 530            | - 70  | 0.5 ...   | -     |
| 48.34                           | Triad Group          | 290            | ...   | 2.1 -47.5 | -     |
| 69.06                           | Viair Int'l          | 397%           | + 17% | ...       | 20.0  |
| 60.40                           | Xaar                 | 76             | + 5   | ...       | -27.1 |
| 32.01                           | Xoo Digital          | 32%            | + 1%  | ...       | -1.8  |
| Telecoms                        |                      |                |       |           |       |
| 3,910.68                        | Airtel Africa        | 106            | + 1%  | 4.6 -30.7 | -     |
| 16,675.80                       | BT Group             |                |       |           |       |

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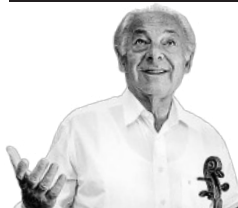
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**Torchbearer for the  
Hungarian violin school**  
**Gyorgy Pauk**  
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## Obituaries

# David Korda

Scion of a Hollywood dynasty and dependable producer whose modesty allowed the careers of egotistical Tinseltown directors to shine

In the early Eighties, Francis Ford Coppola found himself in a bit of a squeeze. He had colossally overspent on his Vietnam War epic *Apocalypse Now* — some \$18 million, or 300 per cent of its original budget, to be precise — and his next project, a cloying musical rom-com called *One from the Heart* (1981) had been a box-office flop. Many producers were wary of working with the maverick film director, whose capricious moods and temper were by now folkloric.

Coppola was eventually pulled from the swamp by a financier and producer called David Korda. As the scion of a notable Hollywood dynasty — his uncle was the great film-maker Sir Alexander Korda — Korda was accustomed to the whims and wild tempests that often accompanied Tinseltown talent. He had built a reputation for being one of the more dependable grown-ups in an industry notorious for its enfants terribles, and it was his careful supervision of Coppola's 1983 teen coming-of-age double-bill *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish* that smoothed the way for the director's eventual comeback.

Korda's mother, Joan Gardner, had been a movie star in the 1930s; his father, Zoltan Korda, had shot one of cinema's greatest action epics, *The Four Feathers*, but Korda often recalled (in his characteristic deadpan style) an anecdote that Gregory Peck told about working with his father on a Hollywood picture called *The Macomber Affair*. When the producer turned up one day during the shoot, Zoltan took out a knife and, sticking the point against the producer's chest, cried: "You get off my set and if you ever come back here again, I'll cut your liver out!"

Zoltan suffered from constant pain after being gassed in the trenches during the First World War and his moods were often sulphurous. As minor an offence as slurping one's soup could trigger outbursts of rage and a familiar childhood experience for Korda was being chased around the house with a stick, although he stressed that his father never actually beat him. "It was more the fear that he instilled," he said.

If such an upbringing encouraged a wary, cautious disposition — strangers often mistook Korda's shy nature for coldness — it also inculcated the sort of temperament needed to weather large Hollywood egos such as Coppola, Terry Gilliam or the Weinstein brothers. When the future Miramax moguls co-directed *Playing for Keeps* in 1986 it was Korda who imposed the quiet authority required to control the production; when Gilliam's epic fantasy *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* threatened to cost more than twice its original budget, Korda spent nearly a year of his life in 1988 imposing a degree of sanity and order.

In contrast to many of the magnates he had grown up with, Korda was not a gambler. A sense of pragmatism was crucial to his long career as head of production for RKO Pictures and Capella International during the 1980s and 1990s, and to a résumé that included the Vietnam War drama *Hamburger Hill* and Wolfgang Petersen's first Hollywood film *Shattered*.

Modest and shy of the limelight, Korda's skill was to provide a stable plat-



The overspend on *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988) was cut back by the frugal Korda, below in later life

form on which wilder spirits might achieve success. He joked with friends that it had been his lot in life to recover some of the millions that his uncle Alexander had lost during a tumultuous career as one of the world's most colourful and spendthrift movie tycoons.

Born David Alexander Korda in 1937, in Hampstead, London, at the outbreak of war, aged three, he moved with his parents from London to Beverly Hills, where they lived in a house on Rexford Drive. His first memory of Los Angeles was his uncle Alex turning up in a large

## The Jungle Book's boy star turned up offering wild animals as gifts

limousine to take him on a tour of the town, then sending him home with a bag of silver dollars.

Other early memories included playing with props from *The Thief of Bagdad* (the 1940 fantasy film his uncle had produced) and *The Jungle Book* (1942), which his father had directed. Sabu, the boy star of both films, would turn up at the family home with wild animals as gifts, including three large ravens that lived in the garage, a monkey kept on the end of a long rope in the garden and a baby jaguar that had to be given to Los Angeles zoo after shredding the curtains and furniture. The extravagance of Tinseltown soon became ordinary life — as a student at Oxford some years later Korda's holiday job was not to work, say, in a bank, but to act as an assistant on the great *Ben-Hur* chariot

race at Cinecittà Studios near Rome.

After the war he returned to England to study at the Lycée in South Kensington and in 1952, aged 15, he attended the International School in Geneva. He was not particularly scholarly — his chief pursuit, one friend recalled, was to have "a bloody good time" — and after an unhappy term at Pomona College in California he abandoned his studies and returned to England, where he attended a crammer school to learn Latin, then an Oxford University matriculation requirement.

In 1957 he won a place to study politics, philosophy and economics at Pembroke College, Oxford, but his main vocation was the theatre. He made two lifelong friends in the actors Vernon Dobtcheff and John Quentin, the latter of whom recalled that Korda was persuaded to act in plays primarily because he was so good-looking (as a young man Korda looked uncannily similar to his father, with an aquiline nose, dark eyes and sharp cheekbones).

He soon shied away from acting because of his natural reticence, however, and after graduating set up a theatre company with the Polish actor and director Vladěk Šeybal, who later played the villain Kronsteen in the Bond film *From Russia with Love*. It was Korda's

father who, in a characteristically generous gesture, funded the venture with money that came from the sale of his stamp collection. Among the performers who appeared for the company were a young Eileen Atkins, Prunella Scales and Jeremy Brett.

The company disbanded in 1961 and two years later he got a job as second assistant on Peter Brook's production of *Lord of the Flies*. "None of us were paid to work on it," recalled Korda, who was determined to make it without the influence of the family name. "It was shot on the now famous island of Vieques [in Puerto Rico]. They were still bombing it then." On his return to England he began working his way up the business "in the traditional English way. You do years of apprenticeship. Unless you've brought cups of tea to the directors for years as third assistant director, you don't get promoted to second director."

Yet early aspirations on becoming a director like his father soon waned — Zoltan's example perhaps made him fear his own temper — and he instead began working for Ray Harryhausen's producer Charles H. Schneer, whose films involved cobbling together thin stories around action footage from old films. Korda's

job was to

comb through the film libraries for material: the films he worked on included an Arthurian epic *Siege of the Saxons* and a British Empire story, *East of Sudan*, for which he plundered sequences from Zoltan's *The Four Feathers*. "I always thought my father must have turned in his grave."

Next Korda produced *The Ruling Class* and *Man Friday* for Peter O'Toole's company Keep Films, but having built his career working on mostly Hollywood-financed films shot in England, during the late 1970s he began supervising independently financed films.

His marriage to the actress Penelope Horner had, by this point, already broken down, but spending long periods away from home put a strain on his relationship with his two children and in 1980 he accepted an offer to work as the London-based production executive for Film Finances, a completion guarantor with which he supervised *Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish*.

As a means of managing even the most maverick talents, it was the calling card that put Film Finances at the heart of the rapid expansion of independent film-making in 1980s America and the company would provide bonds for such films as *The Terminator*, *Romancing the Stone* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*.

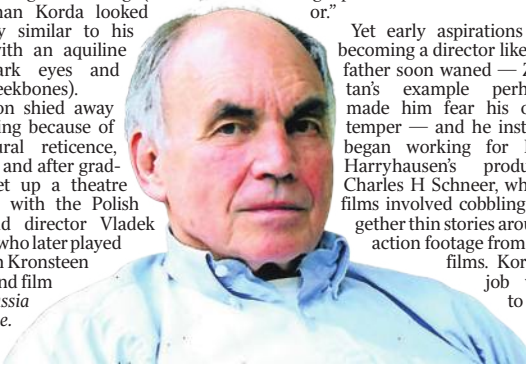
Korda cared little for the increasingly parochial, low-budget film-making of Britain's cottage industry, where during the 1980s Channel 4 had replaced the old combines of Rank and EMI as the most significant force in British production, so the opportunity in 1985 to become head of production of RKO Pictures was an offer he could not refuse. His brief was to take RKO back into making films again and he was in effect running a mini-studio responsible for the development and production of approximately ten films.

Despite some box-office successes, however, there was no runaway hit and in 1987 RKO Pictures was sold off, with Korda returning to Film Finances to try to contain the vast over-expenditure of Terry Gilliam's *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*.

In 1990, with his children now grown up, he moved to Los Angeles, where he became head of production and development for Capella Films. Korda is survived by his son Nik, a production manager ("I did my best to dissuade him from coming into the business," Korda said) and daughter Lerryn, an art director in commercials and music videos (Korda also tried to steer her away from the profession).

Were it not for the demands of the film industry, Korda would likely have devoted more time to his ambition of writing a book about his father, whose complex character came increasingly to fascinate him. Yet to the very last he was defining himself against the towering egos that had dominated his life. The only visible signs of any pride were the four movie posters that decorated his office: *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, Peter Greenaway's *Nightwatching*, which Film Finances guaranteed in 2007 — and, of course, *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish*.

David Korda, film producer and financier, was born on May 26, 1937. He died on September 18, 2024, aged 87



# Gyorgy Pauk

Torchbearer for the Hungarian violin school whose passionate playing and 'sweet silvery tone' put him among the world's best

Gyorgy Pauk was orphaned in Budapest during the Holocaust, defected to the West in his twenties and won an international violin competition in Paris before building a successful career in London. He was among the world's leading violinists, known for his glorious tone and passionate interpretation, and a much-sought after pedagogue, teaching until a few days before his death.

Regarded as a torchbearer for the "Hungarian violin school", Pauk could trace his musical lineage to Joseph Joachim, the 19th-century violinist and friend of Johannes Brahms. He was also a leading exponent of 20th-century Hungarian music, notably Bartók's "difficult" Second Violin Concerto, which accompanied him throughout his career.

Other composers whose music he championed included Witold Lutoslawski, Krzysztof Penderecki and Alfred Schnittke, while among their British colleagues he was well served by Michael Tippett and Peter Maxwell

## Recalling the hunger of war-time, he rarely left home without food

Davies, adopting as his own a concerto that Maxwell Davies had written for Isaac Stern. The critics wrote approvingly of his performances, with The Times commending his "sweet silvery tone and impeccable purity of line" in a Mozart concerto in 1965.

Chamber music was central to Pauk's musical life, including a longstanding partnership with the Hungarian pianist Peter Frankl, whom he first met while playing football as children. In 1973 they formed a trio with the Texan cellist Ralph Kirshbaum that ran for 25 years, culminating in the premiere of *Fourteen Little Pictures* written for them by James MacMillan.

Pauk also played the viola, perform-

ing Brahms quintets with the Takacs Quartet at the Barbican before recording them for Decca in Vienna. His versatility came to the fore during a musical cruise with the English Chamber Orchestra, which had brought timpani but forgot to bring a timpanist for their Mozart piano concerto with Murray Perahia. Pauk agreed to help on the tenuous grounds that Pauken means timpani in German, noting in his memoir *A Life in Music* (2021): "I doubt whether I've ever had to count that many bars in a single evening."

Gyorgy Pauk was born into a Jewish family in Budapest in 1936, the son of Imre Pauk, a manager at the Lustig and Gluck Transportation Company who had married the boss's daughter Magda (née Lustig). He had "no real memories" of his father, who was taken away by the Arrow Cross, or Hungarian SS, in 1942 and starved to death in a labour camp in Ukraine. Two years later his mother suffered a similar fate.

He was raised in the Budapest ghetto by his grandmother, who was under the protection of the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg. His overriding memory was one of hunger and even decades later he did not leave home without fruit, cheese or biscuits, even when staying in the finest hotels.

Having started the violin at the age of five, he resumed lessons after the war. Agnes Heller, the Hungarian philosopher, wrote in *Monkey on a Bicycle* of being at a summer camp in 1948 when "early one morning Gyuri Pauk sneaked out to the forest to play his violin; we followed him and admired his music from our hiding places behind the bushes".

His talent was recognised by the authorities and at the Franz Liszt Music Academy he studied with Zoltan Kodaly and Ede Zathureczky, an associate of Bartók whose name Pauk later gave to his professional chair at the Royal Academy of Music in London.

Pauk made his debut in a Beethoven sonata accompanied by Frankl and at



Despite being a proud Hungarian, Pauk said he was only truly at home in England

the age of 14 he performed Kabalevsky's Violin Concerto on an open-air stage. During one solo performance his E string snapped during Nandor Zsolt's bravura *Valse Caprice*, a crisis that he dealt with "by playing the higher passages on the A string", adding that the feat "only added to the success of that concert". With colleagues from the academy he formed the Pauk Quartet and their recording of Schumann's *Piano Quintet* with Frankl found its way miraculously to a Gramophone reviewer.

In 1955 he was selected to take part in the Long-Thibaud Violin Competition in Paris, but an uncle reported him as a potential defector and he was denied permission to leave Hungary. Over the next couple of years he was permitted to travel, winning competitions in Genoa in 1956 and Munich in 1957, but always returned to Hungary. However, in 1958 he was performing in France at the same time as Frankl and the pair sought political asylum.

Although Pauk enjoyed Paris, he accepted an offer to become co-leader of the Brabant Orchestra in the Netherlands, where he met Zsuzsa (Susie) Mautner, a Hungarian chemistry student working in the Heineken beer laboratory. They were married in 1959 and she survives him with their son Tomi and daughter Kati. A few weeks before their wedding he had another chance at the Long-Thibaud competition, taking first prize with a thrilling performance of Glazunov's Violin Concerto.

Yehudi Menuhin encouraged Pauk and his new wife to settle in London, insisting that it was the centre of the world's music scene. That was brought home in December 1961 when he stepped in at short notice to perform Beethoven's Violin Concerto with the London Mozart Players under Harry Blech in a packed Royal Festival Hall. Just as the orchestra started to play, the shoulder rest slipped from his violin

and clattered to the floor, but fortunately Beethoven's lengthy orchestral introduction gave him time to retrieve the situation.

The following May he made his Wigmore Hall debut, returning there on countless occasions with pianists including Frankl, Geoffrey Parsons and Roger Vignoles. He toured Australia in 1964, recalling with amusement how a radio presenter introduced him as Gregory Peck, and in 1968 he made his Proms debut at the Royal Albert Hall in Mozart's G major Violin Concerto with the Hallé Orchestra conducted by John Barbirolli. He was also supported by members of the Hungarian musical diaspora including Georg Solti, who in 1972 brought him to Chicago.

Pauk returned to Hungary in 1973, encouraged by the pianist Annie Fischer who insisted that he had an obligation to show the music lovers of Budapest what he had achieved since 1958. After one concert a middle-aged lady introduced herself as a distant relative who had survived Auschwitz, leading to an extended family reunion.

His performing career continued until 2007 and at its peak he was giving 80 to 100 concerts a year. Since 1987 he had been a popular teacher at the Royal Academy of Music and he also served on several international competition juries, despite voicing doubts such as: "How can they ever be fair?"

A diminutive and passionate figure with piercing eyes, a receding hairline, and a rich Hungarian accent, Pauk described how he was often asked about his identity. "I was born in Hungary and, as such, I am Hungarian," he wrote. "As a Jew, I cannot deny that Israel holds a special significance for me," he added. However, he concluded that, "above all, Zsuzsa and I are Brits... I know that I am truly at home only in England."

**Gyorgy Pauk, violinist, was born on October 26, 1936. He died after a fall on November 18, 2024, aged 88**

# Shalom Nagar

Israeli executioner of the Nazi Adolf Eichmann who shielded his identity for 30 years — and then celebrated it in later life

Shalom Nagar did not want to be Adolf Eichmann's executioner. The 26-year-old did not volunteer for the job of hanging the architect of Hitler's Holocaust whom he had guarded during his six months in Israel's Ramla prison. He was chosen for the task, and agreed only after he was shown photographs of Nazi atrocities against children. "It so shocked me that I agreed to do what had to be done," he said.

Eichmann was executed in secret a few minutes after midnight on June 1, 1962. Nagar was off duty that day, but he was picked up by his boss as he walked along a street and driven back to the prison. There he was taken to a specially constructed execution chamber where he confronted Eichmann, who had received a last glass of wine and a visit from a priest and was still wearing his plain slippers.

Eichmann refused a blindfold. He was standing on the trapdoor. One of the small group of witnesses claimed the condemned man's final words were "I hope that all of you will follow me", but Nagar never confirmed that. Nagar said he looked Eichmann in the eye, then, "I pulled the handle and he fell, dangling from the rope."

He was left hanging for an hour to make sure he was dead. Nagar was then ordered to take down the body. "For years I had nightmares of those mo-

ments," he recalled decades later. "His face was white as chalk, his eyes were bulging and his tongue was dangling out. The rope rubbed the skin off his neck, and his tongue and chest were covered in blood. When I lifted him, all of the air from the inside came out and a terrible noise came out of his mouth. I had a feeling that the angel of death was coming to take me."

Nagar then had to push the corpse across a courtyard on a trolley to an incinerator specially built by a man whose family had all died in concentration camps, their remains burnt in ovens. "I was trembling so much that the body was rocking from side to side... I ultimately managed to push him in and shut the doors," he said. An Auschwitz survivor lit the flames.

After Israel's first and only judicial execution, Eichmann's ashes were swiftly buried at sea so they would not defile the Holy Land, but for years afterwards Nagar suffered from nightmares and post-traumatic stress disorder. In the 1980s he was asked to execute another Nazi war criminal, Ivan

**Nagar's role was revealed by a radio station in 1992**

Demjanjuk, but refused, saying he had "had enough trauma" (Demjanjuk was ultimately acquitted). He embraced Orthodox Judaism and — at least for the next 30 years — anonymity.

Shalom Nagar was born in Yemen in or about 1936, and orphaned while still young. He emigrated to Israel as a boy, shortly after the founding of the Jewish state. He served as a paratrooper with the fledgling Israel Defence Forces, then worked for the border police before joining the prison service.

Eichmann was the logistical mastermind of the Final Solution. He escaped to Argentina a few years after the war, but was tracked down and abducted by Mossad agents in 1960. Eichmann was subsequently sentenced to death for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and Nagar was one of his 22 hand-picked guards during the six months he spent in Ramla (now Ayalon) prison in central Israel while awaiting execution.

Nagar stood guard in a room right outside Eichmann's second-floor cell to ensure he did not commit suicide. He was himself watched by another guard in an outer room who was in turn watched by a

duty officer in case any of them sought to attack the prisoner.

Eichmann's meals were delivered in sealed containers, and one of Nagar's tasks was to taste the food to check it was not poisoned. "If I didn't drop dead after two minutes, the duty officer allowed the plate into his cell," Nagar recalled. "For six months I guarded him, facing his cell in the innermost room, standing in close proximity to where he rested, wrote his memoirs, ate and used the facilities. He was extremely clean and washed his hands compulsively."

One night Nagar bent the rules and allowed a fellow guard who had survived a concentration camp to take his place. The guard rolled up his sleeve to expose the number tattooed on his arm and told Eichmann: "Once I was in your hands, and now the tables have turned. Look who has the last laugh." Eichmann shouted back in German.

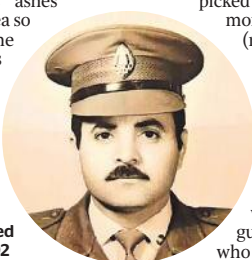
The streets around the prison were cordoned off before Eichmann's execution. Nagar had to conceal his task from his wife when he was picked up by the police van and taken to the prison. The execution was announced only after the event, and Nagar's identity as the hangman was kept secret for fear of reprisals.

After retiring from the prison service he went to live in Kiryat Arba, an Israeli settlement on the West Bank. He stud-

ied to become a ritual slaughterer of kosher meat and spent his days at a kollel, an institute for studying the Torah. In 1992, an Israeli radio station discovered his role as Eichmann's executioner while researching a programme on the 30th anniversary of the Nazi's death. By then Nagar no longer feared reprisals and gave several interviews. "I was involved in the great mitzvah of wiping out Amalek," he said, "mitzvah" meaning a good deed and Amalek being a reference to Israel's enemies.

In 2004 he agreed to give an interview to a German television station provided it was conducted in his noisy, bustling, disorderly kollel. At the end, the interviewer asked why he had chosen that location. "I don't want you to think that our people only survived. I want you to know that our people thrived," Nagar replied. "I want to show you those books, those texts, that language, that tradition, those values, that faith which Hitler and Eichmann wanted to decimate. I want to show you that we're not just surviving as a broken people. Rather, we're here with those books that they burnt by the hundreds of thousands. We're here with those traditions... They're alive. We're alive."

**Shalom Nagar, Adolf Eichmann's executioner, was born in 1936. He died on November 26, 2024, aged 88**



## Law Report

# Power to suspend inquiry until end of criminal trial

Supreme Court  
Published December 8, 2024

In re JR222

Before Lord Lloyd-Jones, Lord Burrows, Lord Stephens, Lord Richards and Lady Simler  
[2024] UKSC 35  
Judgment October 30, 2024

A public inquiry could not be suspended to allow for related criminal proceedings or investigations to be completed unless the relevant government minister was satisfied that it was "necessary" for him to do so.

The Supreme Court so held in dismissing an appeal by the applicant (given the cypher JR222) against the order of the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland (Lady Chief Justice Keegan, Lord Justice Treacy and Lord Justice Horner) ([2023] NI 333) affirming the order of Mr Justice Colton ([2022] NIKB 3) that dismissed her claim for judicial review of the refusal by the minister of health for Northern Ireland to suspend the Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry (the hospital inquiry) into alleged abuse of vulnerable patients by some members of staff at the hospital.

The applicant, a former nurse at the hospital who was facing criminal charges for alleged abuse of patients, claimed that if the hospital inquiry continued to publicly examine allegations of abuse at the hospital in parallel with her trial she could not have a fair criminal hearing. The minister of health, however, decided that as anonymity orders and other safeguards had been put in place by the hospital inquiry, it was not necessary to suspend it.

By section 13(1) of the Inquiries Act 2005 a United Kingdom or devolved government minister: "may at any time, by notice to the chairman, suspend an inquiry for such period as appears to him to be necessary to allow for — (a) the completion of any other investigation relating to any of the matters to which the inquiry relates, or (b) the determination of any civil or criminal proceedings ... arising out of any of those matters."

**John F Larkin KC and Natasha Fitzsimons** for the applicant; **Peter Coll KC, Philip McAteer and Leona Gillen** for the Minister of Health; **Sean Doran KC and Denise Kiley** for the hospital inquiry. Aaron Brown (by his father and next friend Glynn Brown) and Bryan McCarr (by his sister and next friend Brigene McNeilly), both former patients, and NP3 (the mother of a former patient, now deceased) intervened by way of written submissions only.

**LORD STEPHENS**, with whom the other members of the court agreed, said that at all times relevant to the proceedings Muckamore Abbey Hospital had provided inpatient assessment and treatment facilities for vulnerable people with severe learning disabilities, mental health needs, and challenging behaviour.

After concerns about alleged inappropriate behaviour towards and the alleged abuse of patients by some staff in the hospital, the minister of health had, in 2020, exercised his power under section 1 of the 2005 act to order the hospital inquiry.

In 2021 the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (the PPS) decided to charge the applicant, along with seven other co-accused, with offences in respect of alleged abuse committed in the course of their employment at the hospital.

The trial of the applicant and her co-accused was but one outworking of a large-scale criminal investigation. There were said to be additional files under consideration by the PPS. It was also said that the investigation by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) had not yet been completed.

In June 2022 the hospital inquiry commenced hearing evidence. The hospital inquiry was still continuing. Its work included — but also extended before and beyond — the timeframe of the prosecutions.

To protect the integrity of the parallel criminal investigation and proceedings, the hospital inquiry, the PSNI and the PPS had taken several detailed measures:

(i) The hospital inquiry had entered into a memorandum of understanding with the PSNI and PPS to provide for co-operation between the three parties. The measures were not static. Rather, they were subject to revision and could be (and had been) adapted.

(ii) The director of public prosecutions had given an undertaking that no oral evidence or written statement drafted for the purpose of giving evidence to the hospital inquiry would be used in evidence against that person in any criminal proceedings or for the purpose of deciding whether to bring such proceedings.

(iii) To date, the hospital inquiry had made some 90 restriction orders, including restricting who could view CCTV footage recording events at the hospital and prohibiting the identification of past and present staff members who had been implicated in abuse of a patient in evidence received by the hospital inquiry.

(iv) The hospital inquiry had required core participants, their relevant employees and legal representatives to sign strict confidentiality undertakings in respect of all material received for inquiry purposes.

(v) The PSNI had appointed senior counsel to engage with and attend the hospital inquiry.

The applicant's solicitors, however, requested that the minister of health use his power under section 13(1)(b) of the Act to suspend the hospital inquiry to protect her right to a fair trial. The minister refused on the basis that it was not necessary to do so to allow for the determination of the criminal proceedings.

The applicant sought and was granted leave to apply for judicial review of the minister's refusal to suspend the hospital inquiry. At that stage the focus of her challenge was on the alleged breach of her right to a fair trial under article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The core of her case was that publicity to the hospital inquiry would prejudice her criminal trial. Those grounds were dismissed by Mr Justice Colton and were not pursued in the Court of Appeal.

It was not until the start of the hearing before Mr Justice Colton that the issue as to the true interpretation of section 13(1) was raised, which was now the sole issue on the appeal. On that issue Mr Justice Colton held that the text of section 13(1) should be read as a whole so that "any suspension imposed by the minister must be necessary before it may be imposed." The Court of Appeal agreed.

His Lordship said that the courts in conducting statutory interpretation were seeking to ascertain the meaning of the words used in a statute in the light of their context and the purpose of the statutory provision.

There were two possible interpretations of section 13(1). As a matter of syntax, it was plausible that, as the applicant contended, the term "for such period as appears to him to be necessary" qualified "for such period" and not "may ... suspend".

An alternative interpretation was that "for such period" was a phrase within a sentence, so that reading the sentence as a whole, necessity applied to both the purposes in section 13(1)(a) and (b) and to the period of suspension.

In agreement with the courts below, his Lordship considered that the true interpretation was that section 13(1) naturally read as one question that had to be considered and answered as a whole. On that basis necessity applied to both the purposes in section 13(1)(a) and (b) and to the period of suspension.

The words used by parliament were consistent with that interpretation. The matter was put beyond all doubt by reference to the legislative debate, where a promoter of the future Act, Lord Evans of Temple Guiting, had addressed the question whether the test of necessity applied to the purposes in section 13(1)(a) and (b): see *Hansard*, House of Lords Debates, January 19, 2005, volume 668, column GC259.

In doing so, Lord Evans did not say that a minister might suspend an inquiry when he considered it desirable or appropriate or prudent for the completion of other related investigations or the determination of any civil or criminal proceedings. Rather, he stated that the provision allowed a minister: "to suspend an inquiry only when it is necessary to allow for the completion of other related investigation or the determination of any civil or criminal proceedings."

That statement (which was a permissible aid to interpretation under the rule in *Pepper v Hart* ([1993] AC 593)) was clear and unequivocal on the point of interpretation which the court was considering.

Moreover, applying the test of necessity advanced the statutory purpose of the hospital inquiry that included allaying the high degree of public concern that the most vulnerable members of society should not be abused in institutions in Northern Ireland that were there to protect and care for them.

Solicitors: **McCann & McCann**, Belfast; **Departmental Solicitor's Office**, Belfast; **Solicitor to the Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry**, Belfast.

at le Bourget Airport by His Majesty's Ambassador to the French Republic (Her Excellency Dame Menna Rawlings).

His Royal Highness afterwards called upon President Donald Trump (President-elect of the United States of America) at the residence of His Majesty's Ambassador to the French Republic.

The Prince of Wales subsequently called upon Dr

Jill Biden (wife of the serving President of the United States of America) at the residence.

His Royal Highness, on behalf of The King, this evening attended the re-opening ceremony of Notre-Dame Cathedral de Paris.

The Prince of Wales later arrived at Royal Air Force Northolt from France. Mr Ian Patrick, Mr Lee Thompson, Miss Edwina Iddles and Lieutenant Commander James Benbow RN were in attendance.

## Births, Marriages and Deaths

To book a Birth, Marriage or Death announcement in the Register, visit: [newsukadvertising.co.uk](http://newsukadvertising.co.uk) for help, please call 020 7782 7553 or email [BMDs@thetimes.co.uk](mailto:BMDs@thetimes.co.uk)

**AND** when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God had commanded. Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born. Sarah said: "God has brought me joy and laughter. Everyone who hears about it will laugh with me." Genesis 21:4-6 (GNB)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

### Deaths

**TAN** Joan Mary (née Boger) passed away peacefully in her sleep on 25th November 2024, aged 102. Beloved mother of Christopher and Jonathan, she will be deeply missed by family and many friends.

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THE TIMES

## Legal Notices

### IN PARLIAMENT

SESSION 2024-2025

### MALVERN HILLS BILL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that application is being made to Parliament by the Malvern Hills Conservators for leave to introduce a Bill ("the Bill") under the above name or short title. The working name of the Malvern Hills Conservators is the Malvern Hills Trust ("the Trust"). The Trust, which is a registered charity, has statutory responsibilities relating to the Malvern Hills ("the Hills") as set out in the Trust's existing legislation: the Malvern Hills Act 1884, the Malvern Hills Act 1909, the Malvern Hills Act 1924, the Malvern Hills Act 1930 and the Malvern Hills Act 1995 ("the Malvern Hills Acts").

The following is a concise summary of the purposes of the Bill:

- to define the area of the Hills over which the Trust exercises its functions;
- to rename the Malvern Hills Conservators as the Malvern Hills Trust;
- to set out the charitable objects of the Trust;
- to set out (subject to the provisions of the Bill) the public's right of access to the Hills on foot or horseback for the purpose of open-air recreation, set out the duty on the Trust to keep the Hills unenclosed and unbuilt on as open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public, and give the Trust powers to enable them to comply with that duty and to protect the Hills;
- to alter the constitution of the Trust, making provision for the Trust's board to consist of a mix of elected trustees and appointed trustees, who would be appointed and elected in regular cycles;
- to set out the process for the appointment of appointed trustees, including by establishing a nomination committee to recommend appointments;
- to set out the process for the election of elected trustees, including by specifying the requirements for candidates to stand and electors to be eligible to vote, to provide for postal and electronic voting in elections, to enable the Trust to make rules about the conduct of elections, and to make provision about legal proceedings relating to elections;
- to make provision about the conduct of trustees and the liability of trustees and employees of the Trust;
- to make provision about the administration and management arrangements of the Trust, including provision about trustees' benefits and interests, meetings, decision making, committees and delegation;
- to continue the Trust's existing powers to issue a levy under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Levying Bodies (General) Regulations 1992;
- to make other provision about financial matters, including provision about the Trust's use of capital money and income, the appointment of auditors and publication of accounts and powers to borrow and give security for borrowing;
- to enable the Trust to regulate and manage the Hills and the exercise of rights of common on the Hills, and to regulate and prohibit access to the Hills and fence parts of the Malvern Hills for specified reasons, subject to safeguards, and to make provision about occupiers' liability;
- to enable the Trust to fence or otherwise enclose common land to prevent animals straying from it, subject to safeguards;
- to enable the Trust to regulate horse riding and prevent unauthorised access by motor vehicles, take measures to prevent nuisances and preserve public order, make and maintain paths and ways, and authorise persons to construct and maintain roads or ways over the Malvern Hills in specified circumstances and with safeguards;
- to enable the Trust to acquire and plant trees and shrubs on the Malvern Hills; provide and regulate parking places, provide various types of facilities on the Malvern Hills, allow certain parts of the Hills to be set aside for activities including games, sports and exhibitions, to license refreshment stalls and other commercial activities on the Hills and remove and dispose of things (including vehicles) placed or left on the Hills without authority;
- to continue the Trust's powers to make and enforce byelaws in furtherance of the Trust's objects including powers to enforce byelaws by fixed penalty and to seize and impound animals;
- to set out the Trust's powers to acquire, dispose of and lease land and make agreements in relation to land, to make provision about ancillary land, grant easements for utilities, to make provision about St. Ann's Well, require notice to be given of any quarrying on the Hills, and to enable the Trust to use loose natural materials located on the Hills;
- to provide a general power for the Trust to do any lawful thing to further the Trust's objects, subject to the other provisions of the Bill and to certain other limitations;
- to enable the Trust to exercise specified miscellaneous powers in furtherance of its objects, including powers to employ staff, raise funds, enter into contracts and establish a supporters' organisation;
- to repeal the Malvern Hills Acts 1884 to 1995 and make consequential repeals and amendments to other legislation, and provide protective provisions for certain bodies.

On and after 4th December 2024, a copy of the Bill may be inspected and copies thereof obtained at the price of £3.50 each at the offices of the Malvern Hills Trust, Manor House, Grange Road, Malvern, WR14 3EY, at the offices of Herefordshire Council, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford, HR1 2LX and at the office of the undermentioned Parliamentary Agents. A copy of the deposited map referred to in the Bill may also be inspected at those locations on and after that date.

Objection to the Bill may be made by depositing a Petition against it in the office of the Clerk of the Parliaments, House of Lords or the Private Bill Office of the House of Commons. If the Bill originates in the House of Commons the latest date for depositing such a Petition in the Private Bill Office of that House will be 30th January 2025. If the Bill originates in the House of Lords the latest date for depositing such a Petition in the Office of the Clerk of the Parliaments in that House will be 6th February 2025.

Information about the deposit of such Petitions may be obtained from the Private Bill Office, House of Commons (tel: 020 7219 3250, email: [prbhc@parliament.uk](mailto:prbhc@parliament.uk), [www.parliament.uk/bills](http://www.parliament.uk/bills)), the Office of the Clerk of the Parliaments, House of Lords (tel: 020 7219 8261, email: [hlprivatebills@parliament.uk](mailto:hlprivatebills@parliament.uk), [www.parliament.uk/bills](http://www.parliament.uk/bills)), or from the undermentioned Parliamentary Agents (tel: 020 7405 4600, email: [enquiries@sharepritchard.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@sharepritchard.co.uk), [www.sharepritchard.co.uk](http://www.sharepritchard.co.uk)).

Dated 2nd December 2024

SHARPE PRITCHARD LLP  
Elm Yard, 10-16 Elm Street, London, WC1X 0BJ  
Parliamentary Agents

## Court Circular



### Kensington Palace

7th December, 2024  
The Prince of Wales this afternoon departed Royal Air Force Northolt for France and was received later upon arrival

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- Day 5 Cadillac, France**  
*Cruise the Garonne River into Cadillac* (B, L, D)
- Day 6 Cadillac, France ★ Wine Tasting ★**  
★ **Freechoice** ★: Venture into the Sauternes region for a delicious wine tasting at a prestigious Château, or cycle to the Grand Cru Classé estate of Château Mayne la Merci for a tasting. Visit Roquetaillade Castle, or visit Château Toulouse-Lautrec (B, L, D)
- Day 7 Bordeaux, France**  
★ **Freechoice** ★: Shop with a Chef at a local food market or enjoy a guided tour of Bordeaux, or choose to cycle the historic regions of the city. Back on board, enjoy a tasting of fresh oysters delivered straight from the waters of Arcachon Bay  
★ **Enrich** ★: This evening, enjoy after-hours access to Les Bassins de Lumière, an impressive art installation (B, L, D)

- Day 8 Bordeaux – Bourg, France**  
★ **Freechoice** ★: Journey to Arcachon and join a walking tour with a visit to local markets, or stay in Bordeaux and visit the Cité du Vin Museum (B, L, D)
- Day 9 Bourg, France**  
★ **Freechoice** ★: Discover the Carriages Museum in Bourg Castle. Or, explore the town of Cognac before a tasting at the acclaimed property of Rémy Martin (B, L, D)
- Day 10 Blaye – Bordeaux, France**  
★ **Freechoice** ★: Enjoy a guided walking tour, or a more active walk through the Citadel of Blaye. Or, explore the stunning fairytale Château de La Roche Courbon on a guided tour. Alternatively, join a 30km roundtrip cycle along the Captain's Road (B, L, D)
- Day 11 Bordeaux, France**  
Disembark and transfer to the airport for your return flight to London (B)

Itinerary is based on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2025 departure date. Meals are as stated:  
B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner



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**Today** Showery rain in the south but drier, chillier and sunnier further north. Max 10C (50F), min -6C (21F)

**Around Britain**

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy, du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, ss=sun, t=thunder  
\*\*previous day \*\*=data not available

|                   | Temp C |    | Rain mm | Sun hr* |
|-------------------|--------|----|---------|---------|
| midday yesterday  |        |    |         |         |
| Aberdeen          | 7      | D  | 6.8     | 0.0     |
| Aberporth         | 8      | PC | 0.0     | 0.0     |
| Anglesey          | 8      | C  | 0.0     | 0.0     |
| Aviemore          | 4      | R  | 7.8     | 0.0     |
| Barnstaple        | 8      | PC | 0.0     | 0.0     |
| Bedford           | 6      | R  | 10.4    | 0.0     |
| Belfast           | 8      | S  | 0.2     | 1.1     |
| Birmingham        | 6      | R  | 3.2     | 0.0     |
| Bournemouth       | 8      | PC | 0.2     | 0.0     |
| Bridlington       | 8      | C  | 13.0    | 0.0     |
| Bristol           | 7      | C  | 0.0     | 0.0     |
| Cambridge         | 9      | C  | 0.2     | 0.0     |
| Cardiff           | 8      | S  | 0.0     | 0.0     |
| Edinburgh         | 6      | C  | 0.2     | 0.0     |
| Eskdalemuir       | 5      | C  | 4.0     | 0.0     |
| Glasgow           | 7      | S  | 0.0     | 0.0     |
| Hereford          | 7      | C  | 0.4     | 0.0     |
| Hertsmere         | 7      | R  | 1.2     | 0.0     |
| Ipswich           | 7      | R  | 12.0    | 0.0     |
| Isle of Man       | 8      | PC | 0.0     | 0.0     |
| Isle of Wight     | 8      | R  | 1.4     | 0.0     |
| Jersey            | 8      | C  | 1.6     | 0.5     |
| Kewstwick         | 7      | C  | 1.0     | 0.0     |
| Kinloss           | 7      | D  | 1.0     | 0.0     |
| Leeds             | 5      | R  | 3.4     | 0.0     |
| Lerwick           | 6      | C  | 1.0     | 0.0     |
| Leuchars          | 8      | B  | 0.0     | 0.0     |
| Lincoln           | 7      | R  | 12.8    | 0.0     |
| Liverpool         | 7      | C  | 0.0     | 0.0     |
| London            | 6      | R  | 3.8     | 0.0     |
| Lyneham           | 6      | C  | 0.4     | 0.0     |
| Manchester        | 7      | D  | 3.0     | 0.0     |
| Margate           | 8      | C  | 1.6     | 0.8     |
| Milford Haven     | 9      | C  | 0.2     | 0.0     |
| Newcastle         | 6      | R  | 15.6    | 0.0     |
| Nottingham        | 6      | R  | 11.6    | 0.0     |
| Orkney            | 7      | C  | 1.0     | 0.0     |
| Oxford            | 6      | R  | 2.2     | 0.0     |
| Plymouth          | 8      | PC | 0.0     | 0.0     |
| Portsmouth        | 8      | C  | 0.2     | 0.0     |
| Scilly, St Mary's | 9      | PC | 0.0     | 0.0     |
| Shoreham          | 6      | R  | 6.8     | 0.0     |
| Shrewsbury        | 6      | C  | 3.4     | 0.0     |
| Snowdonia         | 6      | PC | 1.0     | 0.0     |
| Southend          | 8      | D  | 2.6     | 0.0     |
| South Uist        | 6      | S  | 1.2     | 0.0     |
| Stormovay         | 6      | D  | 1.0     | 0.6     |
| Tiree             | 7      | C  | 1.0     | 2.1     |
| Whitehaven        | 5      | D  | 2.8     | 0.0     |
| Wick              | 6      | D  | 1.2     | 0.0     |
| Yeovilton         | 8      | C  | 0.0     | 0.0     |

**The world**

|                                     |    |    |                |       |
|-------------------------------------|----|----|----------------|-------|
| All readings local midday yesterday |    |    |                |       |
| Alicante                            | 16 | PC | Madeira        | 19 B  |
| Amsterdam                           | 7  | PC | Madrid         | 10 PC |
| Athens                              | 17 | B  | Malaga         | 17 PC |
| Auckland                            | 23 | B  | Malorca        | 14 PC |
| Bahrain                             | 25 | S  | Malta          | 15 B  |
| Bangkok                             | 31 | B  | Melbourne      | 20 S  |
| Barbados                            | 29 | SH | Mexico City    | 25 PC |
| Barcelona                           | 13 | PC | Miami          | 26 PC |
| Beijing                             | 3  | S  | Milan          | 5 B   |
| Beirut                              | 22 | PC | Mombasa        | 31 PC |
| Belgrade                            | 6  | S  | Montreal       | -6 PC |
| Berlin                              | 4  | R  | Moscow         | -3 SH |
| Bermuda                             | 17 | PC | Mumbai         | 29 ** |
| Bordeaux                            | 10 | C  | Munich         | 6 S   |
| Brussels                            | 7  | B  | Nairobi        | 25 PC |
| Bucharest                           | 6  | R  | Naples         | 13 PC |
| Budapest                            | 5  | C  | New Orleans    | 13 S  |
| Buenos Aires                        | 20 | PC | New York       | 6 PC  |
| Cairo                               | 22 | ** | Nice           | 13 S  |
| Calcutta                            | 26 | SH | Nicosia        | 20 PC |
| Canberra                            | 22 | S  | Oslo           | -1 S  |
| Cape Town                           | 24 | PC | Paris          | 8 B   |
| Chicago                             | 7  | B  | Perth          | 33 S  |
| Copenhagen                          | 7  | C  | Prague         | 3 R   |
| Corfu                               | 16 | C  | Reykjavik      | 8 D   |
| Delhi                               | 21 | ** | Riga           | 0 DU  |
| Dubai                               | 29 | S  | Rio de Janeiro | 37 S  |
| Dublin                              | 7  | PC | Riyadh         | 27 S  |
| Faro                                | 16 | S  | Rome           | 11 T  |
| Florence                            | 9  | B  | San Francisco  | 16 ** |
| Frankfurt                           | 8  | PC | Santiago       | 26 S  |
| Geneva                              | 5  | B  | Sao Paulo      | 32 PC |
| Gibraltar                           | 16 | PC | Seoul          | 2 S   |
| Helsinki                            | 0  | B  | Seychelles     | 26 SH |
| Hong Kong                           | 18 | S  | Singapore      | 32 B  |
| Honolulu                            | 28 | PC | St Petersburg  | -2 DU |
| Istanbul                            | 14 | PC | Stockholm      | 0 R   |
| Jerusalem                           | 22 | PC | Sydney         | 24 B  |
| Johannesburg                        | 28 | S  | Tel Aviv       | 22 PC |
| Kuala Lumpur                        | 34 | PC | Tenerife       | 24 PC |
| Kyiv                                | ** | B  | Tokyo          | 13 B  |
| Lanzarote                           | 22 | B  | Vancouver      | 10 B  |
| Las Palmas                          | 24 | PC | Venice         | 9 B   |
| Lima                                | 18 | S  | Vienna         | 4 B   |
| Lisbon                              | 14 | PC | Warsaw         | 3 B   |
| Los Angeles                         | 24 | S  | Washington     | 5 B   |
| Luxor                               | 25 | S  | Zurich         | 5 B   |

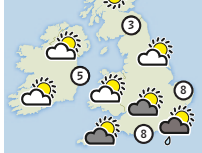
**Five days ahead**

Cloud increasing in northern and western areas to bring showers or longer periods of rain

**Tomorrow**

Some sunny spells over southern England but most of the day will be cloudy with the risk of showers. Dry elsewhere across Britain and Ireland with sunny spells.

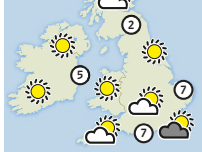
Max 8C, min -7C



**Wednesday**

The risk of a few isolated showers from thicker cloud in southeast England and northeast Scotland, otherwise it will be a dry day with sunny spells over the British Isles.

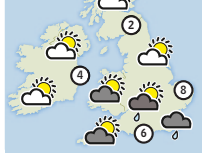
Max 8C, min -6C



**Thursday**

Rather cloudy with showery rain in southeast England and the far north of Scotland. Dry with sunny spells elsewhere and feeling chilly with a frost around at first.

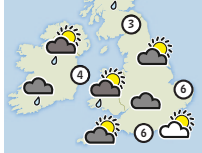
Max 9C, min -3C



**Friday**

Some dry and sunny intervals but most of the day will be cloudy with showery rain, perhaps heavy at times. Moderate to fresh northeasterly wind. Maximum 10C (50F), minimum 4C (39F).

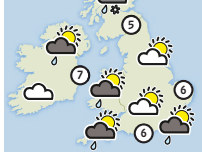
5 Wales, W Midlands, Cen N Eng: Dry with sunny spells in the morning but



**Saturday**

A band of cloud and rain will clear southern Britain in the morning to bring a mainly dry day with sunny spells but a few wintry showers near northern and western-facing coasts.

Max 9C, min -2C



The Times weather page is provided by WeatherQuest

**Wind speed**

34 (mph)

**Sea state**

Calm

Slight

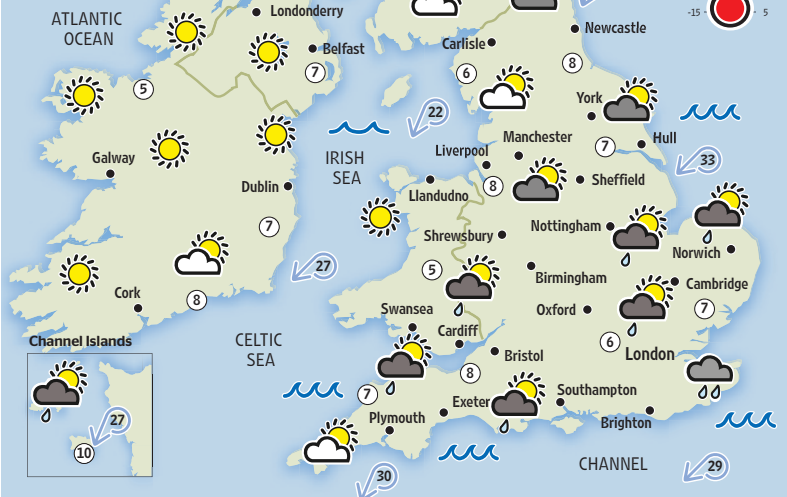
Moderate

Rough

**Flood alerts and warnings**

At 17:00 on Sunday there were 132 flood alerts and 53 warnings in England, 16 flood alerts and nine warnings in Wales and no flood alerts or warnings in Scotland.

For further information and updates in England visit flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk, for Wales naturalresources.wales/flooding and for Scotland SEPA.org.uk



**General situation:** A chilly start in Scotland and Ireland leading to a dry and sunny day but cloudier with showery rain further southeast. E Anglia, SE Eng, E Midlands, Cen S Eng, London, E Eng, SW Eng, Channel Is: Some sunny intervals but most of the day will be cloudy with showery rain, perhaps heavy at times. Moderate to fresh northeasterly wind. Maximum 10C (50F), minimum 4C (39F). S Wales, W Midlands, Cen N Eng: Dry with sunny spells in the morning but

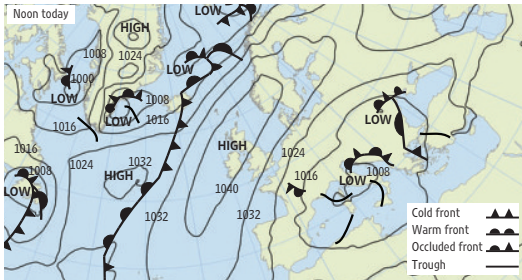
cloud increasing to bring the risk of an isolated afternoon shower. Moderate to fresh northeasterly wind. Maximum 7C (45F), minimum 1C (34F). N Wales, NW Eng, NE Eng, Borders, IoM, Lake District, Aberdeen, N Isles, Edinburgh and Dundee: A dry day with sunny spells and areas of cloud. Light and variable winds in Scotland but light to moderate northeasterly winds elsewhere. Maximum 8C (46F), minimum -3C (27F). Republic of Ireland, N Ireland: Any frost

around at first will soon clear to bring a dry day with plenty of sunshine but some patchy cloud in southeastern areas. Light to moderate northerly wind. Maximum 8C (46F), minimum -3C (27F). SW Scotland, Cen Highland, Glasgow, NW Scotland, Argyll, NE Scotland, Moray Firth: A frosty start leading to a dry and chilly day with plenty of sunshine. Light and variable winds. Maximum 6C (43F), minimum -6C (21F).

**Tides**

Tidal predictions. Heights in metres

|               | Today | HT   | HT         |
|---------------|-------|------|------------|
| Aberdeen      | 07:29 | 3.6  | 19:30 3.8  |
| Avonmouth     | 00:19 | 10.8 | 12:54 10.9 |
| Belfast       | 04:56 | 3.0  | 17:01 3.3  |
| Cardiff       | 00:11 | 10.0 | 12:47 10.2 |
| Devonport     | 11:23 | 4.9  | -- --      |
| Dover         | 04:35 | 5.9  | 17:27 5.6  |
| Dublin        | 05:40 | 3.6  | 17:48 3.9  |
| Falmouth      | 11:06 | 4.5  | 23:51 4.2  |
| Greenock      | 05:52 | 3.1  | 18:09 3.2  |
| Harwich       | 04:54 | 3.4  | 17:52 3.5  |
| Holyhead      | 04:12 | 4.7  | 16:28 5.1  |
| Hull          | --    | --   | 12:26 6.2  |
| Leith         | 08:34 | 4.8  | 20:46 4.9  |
| Liverpool     | 04:45 | 7.8  | 17:14 8.2  |
| London Bridge | 06:58 | 6.1  | 19:51 6.3  |
| Lowestoft     | 02:30 | 2.4  | 16:21 2.2  |
| Milford Haven | --    | --   | 12:10 5.9  |
| Morecambe     | 04:58 | 7.7  | 17:28 8.2  |
| Newhaven      | 04:43 | 5.8  | 17:11 5.5  |
| Newquay       | 11:08 | 6.0  | 23:45 5.8  |
| Oban          | --    | --   | 12:01 3.4  |
| Penzance      | 10:35 | 4.8  | 23:15 4.5  |
| Portsmouth    | 05:25 | 4.3  | 17:41 4.1  |
| Shoreham      | 04:46 | 5.3  | 17:16 5.2  |
| Southampton   | 04:08 | 4.0  | 16:27 3.9  |
| Swansea       | --    | --   | 12:18 7.9  |
| Tees          | 09:49 | 4.7  | 21:51 4.9  |
| Weymouth      | --    | --   | 12:19 1.6  |



**Synoptic situation**

High pressure will build across northwestern Europe bringing dry and mainly sunny conditions to Scotland, Ireland, most of Wales and northwest England. A northeasterly wind flow will bring rather cloudy skies and showery rain elsewhere over England, especially frequent in southeast England. High pressure will dominate over the British Isles in the coming days.

**Highs and lows**

24hrs to 5pm yesterday

Warmest: St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 9.4C  
Coldest: Aonach Mor, -4.8C  
Wettest: Fylingdales, North Yorkshire, 33.8mm  
Sunniest: Tiree, 2.3hrs

**Sun and moon**

For Greenwich  
Sun rises: 07:53  
Sun sets: 15:51  
Moon rises: 12:47  
Moon sets: 01:22 Tue  
Full moon: December 15

**Hours of darkness**

|            |             |
|------------|-------------|
| Aberdeen   | 15:56-08:06 |
| Belfast    | 16:28-08:05 |
| Birmingham | 16:23-07:37 |
| Cardiff    | 16:33-07:37 |
| Exeter     | 16:39-07:35 |
| Glasgow    | 16:13-08:06 |
| Liverpool  | 16:23-07:46 |
| London     | 16:21-07:25 |
| Manchester | 16:19-07:44 |
| Newcastle  | 16:08-07:50 |
| Norwich    | 16:10-07:25 |
| Penzance   | 16:49-07:40 |
| Sheffield  | 16:17-07:40 |

**Weather Eye**  
Paul Simons



It sounds like an image plucked out of a Salvador Dali painting — a wedge of a rainbow-coloured bicycle wheel with spokes lit up against a sky of dark clouds. This surreal spectacle was seen in Sardinia just before sunset on October 8, and as an added fascination to this sight there was a double rainbow and a lightning strike in the distance, all caught on camera by photographer Lorenzo Busilacchi.

The spokes of the wheel were created by shadows in the sky. When clouds or dense showers of rain block the light entering the bow of a rainbow, the light from the rainbow's rays can no longer be directed towards our eyes, and so the result is radial spokes emanating from a central point, with a striking resemblance to a bicycle wheel. An extra touch of magic to this spectacle is when fast-moving clouds glide across the sky and cast moving shadows that seem to make the rainbow wheel spin across the sky as if it has come alive.

The spectacle of the rainbow spokes and wheel is not often seen and depends on several other factors, such as the size and shape of the raindrops, the angle of the sunlight and the presence of particles in the atmosphere, all of which contribute to the display of spokes and wheels in the rainbows.

And a trick of perspective makes the shadows in the sky appear to converge towards a single point directly opposite the sun appear in the sky. This is called the antisolar point, which also makes the centre of the rainbow wheel.

It could be that John Constable made the first picture of a rainbow wheel in his watercolour, *London, from Hampstead Heath in a Storm, with Double Rainbow Seen Beneath Purple Masses of Clouds*, which he painted one evening in 1831. He showed a portion of rainbow beneath stormy clouds dissected with shadows that converged on St Paul's Cathedral. But then Constable was keenly aware of rainbows and light in the sky, "The 'skey' is the source of light in nature — and governs everything," he wrote.

**Speak directly to one of our forecasters on 09065 777675**

8am to 5pm daily (calls are charged at £1.55 plus network extras)

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# Sport

## Musselfburgh

Rob Wright

12.45 You Some Girl 2.15 One More Stroke  
1.15 Jet To Vegas 2.45 Nakassama  
1.45 Belle O Annandale 3.15 Jony Max

Going: good to soft, soft in places  
Racing TV

### 12.45 Handicap Hurdle

(£3,697: 3m) (10 runners)

|    |        |                                   |                       |                   |
|----|--------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 1  | 60-42  | PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL 13 (P)          | M Walford 7-12-0      | J Hamilton        |
| 2  | 32111  | YOU SOME GIRL 10 (H,T,C,D)        | R Menzies 7-11-13     | C Maggs (7)       |
| 3  | 7-5-03 | MALLOT BLANC 30 (T)               | N Alexander 7-11-10   | Mr D Hislop (C,D) |
| 4  | 05002  | EVENWOOD SONOFAGUN 11 (P)         | Lizzie Quinlan 6-11-5 | R Chapman         |
| 5  | -2350  | OUR ZERO 31 (P)                   | N Kelly (ho) 5-11-2   | Mr O McGill (5)   |
| 6  | 03654  | DEFENCE WITNESS 10 (P,B,F)        | A M Thomson 5-11-2    | R Mania           |
| 7  | 51064  | SHANTOU LUCKY 10 (P,T)            | J Bedi 7-10-1         | A Anderson (5)    |
| 8  | 0F-00  | STAR VANTAGE 25 (H,T)             | R Menzies 7-10-4      | B Hughes          |
| 9  | 006/P  | WOTSMYNAME 13 L Kerr 7-10-2       |                       | D R Fox           |
| 10 | 05P-0  | BOWLER JACK 42 A M Thomson 6-10-2 |                       | D McMenamin       |

7-4 You Some Girl, 5-1 Defence Witness, 11-2 Malloit Blanc, 8-1 Evenwood Sonofagun, 10-1 Punsutsatwney Phil, Our Zero, 12-1 others.  
Rob Wright's choice: You Some Girl won easily here last time  
Dangers: Punsutsatwney Phil, Evenwood Sonofagun

### 1.15 NH Maiden Hurdle

(£3,812: 2m 4f) (4w)

|   |     |  |                  |             |
|---|-----|--|------------------|-------------|
| 1 | 3   | ATHAIR MOR 39 (P)                      | Ewart 5-11-4     | R Mania     |
| 2 | 122 | JET TO VEGAS 28 (T)                    | L Russell 5-11-4 | C Nichol    |
| 3 | 163 | KADJAR DES MOTTES 26 (P)               | D McCall 4-11-4  | B Hughes    |
| 4 | 2   | SMOKERININTHEHAR 205 N Richards 4-11-4 |                  | D McMenamin |

8-11 Jet To Vegas, 4-1 Kadjar Des Mottes, 9-2 Smokerinintehard, 7-1 Athair Mor.  
Wright choice: Jet To Vegas was a good second on his debut over hurdles at Carlisle Danger: Kadjar Des Mottes

### 1.45 Handicap Hurdle

(£3,697: 2m) (6)

|   |       |                                      |                    |                 |
|---|-------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 04060 | LONE STAR 141 (T,C,P)                | Kirby 7-12-0       | D McMenamin     |
| 2 | 3400  | BELLE O ANNANDALE 74 (B,F,C,D)       | R M Smith 5-11-2   | S Quinlan       |
| 3 | 2P-41 | NO NO FIZZ 27 (D)                    | F O'Brien 6-11-9   | T Broughton (5) |
| 4 | 10351 | THEIRSGOES 10 (C,D)                  | A M Thomson 7-11-9 | L Dobb (7)      |
| 5 | 56232 | WINDS OF WINTER 25 J Jardine 6-10-13 |                    | B Hughes        |
| 6 | 6/956 | NOW THEN WENDY 38 S Cameron 7-10-13  |                    | Doubtful        |

7-4 No No Fizz, 2-1 Theirshegoes, 10-1 Winds Of Winter, 10-1 Belle O Annandale, 14-1 Lone Star, 20-1 Now Then Wendy.  
Wright choice: Belle O Annandale drops to her best trip after failing to stay three miles at Perth Danger: No No Fizz

### 2.15 Handicap Chase

(£5,281: 2m 4f) (6)

|   |        |   |                    |           |
|---|--------|---|--------------------|-----------|
| 1 | 33122  | THE CHURCHILL LAD 33 (H,B,F)                  | R Menzies 5-12-0   | R Chapman |
| 2 | 1113-0 | ONE MORE STROKE 31 (D)                        | D McCall 5-11-9    | B Hughes  |
| 3 | 242-5  | MONOCHROMIX 55 (P)                            | L Russell 6-11-9   | P W Wadde |
| 4 | -2200  | LEADING FORCE 134 (P,T)                       | A M Thomson 7-11-5 | R Mania   |
| 5 | 04511  | STRINGTOUTOURBOW 24 Christian Williams 7-12-5 |                    | S Quinlan |
| 6 | 63411  | CARDAMON HILL 11 (P,C,D)                      | Sayer 7-12-0       | H Brooke  |

9-4 Stringtoutourbow, 100-30 Cardamon Hill, 7-2 The Churchill Lad, 6-1 Monochromix, One More Stroke, 12-1 Leading Force.  
Wright choice: One More Stroke shaped well when third on his chasing debut at Hexham Danger: Monochromix

### 2.45 Handicap Hurdle

(£3,697: 2m 4f) (14)

|   |       |                                       |  |                  |
|---|-------|---------------------------------------|--|------------------|
| 1 | 45/45 | PRINCE OF PERTH 20 L Russell 6-12-0   |  | C McCann (7)     |
| 2 | 0/P40 | BALCONIE BREEZE 20 G Boanas 6-11-13   |  | D McMenamin      |
| 3 | -000P | GARRICK PAINCE 22 N Kelly (ho) 6-11-2 |  | P J Kavanagh (3) |

|    |       |  |                           |                  |
|----|-------|--|---------------------------|------------------|
| 4  | 0450  | MISTER MOODLES 155 R Menzies 6-11-2    |                           | P J Kavanagh (3) |
| 5  | 13410 | FLASHTHUGHTS 58 (P)                    | N Kelly (ho) 6-11-2       | Mr O McGill (5)  |
| 6  | 035-6 | THE NORTHLEDGERS 64 A M Thomson 5-11-9 |                           | R Mania          |
| 7  | 00003 | NAKASSAMA 59 N Kelly (ho) 4-11-5       |                           | C O'Farrell      |
| 8  | 50435 | MINELLA YOUNG 13 (T,V)                 | Lizzie Quinlan 6-11-3     | S Quinlan        |
| 9  | 41256 | CATBOY 18 (B,F)                        | Christian Williams 6-11-2 | E Collier (7)    |
| 10 | 04003 | QUAN 14 (B)                            | F O'Brien 8-12-2          | T Broughton (5)  |
| 11 | 6/496 | THE ROCK HOPPER 30 (H)                 | Mrs J Stephen 5-10-11     | C Nichol         |
| 12 | 06-59 | MARCH WIND 42 A M Thomson 7-10-10      |                           | B Hughes         |
| 13 | 35-03 | SOMETHING GOLDEN 8 (P)                 | V Thompson 8-10-9         | C Maggs (7)      |

|    |       |                          |                |         |
|----|-------|--------------------------|----------------|---------|
| 14 | 00212 | NATIONAL QUESTION 13 (P) | A Nicol 4-10-3 | D R Fox |
|----|-------|--------------------------|----------------|---------|

9-2 Quan, 5-1 Catboy, 6-1 Prince Of Perth, National Question, 7-1 The Northledgers, 8-1 Flashlightings, 14-1 others.

Wright choice: Nakassama, third at Downpatrick, should relish this stiffer test  
Dangers: Prince Of Perth, Catboy

### 3.15 Handicap Chase

(£4,225: 3m) (11)

|    |       |                            |                            |                  |
|----|-------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1  | -6413 | RETURN FIRE 10 (T,D)       | L Russell 8-12-0           | A Doyle (5)      |
| 2  | P461  | OKAVANGO DELTA 11 (P,C)    | Paul Robson 8-12-0         | C Nichol         |
| 3  | 7306  | LISLRON 30 (W,P,T)         | R Ross 5-11-1              | R Chapman        |
| 4  | 00212 | JONY MAX 25 (P,T,D)        | Christian Williams 8-11-10 | E Collier (7)    |
| 5  | 25-45 | TAKE CENTRE STAGE 30 (T)   | R Menzies 7-11-6           | B Hughes         |
| 6  | 744-9 | WEAREALONGTERM 20 (D)      | Sayer 7-11-7               | H Brooke         |
| 7  | 211/P | RUFIO 136 (H)              | Gary Rutherford 10-11-5    | Miss L Brown (7) |
| 8  | 12033 | RIBBYE 17 (P)              | Athinson 9-11-3            | D McMenamin      |
| 9  | 23401 | DR SHIROCCO 10 (C,D)       | S Foster 9-11-3            | C O'Farrell      |
| 10 | 00-46 | EX SVELANCE 10 (P)         | V Thompson 10-10-2         | C Maggs (7)      |
| 11 | 7-261 | HALFWAY HOUSE LAD 24 (P,T) | M Barnes 5-10-2            | P J Kavanagh (3) |

3-1 Okavango Delta, 7-2 Jony Max, 5-1 Return Fire, Dr Shirocco, 10-1 Take Centre Stage, Ribbye, 16-1 Wearealongterm, Halfway House Lad, Lisloron.  
Wright choice: Jony Max is tried in cheppies after a close second at Taunton  
Dangers: Return Fire, Okavango Delta

## Huntingdon

Going: soft

12.13 (1m 7f 17yd hdl) 1, Cootilda (H Cobden, 2-2), Knight Templar (7-2), 3, You And Whose Army (14-0), 1½, 181, P F Nicholls, 12.43 (2m 4f 105yd hdl) 1, Bread And Butter (L Saunders, 4-1), 2, Gashagham (22-1), 3, Nollador (14-4), 8 ran, NR: Aggashad, Opera King, Star Turn, Star Of Fame, 1½, 5½, 0 Murphy.

## Lingfield Park

Rob Wright

12.30 Full Confession 2.30 The Big Reveal  
1.00 Miss Fedora 3.00 King William Rufus  
1.50 Diva Luna 3.30 Le Ligerien  
2.00 Kado De Joie

Going: soft; aw: standard to slow  
Sky Sports Racing

### 12.30 Open NH Flat Race

(AW: £2,451: 2m) (7)

|   |     |                        |                          |                |
|---|-----|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 1-1 | FULL CONFESSION 27 (D) | W P Mullins (dro) 4-11-9 | Mr P W Mullins |
| 2 |     | AMERICAN EMPIRE 0      | Cantillon 4-11-2         | B Bromley (5)  |
| 3 |     | FOXLIGHT 1             | Williams 9-11-2          | C J Todd       |
| 4 |     | P KEVANO BREEZE 207    | M Madgwick 4-11-2        | M Goldstein    |
| 5 |     | WILD GOOSE 8           | K Bailey 4-11-2          | J J Burke      |
| 6 |     | 2 CELTIC QUEEN 27      | T Vaughan 4-10-9         | A Johns        |
| 7 |     | MUDDLE IN THE SKY 6    | J Moore 4-10-9           | N F Houlihan   |

10-11 Full Confession, 5-1 Celtic Queen, 6-1 Wild Goose, 3-2 American Empire, 8-1 Muddle In The Sky, 16-1 Foxlight, 6-1 Kevano Breeze.

### 1.00 Handicap Chase

(£3,248: 2m) (8)

|   |       |                                       |                    |              |
|---|-------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| 1 | 214-2 | MUMBLES 39 E Williams 6-12-0          |                    | C Ring       |
| 2 | 6241/ | ISKAR DAIRY 610 G & J Moore 6-11-9    |                    | N F Houlihan |
| 3 | 0-05P | JOHN W CREAMY 33 C Honour 6-10-10     |                    | B Carver     |
| 4 | -0324 | ROCK ON TOMMY 23 (B,T)                | O Murphy 9-10-9    | S Bowen      |
| 5 | 24-22 | BOBINS FIELD 194 (P,T)                | H Dickinson 9-10-4 | B Poste      |
| 6 | 00/P  | ONESTEPSTO STEPS 117 N Gifford 7-10-2 |                    | J Davies     |
| 7 | 01563 | MISS FEDORA 25 Seamus Mullins 5-10-2  |                    | O Palmer (7) |
| 8 | 43-54 | CLOWDAN ROBIN 21 (P)                  | A Irvine 11-10-2   | P Armstrong  |

100-20 Mumbles, 7-2 Robins Field, Miss Fedora, 7-1 Iskar Dairy, Onestepstoes, 8-1 Rock On Tommy, 12-1 John W Creamy, 16-1 Clondan Robin.

### 1.30 Novices' Hurdle

(£4,193: 2m) (7)

|   |      |                                       |  |                 |
|---|------|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| 1 | 211- | DIVA LUNA 242 B Pauling 5-11-3        |  | K Woods         |
| 2 | 200  | EVERTEST 33 G & J Moore 5-11-3        |  | N F Houlihan    |
| 3 | 53-5 | GOODESS AFRAANA 33 N Hawke 4-11-3     |  | L Murtagh       |
| 4 | 22-1 | JASMINE DAIRY 214 Harry Derham 5-11-3 |  | Mr B Sutton (5) |

|   |       |                                  |                      |             |
|---|-------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 5 | 314-2 | METKAYINA 27 (D)                 | Noel Williams 5-11-3 | G Sheehan   |
| 6 | 182-2 | NORTHERN ARI 37 F O'Brien 5-11-3 |                      | J J Burke   |
| 7 | 450-3 | THE SECRET PEARL 32 (T)          | A Hales 5-11-3       | B Bannister |

6-Diva Luna, 3-1 Jasmine Dairy, 7-2 Northern Ari, 6-1 Metkayina, 16-1 The Secret Pearl, Everest, 36-1 Goddess Afraana.

### 2.00 Handicap Hurdle

(£4,066: 2m 3f 110yd) (8)

|   |       |                                     |                      |              |
|---|-------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| 1 | P2-40 | FINE CASTING 16 (D)                 | 8 Pauling 8-12-0     | B R Jones    |
| 2 | 6-351 | KADO DE JOIE 22 N Henderson 4-11-10 |                      | J Bowen      |
| 3 | 11-4  | PEKING ORANGE 29 (P)                | G & J Moore 4-11-9   | N F Houlihan |
| 4 | 11-20 | GOLDEN MAVERICK 24 J Snowden 4-11-8 |                      | G Sheehan    |
| 5 | 2F-06 | AGGAGIO 35 (D)                      | G & J Moore 6-11-8   | C Quinn      |
| 6 | -44P  | CLOWDAN ROYALE 27 (D)               | J & A O'Neill 5-11-6 | R McLernon   |
| 7 | 4153/ | CONTEMPLEMYFAITH 74 (D)             | O Murphy 8-11-5      | S Bowen      |

|   |       |                                 |  |                     |
|---|-------|---------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| 8 | 232-1 | FOLLOWWANG 57 E Williams 6-11-2 |  | Isabel Williams (3) |
|---|-------|---------------------------------|--|---------------------|

6-4 Kado De Joie, 5-1 Followwango, 6-1 Contempletmyfaith, 8-1 Golden Maverick, Fine Casting, 10-1 Peking Orange, Clondan Royale, 20-1 Aggagio.

### 2.30 Handicap Chase

(£3,248: 2m 7f 110yd) (12)

|    |       |                                  |                    |                     |
|----|-------|----------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1  | PP-60 | OLD PAINLESS 29 (T)              | T Vaughan 8-12-0   | S Houlihan          |
| 2  | 65-24 | ICAQUE DE L'ISLE 29 (B,F)        | R Bandy 6-11-12    | H Bannister         |
| 3  | 24-3  | SHOT BOIT 112 (D)                | P Pipe 7-11-12     | J Tudor             |
| 4  | 225-5 | PEDLEY WOOD 29 (T)               | J Tizzard 7-11-11  | B J Powell          |
| 5  | 14-40 | MORTENS LEAM 17 (D)              | M Hawker 12-11-10  | H Reed              |
| 6  | PP5P- | HAUT FOULIN 22 (D)               | V Williams 7-11-9  | C Deutsch           |
| 7  | 31-3  | BOLEY BOY 38 B Case 6-11-2       |                    | J Quinlan           |
| 8  | 16P-3 | THE TWILIGHT GLORY 34 (P,T,C,D)  | T Vaughan 8-11-0   | A Johns             |
| 9  | 495P- | IMPERIAL HURRICANE 427 (P)       | G Bailey 7-10-13   | K Woods             |
| 10 | 40/75 | THE BIG REVEAL 19 (P)            | G Harris 6-11-1    | C Ring              |
| 11 | U30-P | DELGANY MONARCH 31 R Rowe 9-10-6 |                    | Tabitha Worsley (3) |
| 12 | 164P- | DYSANIA 318 (P,C,D)              | P & M Bowen 9-10-2 | S Bowen             |

|    |       |                            |  |            |
|----|-------|----------------------------|--|------------|
| 13 | 8/496 | SHOT BOIT 72 L'Isle 6-11-2 |  | P J Powell |
|----|-------|----------------------------|--|------------|

10-4 Shot Boit, 7-2 Icaque de L'Isle, 6-1 Pedley Wood, Twilght Glory, 7-1 Haut Foul, 10-1 Mortens Leam, 12-1 The Big Reveal, 16-1 Imperial Hurricane.

### 3.00 Handicap Hurdle

(£4,066: 2m) (12)

|   |       |                           |                 |              |
|---|-------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1 | 2-222 | KING WILLIAM RUFUS 14 (D) | C Morgan 7-12-2 | F Gordon (5) |
|---|-------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------|

7-132-0 DOMINICK'S FAULT 46 (B,F,D) O Murphy 7-12-1 S Bowen  
7-14 LEAGENDARY DAY 143 B Brennan 6-11-11 J Best  
000-P I HAVE A VOICE 8 (P,T,D) N Hawke 5-11-1 L Murtagh  
14045 CATHWORKE BANKER 27 (D) J & A O'Neill 6-11-3 R McLernon

|    |       |                                     |                       |              |
|----|-------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 6  | 20-55 | PYROTECHNIC 16 (H)                  | G & J Moore 5-11-8    | N F Houlihan |
| 7  | 3124- | PULSD 227 (T)                       | Daisy Hitchens 8-11-5 | H Reed       |
| 8  | 2F-42 | HOLESHOT 30 T Vaughan 5-11-4        |                       | A Johns      |
| 9  | 00212 | STAR OF AFFINITY 27 (P)             | G Bailey 7-10-13      | B J Powell   |
| 10 | 5-246 | DIRT DEN 18 Anthony Carabin 4-10-13 |                       | T Cannon     |
| 11 | 50P9- | INNO TIGAR 276 (D)                  | G Harris 7-10-2       | C Ring       |
| 12 | 30622 | TARA TIT 21 (D)                     | G & J Moore 6-10-6    | R Dingle     |

100-30 Star Of Affinity, 7-2 Dominick's Fault, 4-1 King William Rufus, 10-1 Cathworne Banker, Pyrotechnic, Holeshot, 12-1 Dirty Den, 14-1 Pulsid, Tara It.

### 3.30 Handicap Chase

(£4,700: 2m 4f) (6)

|   |       |                                      |                       |              |
|---|-------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1 | 540-3 | LE LIGERIEN 43 (T,D)                 | J Tizzard 11-11-13    | F Gingell    |
| 2 | 0P5-2 | TOP VILLE BEN 219 J Candlish 12-11-2 |                       | L Scott      |
| 3 | 5P62- | BUSHYPARK 238 (P)                    | P Kirby 10-11-10      | J Williamson |
| 4 | 11P-0 | THOR DE CERISY 41 (P,T)              | N Mulholland 10-11-10 | D Johnston   |

|   |       |                         |                      |                 |
|---|-------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 5 | 1350- | GALLIC GEORGE 319 (C)   | S Drinkwater 11-11-7 | N Fox           |
| 6 | 7-5P- | SAINT XAVIER 32 (T,V,D) | R Hobson 12-11-2     | C Pritchard (3) |

118-4 Ligerien, 100-30 Bushypark, 7-1 Gallic George, Saint Xavier, 8-1 Thor De Cerisy, Top Ville Ben.

## Newcastle

Rob Wright

3.22 Sectarius 6.00 Drumstick (nap)  
3.55 Honour Your Dreams 6.30 Rebecca's Girl  
4.30 Do Cogent 7.00 Sir Maxi  
5.00 Rohaan 7.30 William Dewhirst  
5.30 Indalo

Going: standard  
Draw: no advantage  
Sky Sports Racing

### 3.22 Handicap

(£3,716: 1m 4f) (9)

|   |     |       |  |                       |              |
|---|-----|-------|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| 1 | (3) | 25000 | CHILLHI 139 (C)                        | B Ellison 4-10-0      | B Robinson   |
| 2 | (6) | 63005 | DESERT EMPEROR 35 (D)                  | M & D Easterly 7-9-13 | Joanna Mason |
| 3 | (9) | 2061  | GARZ ON PHOENIX 126 J & S Quinn 5-9-12 |                       | A Kearney    |
| 4 | (2) | 0-001 | SECTARIUS 66 (C)                       | D Bethall 4-9-12      | J Hart       |
| 5 | (7) | 13234 | ROGUE TORNADO 177 (D)                  | James Owen 4-9-12     | L Morris     |
| 6 | (4) | 35040 | BANDERAS 16 (D)                        | S England 4-9-11      | J England    |
| 7 | (4) | 3252- | QUERCUS ROBUR 574 (A)                  | C Nicol 5-9-9         | S Hardie     |
| 8 | (6) | 14235 | HUMBLE SPARK 17 (B,F,C)                | J Goldie 4-9-2        | P McLennan   |
| 9 | (5) | 32123 | UNIQUE SPIRIT 42 (P,C)                 | R M Smith 3-9-1       | S B Kirrane  |

9-4 Sectarius, 9-2 Desert Emperor, 5-1 Grace On Phoenix, 6-1 Rogue Tornado, 7-1 Humble Spark, 10-1 Quercus Robur, 12-1 Unique Spirit, 14-1 CHILLHI, 33-1 Banderas.

### 3.55 Handicap

(£3,716: 5f) (12)

|    |      |       |                                   |                   |                |
|----|------|-------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1  | (2)  | -0560 | MASTER OF MY FATE 42 (J)          | J & S Quinn 3-9-9 | J Hart         |
| 2  | (4)  | 2252- | HONOUR YOUR DREAMS 18 (T,V,D)     | M Appleby 4-9-9   | L Morris       |
| 3  | (3)  | 60141 | TOO MUCH 16 (H,C)                 | D Thompson 4-9-8  | A Brookes (3)  |
| 4  | (7)  | 30464 | BRIAN THE SNAIL 28 (P,C)          | R Morris 4-9-8    | B Garrity      |
| 5  | (9)  | 20500 | BELLA KOPELLA 17 (H,C)            | T Tindler 4-9-8   | R Kavanagh (7) |
| 6  | (3)  | 12231 | HOWZAT 38 (D)                     | L Bailey 4-9-8    | F McLennan     |
| 7  | (12) | 45055 | MIDNIGHT UR 32 (T,D)              | M Dods 3-9-8      | D Nolan        |
| 8  | (6)  | 30034 | CASTAN 32 (C,D)                   | S Smart 4-9-7     | P McLennan     |
| 9  | (10) | 1330  | BRAZILIAN ROSE 16 R Menzies 3-9-5 |                   | H Burns (3)    |
| 10 | (8)  | 06623 | DAROLD PRIDE 18 (B,L,D)           | M Dods 4-9-5      | S B Kirrane    |
| 11 | (3)  | 33-00 | PINJARRA 23 J & S Quinn 3-9-3     |                   | JP Sullivan    |
| 12 | (12) | 26263 | RAINBOW RAIN 75 (V,C)             | T Waggott 5-9-3   | T Eaves        |

7-2 Howzat, 5-1 Castan, 6-1 Honour Your Dreams, Darfo Pride, 7-1 Rainbow Rain, 8-1 Too Much, 12-1 Midnight Ur, 14-1 Brian The Snail.

### 4.30 Novice Stakes

(£2-Y-O: £3,402: 5f) (9)

|   |     |       |                                     |                  |                 |
|---|-----|-------|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | (5) | 44100 | AMERJEET 42 (B,D)                   | A Watson 9-11    | L Morris        |
| 2 | (9) | 003   | CAPTAIN KINSELLA 19 J Gallagher 9-4 | S Fadden (7)     |                 |
| 3 | (4) | 2     | DC COGENT 28 S Smart 9-4            |                  | D Nolan         |
| 4 | (7) | 0     | EL COBRE FUEGO 10 Tindler 9-4       |                  | A Jary (5)      |
| 5 | (6) | 6     | HELALAI 155 (P)                     | Aliee Haynes 9-4 | J Hart          |
| 6 | (8) | 0     | HIGHLAND BEAR J Camacho 8-13        |                  | O McSweeney (3) |
| 7 | (3) | 0     | ROGUE DESTINY 27 (H)                | James Owen 8-13  | J Mitchell      |
| 8 | (8) |       | SALI CINNAMON L Jardine 8-13        |                  | A Mullen        |
| 9 | (1) |       | STAR ZIA K Ryan 8-13                |                  | T Eaves         |

2-10 Cogent, 3-1 Amerjeet, 7-2 Star Zia, 10-1 Captain Kinsella, 12-1 Highland Bear, 16-1 Rogue Destiny, El Cobre Fuego, Helalai, 25-1 Sali Cinnamon.

### 5.00 Handicap

(£8,208: 6f) (14)

| (£8,208: 6f) (14) |      |       |                         |                      |                |
|-------------------|------|-------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 1                 | (8)  | 00300 | ROHAAN 66 (CD)          | P Evans 6-9-11       | J Williams (5) |
| 2                 | (12) | 45390 | THE TALTMAN 60 (B,CD)   | Miss L Perratt 5-9-8 | H Burns (3)    |
| 3                 | (3)  | 23202 | SECRET GUEST 27 (D)     | S Smart 4-9-6        | P McLennan     |
| 4                 | (11) | 4-115 | ALTMORE 45 (D)          | W Haggas 3-9-6       | A Farragher    |
| 5                 | (2)  | 30312 | INGRA TOR 65 (D)        | J Channon 5-9-6      | G Bass (3)     |
| 6                 | (1)  | 1-013 | FLYING FLETCHER 25 (CD) | R Fahey 3-9-3        | Oisin C        |
| 7                 | (4)  | 52133 | ROUSING ENCORE 30 (D)   | R Carr 4-9-3         | JP Sullivan    |

## Sport



## Title win ends rocky year for Ingebrigtsen

Against a backdrop of turmoil in the life of Norway's most famous sporting family, Jakob Ingebrigtsen brought the curtain down on a remarkable year of private and professional drama by winning a third European cross-country title yesterday (Rick Broadbent writes).

The Norwegian, 24, won the men's senior crown in Antalya, Turkey, covering the 7,832 metres in a dominant 22min 16sec. It means he finishes the year with a third cross-

country title in four years, an Olympic 5,000m gold medal and the 3,000m world record, although his defeat in the much anticipated Olympic 1,500m final was a sobering blow.

Yet what makes Ingebrigtsen's achievements even more noteworthy is that they have come while his father has been facing allegations that he physically and mentally abused two of his children while coaching them. Gjert, formerly the coach of his sons Jakob,



Filip and Henrik, will face trial in the new year and could get up to six years in prison if found guilty. The indictment claims the 58-year-old slapped, kicked and struck Jakob, as well as threatening to "beat him to death". Gjert denies all the allegations.

The story has been bubbling away all year

since the brothers wrote a piece for Norway's VG newspaper in October 2023. "We have grown up with a father who has been very aggressive and controlling and who has used physical violence and threats," they wrote. "We still feel discomfort and fear which has been with us since childhood."

The case moved on two weeks ago when the state prosecutor charged Gjert with beating two of his children.

On the track and turf, however, Ingebrigtsen has flourished. Now coached by Filip, he made his move on the penultimate lap in Turkey and was never challenged. "I really

Ingebrigtsen won a third European cross-country title in a time of 22min 16sec, in front of Italy's Crippa and Spain's Ndikumwenayo

enjoy cross-country," he said. "There's a lot of fighting and pushing and shoving, there's a lot of things that could happen."

Italy's Yemaneberhan Crippa took the silver in the race, with Spain's Thierry Ndikumwenayo third. The Great Britain and Northern Ireland team topped the overall medal table, with Phoebe Anderson and Will Barnicoat winning the under-23 titles and Innes FitzGerald adding under-20 women's gold.

# 'F1 is too predictable – we're a disruptor'

Jeff Dodds, the bullish chief of Formula E, tells Rick Broadbent why he has Elon Musk (if not Donald Trump) onside

Ten years ago Formula E was launched to the sound of scepticism, rather than roaring engines, and with the whiff of disdain replacing the smell of petrol. Now the man leading the electric car series talks of 375 million fans and his ambition to make this the second-biggest motor sport in the world by 2030. And we already know Jeff Dodds is happy to put his money where his mouth is.

The Formula E chief executive ruffled feathers in Formula 1 in February when he highlighted the predictability of F1 by saying he would give \$250,000 (about £198,000) to charity if anyone but Max Verstappen won the drivers' title.

"We know Formula 1 tends to go in generations or dynasties, so all of a sudden you find a driver and car that hit the sweet spot and you can write off three seasons," he says. "In our championship, we just don't have that. Last season came down to the final and seven drivers could have won."

The \$250,000 will still go to programmes promoting women's participation in motor sport, but the comparison with Formula 1 is a double-edged sword. Formula E may be more equal, but it lacks the stardust, tradition and history, not to

mention political chicanery, to have crashed the mainstream. Nor has it had a *Drive to Survive* docuseries to increase interest, although Dodds says something is the pipeline.

"Outside the top drivers, most people on the F1 grid and team principals were unknown outside of motorsport until *Drive to Survive*," he says of the Netflix series. "We have not pushed that button yet and haven't had an unscripted global streaming proposition. Clearly, we are looking at how we can use that opportunity. Over the coming weeks, we will announce a media product that will put drivers in the spotlight and allow them to build a profile to a very different fanbase."

Not being a copy of Formula 1 is key to Formula E's survival plans. Dodds, who became chief executive in 2023, does not want motorsport fans to choose because he knows that is an unwinnable battle. "I don't see it as my job to convince die-hard petrolheads," he says. "I spend time encouraging those new to motorsport to have a look at this format, where there is some of the most competitive racing in cars that accelerate 30 per cent faster than Formula 1 ones. But it's not either/or — you can like both."

The founding principles of Formula E include shining a spotlight on climate change and the technology that will allow transition to electric vehicles. At the same time, Dodds wants a second round in the United States, where the president-elect has long been a climate change sceptic. Is that an incongruity?

"Our manufacturer partners would say North America is one of the most

important markets for energy transition," he says. "It's interesting given [Donald] Trump has assigned our good friend Elon Musk to a position close to him and he has the world's largest electric vehicle company in Tesla."

"I'd like to think Elon is there, influencing and educating Donald about the benefits of electric vehicles."

Dodds clearly loves sport. Ask him for his most memorable moments, and he quickly rolls off the Ryder Cup's "Miracle at Medinah" in 2012; Tiger Woods's Masters win in 2019; Liverpool's Champions League turnaround against AC Milan in 2005 and Jonny Wilkinson's gilded drop-goal in 2003.

He is also broad-minded enough to draw analogies with attempts to diversify in other sports, such as the ascent of Saudi-backed LIV Golf. So is Formula E a disruptor too? "Yes, of course, 100 per cent," he says. "Pure EV racing is highly disruptive in motor sport. Think back ten years and the cars weren't very fast and could not race for a whole race — the driver had to jump out of the car and into another because the batteries weren't good enough."

"Ten years on and we've got a car

Dodds aims to add a new race each year

that accelerates to 100km in just over 1.8 seconds and a battery that lasts the whole race. We've introduced all-wheel drive so we're disrupting in technology. And we're absolutely disruptive in the way we try to run the sport."

By his reckoning, about 350,000 electric vehicles were sold in Formula E's inaugural year. That will rise to close to 17 million this year. The scepticism is now geographical. "In places like China and Japan there is zero," he says. Europe has been tougher to crack, despite a German champion in Pascal Wehrlein and six British drivers on this year's grid. There are no races in motorsport heartlands such as Italy or Spain, while the original emphasis on city circuits is being weakened by progress. Formula E has already outgrown the Rome circuit and the same will soon go for the London track at the ExCeL.

There are 16 races over ten weekends — New Zealand's Mitch Evans won the curtain-raiser for Jaguar in Brazil on Saturday — and Dodds wants to add a race each year. Manufacturers also include McLaren, Porsche and Maserati. It has been reported that Dodds had hinted about Ferrari talks. "That went like this — I was asked, 'Have you spoken to Ferrari?' I said, 'Maybe.' Of course, I would love to see Ferrari in the championship, but it

has to be the right time for them. Ferrari have not launched an all-electric sports car and it may take them time to do that."

Over the years Formula E has been accused of employing gimmicks, not least the risible popularity contest of Fan Boost, where viewers could vote for who would receive extra power. That predated Dodds's tenure, but he is unapologetic. "We are effectively a start-up, so we haven't got a legacy to protect," he says. "Fan Boost was great for showing off a different format, but not great for sporting integrity. We won't test those type of formats again."

There will be Attack Mode, though, where drivers go through a zone to unlock more power. Dodds is determined that Formula E gives more opportunities to women, who he wants to drive the same cars as the men, not a dialled-down version "like in some motorsport". They held the first all-women test for an FIA World Championship in Madrid last month.

Dodds championed the promotion of Nicki Shields as lead broadcast presenter after the previous TNT host, Jermaine Jenas, was exiled for sending inappropriate messages to female BBC colleagues. This year's series will be shown free-to-air on ITV, as well as TNT, with David Coulthard and Billy Monger among the pundits.

A decade in the making, Formula E moves into new territory, with Dodds insisting he has the "best collection of drivers" in any motorsport, adding that none of them have paid for a seat. It may not provide the aural awe that diehards crave, but Dodds's ambition for Formula E is loud and clear.



# Don't wait too long to test new talent

Stuart Barnes

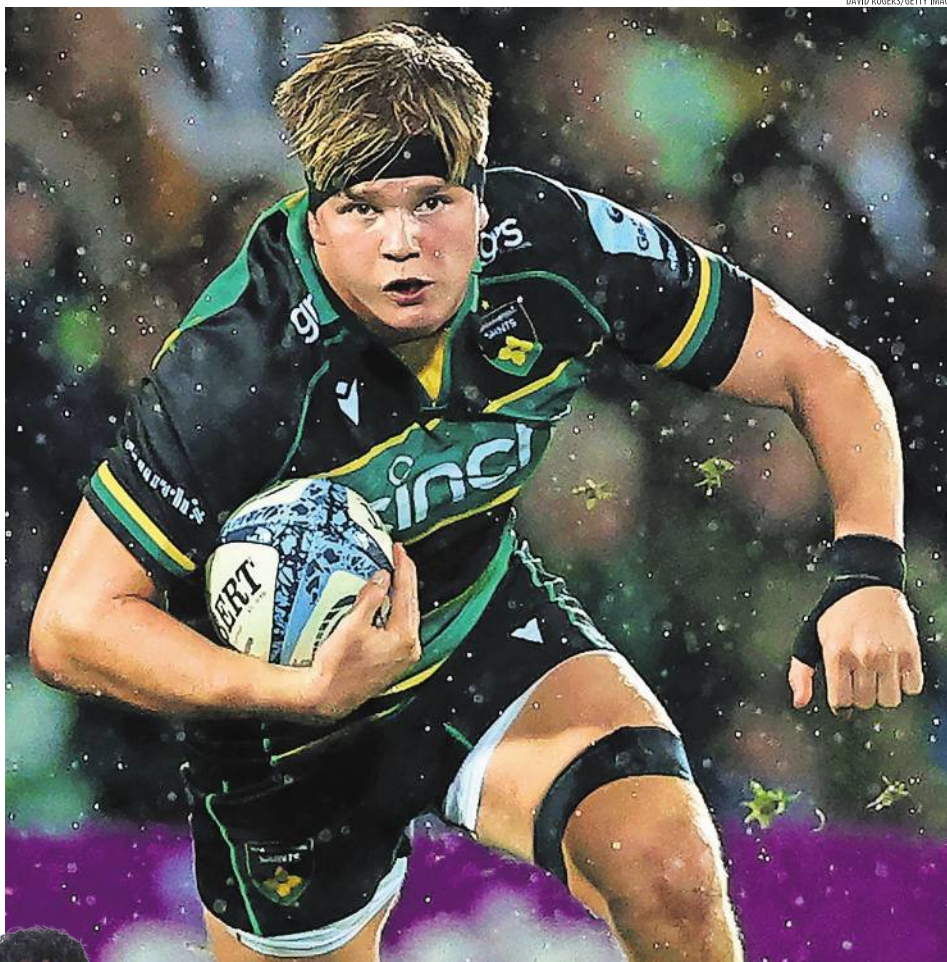


England and Northampton Saints can rejoice. Alex Mitchell is back. Out on his own as the England scrum half, he was a significant absentee in the autumn internationals. Club have suffered as much as country. In his absence, the Saints have been staggering, not marching. On Saturday, against Castres, he cut a controlled figure in the elemental mayhem of gusting wind and rain.

The pre-international Mitchell was a bag of fireworks. He was lightning down the short side. He was the accelerator who changed the pace of the Saints. But not everyone bought into it. Steve Borthwick, for one, wasn't certain the scrum half made the right decisions at the right time. And he had a point. As Northampton's Phil Dowson pointed out post-match: "Mitch has played a lot of [club] rugby and a lot of international rugby and learnt a lot of lessons, tough ones at times, particularly on the international front."

The breathtaking breaks are still a part of his package. When he stops running, you know that the conservatism of England has sent him in a downwards direction from the peak of his game — which we are yet to see. He is very much a contender for the British & Irish Lions tour and more than a long shot for the Test team. The calm in the literal storm at the Gardens, Dowson said: "He does it in a quiet way, there is not too much fanfare about him. His kicking game has come on a tonne, his understanding of momentum, when to go down the short side... is different class."

The words are a stark reminder that the mind is every bit as important as the body, especially when evaluating the decision-makers of a side. But, bright a player as you might be, there is no question that experience helps with decision-



Coaches can learn a lot from throwing youngsters like Pollock, main, and Tuipulotu, inset, in at the deep end

making. That's why, in a paradoxical way, Mitchell is evolving into the problem as well as the cure for England's autumnal woes. He is simply too far ahead of the contenders.

Harry Randall has his moments but lacks the heft, Jack van Poortvliet is struggling, while Ben Spencer appears to be losing his battle with the clock. To be in one's thirties with so little experience

of anything except losing at Test level is a bloody great negative in selection and seemingly on the field.

England made this mistake before. Ben Youngs was embedded at nine way before his prolonged sell-last date. To a lesser extent, so too Danny Care. Nobody developed any experience as a nine. The late arrival of Spencer from out of the blue for the 2019 World Cup final was a savage indictment of managerial mistakes in terms of scrum-half policy.

What a contrast with South Africa, who employed four scrum halves in the recent Rugby Championship. No one was allowed to break free of the challengers, which must have been frustrating for Grant Williams, of the

Sharks, who looked to be playing on another level by the time he was handed the No9 jersey against England. Brilliant as he was, he didn't start against Wales a week later.

The competitive nature of the contest Rassie Erasmus has created in the wake of the Faf du Klerk era has galvanised all of South Africa's scrum halves. The part Williams played in at Makazole Mapimpi try against ailing Exeter Chiefs was simply stunning, as was his overall performance. Yet be sure, Erasmus will not allow the gap — in terms of game time — to grow between Williams and the rest.

Ironically, one of the long-term contenders at nine is Northampton's Archie McParland. The 19-year-old

has been central to the success of Mark Mapletoft's England Under-20 team. Ironically, because in Tom James the Saints have an excellent, experienced back-up when Mitchell is fit. But this leaves the player with the greater potential kicking his heels.

Dowson smiled when the subject of Henry Pollock was raised. Another shining star of the World Championship-winning under-20 team, the Saints director of rugby admits to being "reticent" on the subject of the much heralded youngster. There is a gulf between age-group rugby and the "real" thing, but unless youth is granted its opportunity, time is being wasted.

Pollock was outstanding. There is something of a beefed-up Neil Back to the flanker. Having played with and against Back, believe me, that is a compliment. He has a feel going forward and a ferocious determination in defence. Now that he is more than a rumour, Dowson has to decide how soon to expose him. He is up for selection against the Bulls on the High Veldt of Pretoria next week. What a lesson that could prove for the youngster; conversely, what a statement he could put out to club and country. There's a World Cup coming. Including fast-improving rookies in squads is smart.

Bath are another club with a decision to make. Tom Dunn failed to hit his mark when it mattered in admittedly atrocious conditions at the Recreation Ground on Friday night. But he has a record of losing his line and length on the big plays.

Meanwhile, there is a 19-year-old flanker turned hooker, Kepu Tuipulotu. He is a whisper at present, a name doing the rounds in Bath; I saw him come off the bench for Bath University against their Exeter counterparts a while ago. Yes, the standards cannot be compared and he is a convert from back to front row, but he turned the game on his own.

Some players you see and say "yes!" He is one of those. By throwing him into the Bath big time, he will be tested, but 20 minutes here and there, as opposed to watching this wonder kid at the university, could exponentially accelerate what could, as with Pollock, be a potentially spectacular career.

The other option is to worry about their age now and talk to them a few years hence for the 2031 World Cup. If they struggle at a higher level, managers can always drop them from where the oxygen is too thin. Better, surely, to be bold. Borthwick eventually made the plunge on Mitchell, despite a few misgivings. Selection requires courage as well as clarity.

## Results

### American football

**NFL**  
Miami 32 New York Jets 26 (OT); Minnesota 42 Atlanta 21; New York Giants 11 New Orleans 14; Philadelphia 22 Carolina 16; Pittsburgh 27 Cleveland 14; Tampa Bay 28 Las Vegas 13; Tennessee 6 Jacksonville 10.

### Cricket

**Second Tests: South Africa v Sri Lanka**  
Gqeberha (fourth day of five): Sri Lanka, with five second-innings wickets in hand, need 143 runs to beat South Africa.  
**South Africa First Innings** 358 (K Verreynne 105 not out, R D Rickelton 101, T Bavuma 78; C B R L S Kumara 4 for 79).  
**Second Innings** (overnight 191-3):  
T Stubbs run out 47  
T Bavuma b Jayasuriya 66  
D G Bedingham c De Silva b Jayasuriya 35  
K Verreynne c B K G Mendis b M V T Fernando 9  
M Jansen c A M Fernando b Jayasuriya 8  
K A Maharaj not out 14  
K S Rabada c B K G Mendis b Kumara 8  
D Paterson b A M Fernando 14  
Extras (lb 8, w 9, nb 1) 18  
**Total (86 overs)** 317

**Fall of wickets** 1-55, 2-96, 3-109, 4-213, 5-254, 6-268, 7-273, 8-279, 9-290.  
**Bowling** M Fernando 19-4-47-2; A Fernando 14-2-52-1; Kumara 16-0-71-1; Jayasuriya 34-2-129-5; De Silva 3-0-10-0.  
**Sri Lanka First Innings** 328 (P N Silva 89; D Paterson 5 for 71).  
**Second Innings**  
P N Silva c Verreynne b Paterson 18  
F D M Karunaratne lbw b Rabada 1  
L D Chandimal lbw b Paterson 29  
A D Mathews b Maharaj 32  
P H K D Mendis c Verreynne b Maharaj 35  
D M de Silva not out 39  
B K G Mendis not out 39  
Extras (b 5, lb 1, nb 6) 12  
**Total (5 wks, 52 overs)** 205  
**Fall of wickets** 1-10, 2-47, 3-64, 4-117, 5-122.  
**Bowling** Rabada 13-2-44-1; Jansen 10-1-54-0; Maharaj 16-2-62-2; Paterson 12-3-33-2; Markram 1-0-0-0.  
**Umpires** J S Wilson (WD) and P R Reiffel (Aus).  
**Australia v India**  
**Adelaide** (third day of five): Australia beat India by ten wickets.  
**First Innings** 180 (M A Starc 6 for 48).  
**Second Innings** (overnight 128-5):  
R R Pant c Smith b Starc 28  
Y R K Reddy c McSweney b Cummins 42  
R Ashwin c Carey b Cummins 7

**H P Rana c Khawaja b Cummins** 0  
J J Bumrah not out 2  
Mohammed Siraj c Head b Boland 17  
Extras (b 5, lb 2, w 3, nb 3) 7  
**Total (36.5 overs)** 175  
**Fall of wickets** 1-12, 2-42, 3-66, 4-86, 5-105, 6-128, 7-148, 8-153, 9-166.  
**Bowling** Starc 14-1-60-2; Cummins 14-0-57-5; Boland 8-5-0-51-3.  
**Australia First Innings** 337 (T M Head 140, M Labuschagne 64; J J Bumrah 4 for 61, Mohammed Siraj 4 for 98).  
**Second Innings**  
N A McSweney not out 10  
U T Khawaja not out 9  
**Total (no wkt, 32 overs)** 19  
**Bowling** Bumrah 1-0-2-0; Siraj 1-2-0-9-0; Reddy 1-0-8-0.  
**Umpires** C Gaffaney (NZ) and R Illingworth (Eng).  
● five-match series level 1-1  
**First one-day international**  
**Basesterre** Bangladesh 294-6 (M H Miraz 74, T H Tamim 60, M M Riyad 50). West Indies 295-5 (47-40s: S E Rutherford 113, SD Hope 86). West Indies won by five wickets.  
● West Indies lead the three-match series 1-0  
**Second women's ODI**  
**South Africa v England**  
**Durban** (England won toss): England beat South Africa by six wickets

**South Africa**  
L Wolsvaardt b Ecclestone 35 (50)  
T Brits b Filer 5 (3)  
S Luus b Filer 4 (6)  
A Dercksen c Filer b Dean 29 (44)  
M Kapp c Ecclestone b Dean 0 (3)  
N de Klerk c Knight b Dean 0 (1)  
C L Tryon c Beaumont b Ecclestone 45 (49)  
TS Jafa lbw b Dean 0 (1)  
N Mliaba b Filer 4 (14)  
A Khaka not out 1 (5)  
A Hluhi b Ecclestone 6 (13)  
Extras (b 2, w 4) 6  
**Total (31.3 overs)** 135  
**Fall of wickets** 1-6, 2-14, 3-72, 4-72, 5-76, 6-76, 7-76, 8-102, 9-127.  
**Bowling** Cross 4-0-18-0; Filer 6-0-32-3; Dean 10-0-45-4; Sciver-Brunt 4-0-11-0; Ecclestone 7-3-0-27-3.  
**England**  
T T Beaumont c Jafa b Dercksen 34 (52)  
M E Boucher c Brits b Dercksen 33 (36)  
H C Knight lbw b Kapp 7 (11)  
N Sciver-Brunt lbw b De Klerk 20 (19)  
D N Wyatt-Hodge not out 25 (23)  
H A E Jones not out 9 (3)  
Extras (lb 1, w 9) 10  
**Total (4 wks, 24 overs)** 137  
A Capsey, C E Dean, S Ecclestone, K L Cross and L Filer did not bat.  
**Fall of wickets** 1-69, 2-80, 3-82, 4-129.

**Bowling** Kapp 5-1-14-1; Khaka 5-0-32-0; De Klerk 3-0-25-1; Hluhi 2-13-0; Mliaba 5-0-30-0; Dercksen 4-0-22-2.  
● three-match series level 1-1

### Golf

**DP World Tour Nedbank Challenge**  
**Sun City: Leading final scores** (Great Britain and Ireland unless stated): 283 J Veerman (US) 70, 71, 73, 69, 284 A Potgieter (SA) 73, 70, 66, 75; R Langasque (Fr) 70, 70, 73, 71; M Jordan (Eng) 69, 72, 71, 72, 285 T Olesen (Den) 69, 74, 72, 70, 286 C Bezuidenhout (SA) 70, 72, 72, 72; C Corners (Can) 72, 76, 67, 71; M Hughes (Can) 67, 73, 70, 72; J Guernier (Fr) 71, 68, 75, 72; Ostrydom (SA) 67, 73, 74, 72; J Smith (Eng) 72, 69, 73; F Laporta (It) 73, 70, 69, 74.

**US PGA Tour Hero World Challenge**

**Albany, Bahamas: Scores after three rounds** (United States unless stated): 199 J Thomas 66, 67, 66, 200 S Scheffler 67, 64, 69, 201 Kim Joo-hyung (S Kor) 74, 65, 62, 203 K Bradley 68, 67, 68, 204 A Bhatia 67, 66, 71, 205 Theegalla 67, 71, 66, 207 R Macintyre (Sco) 68, 71, 68, 209 L Aaberg (Swe) 67, 70, 72, P Cantlay 67, 71, 71; Im Sung-jae (S Kor) 69, 68, 72; S Straka (Austria) 69, 68, 72.

### Rugby union

**Investec Champions Cup: Pool one**

Bordeaux-Bègles 42 Leicester 28; Sharks 39 Exeter 21; Toulouse 61 Ulster 21. **Pool two** Bristol 12 Leicester 35; Clermont Auvergne 28 Benetton 0. **Pool three** Munster 33 Stade Français 7; Northampton 38 Castres 8; Saracens 27 Bulls 5. **Pool four** Glasgow 38 Sale 19; Racing 92 23 Harlequins 12; Stormers 14; Toulon 22.

**Challenge Cup: Pool one** Chester 20 Perpignan 20; Connacht 43 Zebre 12; Lyon 37 Cardiff 26. **Pool two** Ospreys 30 Lions 14; Pau 32 Newcastle 19. **Pool three** Bayonne 17 Scarlets 16; Black Lion 22 Vannes 19.

**RFU Championship** Bedford 17 Ealing Trailfinders 25; Caidy 3 Cornish Pirates 22; Cambridge 10 Nottingham 43; Chinnor A Doncaster A; Coventry 14 Hartpury 13; London Scottish 14 Amphil 15.

**Women's Allianz Premiership** Bristol P Exeter P; Ealing Trailfinders 31 Sale 5; Leicester 5 Saracens 38; Loughborough 7 Gloucester 31.

### Snooker

**Snooker9Club Shoot-Out**  
**Mattio Arena, Leicester** (England unless stated): **Semi-finals** L Graham (Sco) bt M Selby 38pts-20; T Ford bt Wu Yuzhe (China) 37-32. **Final** Ford bt Graham 31-28.

Sport Investec Champions Cup

# Barrett gives Leinster a taste

|               |    |
|---------------|----|
| Bristol Bears | 12 |
| Leinster      | 35 |

Tom Bradshaw

A touch of class from two southern hemisphere heavyweights settled this northern hemisphere clash, as All Black Jordie Barrett gave Europe a taste of just what it can expect from him in a Leinster shirt.

He came on at half-time to combine well with the fly half Sam Prendergast, while the arrival of Springbok RG Snyman off the bench helped to restore an aura that the four-times champions had lacked in the first period.

Leinster, defeated finalists in the past three Champions Cups and uncharacteristically ill disciplined in the first half here, were also propelled on their way by an all-court display by Josh van der Flier, the flanker.

Van der Flier sung the praises of Barrett, Snyman and the rest of the bench. "They brought great energy and it rejuvenates you," the Ireland flanker said. "If you bring on fresh legs like that then you have some pretty special players who are capable of great moments."

Leo Cullen, the Leinster head coach, was similarly pleased by Barrett's debut, but made it clear he is expecting more. "It is amazing experience to bring off the bench," Cullen said. "He will now hopefully go from strength to strength. We are incredibly lucky to have him and hopefully he'll have a good run for us."

Three tries in only six second-half minutes undid Bristol, whose evening was also blighted by injury concerns for the fly half AJ MacGinty, who lasted less than five minutes.

Sandwiched between the autumn internationals and the Six Nations, the Champions Cup is a natural proving ground for those with international ambitions. And this encounter between two domestically high-flying sides had the potential to encapsulate the notion of big European club games functioning as a proxy war for international clashes.

Pat Lam, the Bristol director of rugby, declared in advance that the opening fortnight of his side's European campaign was akin to back-to-back Test matches. And it was — and now remains — a view with much to commend it. First, the might and depth of an emerald-studded Leinster side glistening with Ireland internationals. Then next week the formidable Gallic proposition of La Rochelle away.

Leinster are seven wins from seven in the United Rugby Championship, while Bristol are tied on points with Bath at the top of the Gallagher Premiership. Both have been scoring tries by the handful. But this, given the elements, was always likely to be more of an arm-wrestle than a free-flowing dance of tries. And so it proved — at least until Barrett, Snyman and co came off the bench.

It took half an hour for the first points to be scored. And while the dying gusts of Storm Darragh blew through, Bristol were initially undeterred and sought to put the ball through hands in trademark fashion. The Bears lost the in-form MacGinty to a head injury assessment after just four minutes, and the United States international, who also appeared to be holding his right wrist gingerly, did not return.

With the England duo Ellis Genge and Harry Randall straight back into the mix after playing in all four of England's autumn games, Bristol's only other change from their Premiership win over Harlequins was the return of the hooker Harry Thacker. Thacker was swiftly bubbling with typical efferves-

| Pool two    |   |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |     |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|----|----|---|---|-----|
|             | P | W | D | L | F  | A  | T | B | Pts |
| Clermont    | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 28 | 0  | 4 | 1 | 5   |
| Leinster    | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 35 | 12 | 5 | 1 | 5   |
| La Rochelle | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 20 | 3 | 0 | 4   |
| Bath        | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 20 | 24 | 2 | 1 | 1   |
| Bristol     | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 12 | 35 | 2 | 0 | 0   |
| Benetton    | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0  | 28 | 0 | 0 | 0   |

cence, pirouetting down the left wing as Bristol gradually accumulated territory and possession.

Randall looked sharp too, harrying, hustling and bossing his pack around.

No 8 Viliame Mata was the hosts' go-to ball-carrier. The Fijian's hard, direct lines represented a good foil to the other strand of Bristol's game plan, which was to continue to put width on the ball.

Van der Flier looked odds-on to barge his way over for the game's opening score but a head-on challenge by Jack Bates, the Bristol wing, denied him.

Then came the start of Leinster's period of ill discipline. Ronan Kelleher, the hooker, was shown a yellow card for a cynical intervention in a Bristol maul. Then Max Deegan, the flanker, was sent to the bin for a trip.

Bristol made their numerical advantage tell immediately, with the prop Max Lahiff bundling over after another strong carry by Mata. Benhard Janse van Rensburg added the extras.

But 13-man Leinster rallied. Jordan Larmour pounced after Rich Lane spilt a kick by Prendergast, and Prendergast slotted the conversion to tie the scores at half-time. Then came Barrett's significant cameo. Even putting Barrett to one side, the visiting side's bench was a terrifying prospect, oozing international class and menace.

But first Leinster were up to their earlier tricks. Joe McCarthy, the lock, extended a leg to trip Randall and could count himself very fortunate to remain on the pitch.

The packs' inability to hold an honest scrum led to a double sin-binning: Lahiff for the Bears and the newly arrived Andrew Porter for Leinster.

Then came the Leinster bench's impact and their three-try blitz. First, Prendergast profited from Barrett's exquisitely timed pass, then Barrett cut an intelligent line to dart over himself. Prendergast showed his class again to finish off Snyman's thundering break.

Van der Flier added Leinster's fifth before Gabriel Ibitoye scored a late try that was of scant consolation for Bristol.

Lam indicated that MacGinty was likely to be sidelined for a number of weeks, with Max Malins — who can cover fly half — due to return from injury on December 27. "I'm really proud of the boys, I can't fault them for hanging in there," Lam said. "It was huge disruption losing AJ when we did. It had a big effect in terms of us being able to play the shapes we wanted to."

The Stade Marcel-Deflandre on the Atlantic coast now awaits Bristol on Saturday. Without a doubt, the Test-match intensity will continue for Lam against La Rochelle. Welcome to Europe.

**Scorers:** Bristol: Tries Lahiff (30min), Ibitoye (74). Con Prendergast. Leinster: Tries Larmour (33), Prendergast (52, 58), Barrett (56), Van der Flier (64). Cons Prendergast 5. **Bristol** (L Lane, J Bates, K Ravouvou, B Janse van Rensburg, G Ibitoye, AJ MacGinty (J Jenkins 5), H Randall (K Marmion 63), E Genge (J Woolmore 45), H Thacker (G Oghre 55), M Lahiff (sin-bin 47-57, L Chawatama 57), J Dun (S Luatua 46), J Owen, S Gronдона (B Gronдона), F Harding, V Mata. **Leinster** (C Frawley (J Barrett 40), J Larmour (G McCarthy 38-40), G Ringrose, R Henshaw, J O'Brien; S Prendergast, J Gibson-Park; J Boyle (A Porter, sin-bin 47-57), R Kelleher (sin-bin 27-37), R Sliamini (T Clarkson 45), J McCarthy (RG Snyman 45), J Ryan, M Deegan (sin-bin 29-39), J van der Flier, J Conan. **Referee** P Brousset (Fra). **Attendance** 15,680.



# Weakened Tigers put to sword by Bielle-Biarrey

|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Bordeaux Bègles  | 42 |
| Leicester Tigers | 28 |

John Westerby

Michael Cheika, the Leicester Tigers head coach, had made clear his displeasure at having to rest six of his internationals this weekend, and this Investec Champions Cup game was duly turned by the star quality in an all-international Bordeaux Bègles back division.

After leading 21-14 at half-time, Leicester were blown off course by a flurry of three tries in five minutes early in the second half, two by the brilliant Louis Bielle-Biarrey. The France wing, operating at full back for his club, had scored four tries in three autumn internationals last month and has estab-

lished himself as one of the most lethal finishers in the game at present.

His coruscating pace sparked the decisive burst by Bordeaux Bègles, with further sublime touches provided by Damian Penaud and Mathieu Jalibert, but Leicester competed gamely throughout, claiming a four-try bonus point through a late score from Izaia Perese. When the Sharks travel from Durban to Mattioli Woods Welford Road on Saturday, the Tigers will have a full complement of internationals.

Cheika acknowledged that resting all six players together had left his side a little short of depth. "There was maybe a bit of fatigue, we'd taken our depth out," he said. "I know we lost, but we'll get a lot from that. The boys worked hard, we got a point and probably deserved two."

The Leicester head coach could have chosen to rest his internationals — George Martin and Dan Cole, of

| Pool one   |   |   |   |   |    |    |   |   |     |
|------------|---|---|---|---|----|----|---|---|-----|
|            | P | W | D | L | F  | A  | T | B | Pts |
| Toulouse   | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 61 | 21 | 9 | 1 | 5   |
| Sharks     | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 39 | 21 | 5 | 1 | 5   |
| Bordeaux B | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 42 | 28 | 6 | 1 | 5   |
| Leicester  | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 28 | 42 | 4 | 1 | 1   |
| Exeter     | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 21 | 39 | 3 | 0 | 0   |
| Ulster     | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 21 | 61 | 3 | 0 | 0   |

England, Nicky Smith and Tommy Reffell, of Wales, Julian Montoya of Argentina and Handre Pollard of South Africa — against Sale Sharks in the Gallagher Premiership a week earlier, a game in which they were well beaten. Protocols dictate that players who have featured in all four autumn internationals must miss one of the next three club games, but Cheika opted instead to take an understrength team to face one sitting second in the Top 14.

# of what's to come



BILLY STICKLAND/NPHO/SHUTTERSTOCK

Barrett made an instant impact from the bench on his Leinster debut, scoring their third try

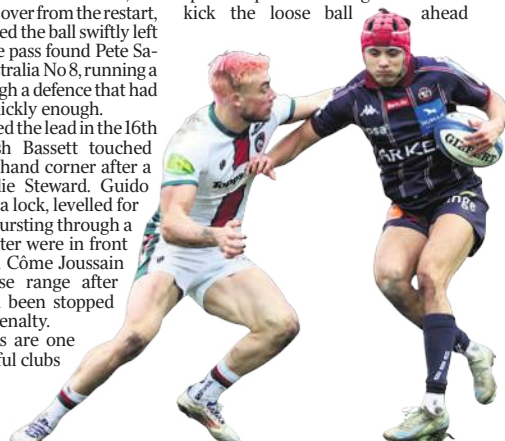
Leicester were outstanding in the first half, their aggressive defence preventing Bordeaux Bègles from finding their stride in attack, the Tigers' scrum well on top. It was their ascendancy in the scrum that created the platform for Leicester's opening score, the penalty kicked to the corner, Olly Cracknell stopped just short and Harry Wells crossing from short range.

The advantage was shortlived, as Tigers were turned over from the restart, the home side moved the ball swiftly left and Jalibert's inside pass found Pete Samu, the former Australia No 8, running a line that tore through a defence that had not reorganised quickly enough.

Leicester regained the lead in the 16th minute when Josh Bassett touched down in the right-hand corner after a surge from Freddie Steward. Guido Petti, the Argentina lock, levelled for the home side by bursting through a lineout, but Leicester were in front at the break when Côme Jussain crossed from close range after Charlie Clare had been stopped short from a tap-penalty.

Bordeaux Bègles are one of the most powerful clubs

Ollie Hassell-Collins grapples with Bielle-Biarrey



in France, beaten finalists in the Top 14 last season, and with only Toulouse ahead of them in the table this season. After half-time, they clicked into gear, with Bielle-Biarrey to the fore. His first try came when Hanro Liebenberg dropped a pass and Penaud launched a kick deep into the Leicester half.

There was no backfield cover in place and Bielle-Biarrey, in the blink of an eye, sprinted past a turning defence to kick the loose ball

and score. Two minutes later Jalibert's nicely weighted kick found Samu wide on the right to score his second try after Penaud had claimed a high ball. Nicolas Depoortere, the strapping 21-year-old centre, then attacked down the left and found Bielle-Biarrey on his inside, the full back comprehensively outpacing Steward to score. In the space of five minutes, the game had been turned on its head and, with Jalibert unerring from the tee, the home side were 35-21 ahead.

Depoortere stretched the lead with a try of his own in the 73rd minute, but Leicester kept coming, clinching a bonus point when Perese pounced with the final play of the game, due reward for a performance of character.

**Scorers:** Bordeaux Bègles: Tries Samu 2 (7min, 46), Petti (29), Bielle-Biarrey 2 (44, 49), Depoortere (73). **Cons:** Jalibert 6. **Tigers:** Tries Wells (6), Bassett (16), Jussain (35), Perese (80+2). **Cons:** Shillcock 4. **Bordeaux Bègles:** L Bielle-Biarrey (J Carbery 63); D Penaud, N Depoortere, Y Moefana, A Retiere; M Jalibert, M Lucu; J Poirat (J Boniface 52), M Lamothe (C Sa 55), B Tameifuna (C Sadie 52), G Petti, J Gray (A Coleman 55), M Diaby (L Swinton 55), B Vergnes, P Samu. **Tigers:** F Steward; J Bassett (M Brown 65), I Perese, S Kata (J Woodward 64), O Hassell-Collins; J Shillcock, J van Poortvliet (T Whiteley 65); J Cronin (J Whitcombe 65), C Clare, J Heyes (W Hurd 63), H Wells, C Jussain (J Holloway 63), H Liebenberg, E Ilione, O Cracknell (K Hatherell 41). **Referee:** N Amashukell (Georgia).



## Dean did not know she'd got a hat-trick

Charlie Dean didn't realise she had claimed a hat-trick until the end of England's six-wicket win over South Africa in Durban. Dean, 23, and her fellow bowlers limited South Africa to 135 all out at Kingsmead

before England cruised to 137 for four in reply with 26 overs to spare, levelling their ODI series 1-1.

Off spinner Dean, whose hat-trick came across two overs, ended with four for 45 and she is only the third England woman to achieve the feat in ODIs, and the first since Clare Connor in 1999.

"I didn't even realise I had a hat-trick," she told Sky Sports. "I'm pleased with my game at the moment. I'm

Dean's four wickets helped England to level the ODI series at 1-1

still learning and growing but I'm becoming more consistent in how I'm going about things."

England, who wrapped up a 3-0 T20 series win over South Africa last week, play the decider in Potchefstroom on Wednesday before the two sides contest a one-off Test match in Bloemfontein, starting next Sunday.

## Rohit: India aren't scarred

### Cricket

Rohit Sharma vowed that his India team would rebound against Australia in Brisbane, rejecting the idea that a heavy defeat in the second Test would leave a mental scar.

Australia won the day-nighter in Adelaide by ten wickets to level the series at 1-1 after captain Pat Cummins took five for 57 to set up a simple chase. With less than a week before they meet again at the Gabba, India are racing against the clock to fix what went wrong.

"Firstly, it's not a scar, it's just we've lost a Test match," Rohit, the India captain, said. "We didn't play well enough. So it's important in this short time that we have just to figure out certain things. It's still 1-1 and definitely a way for us to get back into it."

India were dismissed for 180 after winning the toss and opting to bat at the Adelaide Oval, then were skittled for 175. It left Australia needing only 19 to win, which they completed in the first session on day three.

"When you come to Australia, the best chance of winning is by putting

runs on the board and, when we won the toss, we elected to bat," Rohit said.

"We knew that there would be challenges. But in the past, where the conditions have been a little challenging, we've batted really well to put runs on the board.

"That is the disappointing part, that we didn't bat well enough, you know, probably were 30 to 40 runs short with the bat in the first innings."

Before play began yesterday, there was a spicy exchange between the Australia batsman Travis Head and India bowler Mohammed Siraj.

The pair had traded barbs out in the middle on the previous day, after which Head claimed that all he said to Siraj was a sarcastic "well bowled".

"What he said in the press conference wasn't right," Siraj hit back before the final day's play. "It's a lie that he only said 'well bowled' to me. I respect everybody because cricket is a gentleman's game but what he did wasn't right. I didn't like it at all."

Asked about it after the match, Head said: "We'll move on. We've had a great week so let's not let it ruin it."

## Sport Second Test: New Zealand v England

# England cruise to victory after Root adds final flourish

Mike Atherton

Chief Cricket Correspondent, Wellington



### New Zealand v England

Wellington (New Zealand won toss): England beat New Zealand by 323 runs

When, in the summer of 2022, England's players were asked to define what Brendon McCullum and Ben Stokes had brought to the dressing room, it was Stuart Broad who distilled the essence of it most succinctly. "It's a mentality to get the most freedom and attacking style of play out of you, while loving cricket as much as you can," he said.

Broad, and others, have moved on, but that philosophy is written through this team like a stick of rock. Here in New Zealand, England have looked a contented bunch, e-scootering to the ground in Christchurch, walking among spectators to the Basin Reserve in Wellington, playing golf at every opportunity the itinerary allows, and playing enterprising and winning cricket along the way.

After beating New Zealand within four days and by eight wickets at Christchurch, England handed out a bigger hammering in Wellington to wrap up their first series win in the country since 2008. It took only three days and the margin of victory was an almost unbelievable (given the short time frame) 323 runs. They made a very good side look very ordinary indeed.

In Christchurch it was possible to argue that England had been given a helping hand by dint of the home team's dismal performance in the field. There were no such caveats necessary here: New Zealand were simply brushed aside. Steamrollered. England scored more than 700 runs across two innings at a rate of better than five runs an over, and then bowled New Zealand out twice, taking less than a full day's worth of overs to do so.

New Zealand have a fine record at home too, and are fresh from their historic whitewash of India. In the past decade they have been beaten only by Australia and South Africa on home soil, and England have not won here for a generation, when the partnership between James Anderson and Broad was in its genesis. With Gus Atkinson and Brydon Carse to the fore here, sharing 11 wickets across both innings, it is possible to see the beginnings of another destructive partnership.

Atkinson and Carse are among those who have come into the side since England's heavy defeat in India at the start of the year, when McCullum talked of the need for "refinement". It has been a refinement of personnel, rather than method, with some moved on, like Jonny Bairstow, Ben Foakes and the Sussex bowler Ollie Robinson, and others brought in. Jamie Smith and Jacob Bethell are two more key players added, alongside Atkinson and Carse.

Bethell shot to prominence here with a superb second-innings 96, which was one of a number of fine performances

### Most Test centuries

#### Of all time

|                  | Innings | Centuries | Average |
|------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Sachin Tendulkar | 329     | 51        | 53.78   |
| Jacques Kallis   | 280     | 45        | 55.37   |
| Ricky Ponting    | 287     | 41        | 51.85   |
| Kumar Sangakkara | 233     | 38        | 57.4    |
| Rahul Dravid     | 286     | 36        | 52.31   |
| Joe Root         | 276     | 36        | 50.93   |

#### Since start of 2021

|                    | Innings | Centuries | Average |
|--------------------|---------|-----------|---------|
| Joe Root           | 99      | 19        | 56.25   |
| Kane Williamson    | 41      | 9         | 59.43   |
| Harry Brook        | 38      | 8         | 61.62   |
| Dimuth Karunaratne | 56      | 7         | 48.37   |
| Usman Khawaja      | 58      | 7         | 50.94   |
| Marnus Labuschagne | 66      | 7         | 43.98   |

Source: Cricinfo

in a dominant display. Harry Brook's first-innings 123 — Brook spent the final day off the field with ankle soreness — was the defining performance of the game, while Ben Duckett, Joe Root and Bethell built on that the second time around. Atkinson and Carse stood out with the ball. Aggressive batting and fast bowling is the template for this team, which, of course, will work better in this type of conditions than, say, in Asia.

It was a three-sweater day in Wellington, the wind gusting upwards of 100km/h at times according to the local weather reports. That, combined with a sprinkling of rain around lunchtime and New Zealand's flaky initial response to England's declaration, sent the locals drifting away from the ground early on. It was a sell-out, although the empty spaces on the grass banks and the reserved seating revealed much about the state of the game and the home team's travails.

Stokes extended England's innings by 30 minutes in the morning, enough time for Root to go to his 36th Test hundred, completed with an impish reverse-ramp off Will O'Rourke — a "f--- you" shot if ever there was one — and a gleeful smile. At the moment of impact, as the ball went off the glove over the 'keeper's head, Root raised his arms in triumph, as did Stokes at the non-striker's end, captain and senior player in happy unison.

Astonishingly it was Root's 19th Test hundred since the start of 2021, a remarkable late-career flourish. With his team so far ahead when he came to the crease, this was simply a matter of getting the job done and a telling lesson to the youngsters in the dressing room about not spurning easy runs. He now has as many Test hundreds as Rahul Dravid, and only Sachin Tendulkar, Jacques Kallis, Ricky Ponting and Kumar Sangakkara have more.

Stokes set New Zealand a nominal 583 to win, once Root edged to the 'keeper, and the home team did not show much appetite for the fight in the period before lunch, losing four wickets in 14 overs. Chris Woakes bowled a fine new-ball spell that accounted for

Devon Conway and Kane Williamson, while Carse came pounding in, picking up Tom Latham and Rachin Ravindra, the latter on the point of lunch with the rain sweeping in horizontally on the gusts of wind.

Conway is having a poor series. He looks low on confidence and was beaten on the inside edge from round the wicket. Williamson was surprised by extra bounce, feathering an edge behind. Carse took a superb athletic catch following through, after a leading edge from Latham, and Ravindra's poor series continued with an airy flash outside the off stump. His demise was Carse's 25th wicket of what has become an exceptional winter for the fast bowler.

Daryl Mitchell and Tom Blundell dug in after lunch, as they so often have against England. Blundell was missed by Bethell before he had scored, a sharp chance at third slip to Bethell's left as he drove at a full ball from Carse. After that Blundell took his chances against Shoaib Bashir, doing the grunt work bowling into the wind. Mitchell got a good ball from Atkinson immediately after afternoon drinks and Glenn Phillips was beaten on the back foot by Bashir, the off spinner's sole success in a session where he conceded four sixes.

Blundell went to his fifth Test hundred after tea, taking two more sixes off Bashir, for five in all, after which his innings was cut short by a brilliant piece of instinctive fielding from Duckett at slip. Anticipating a fine dab sweep as Blundell went low into position, Duckett set off from slip towards leg slip, parried the ball in the air when making contact and then caught the rebound.

Stokes brought himself on to administer the coup de grâce with scene-stealing figures of 22-0-5-3, as New Zealand went down swinging. After such a near-miss (the margin one run) last time in Wellington, this was a redemption victory of sorts. It was Stokes's 19th win as England captain — one more than Mike Brearley in the same number of matches — and his sixth series win since taking over a team that was in a dire state. What a transformation he has wrought.



Duckett runs from slip to take a diving catch off the bowling of Bashir and bring

## 'We were right to put

Mike Atherton

A huge gulf between the teams there may have been in Wellington, but after the match the opposing captains, Ben Stokes and Tom Latham, found common ground in analysing the reasons for the outcome.

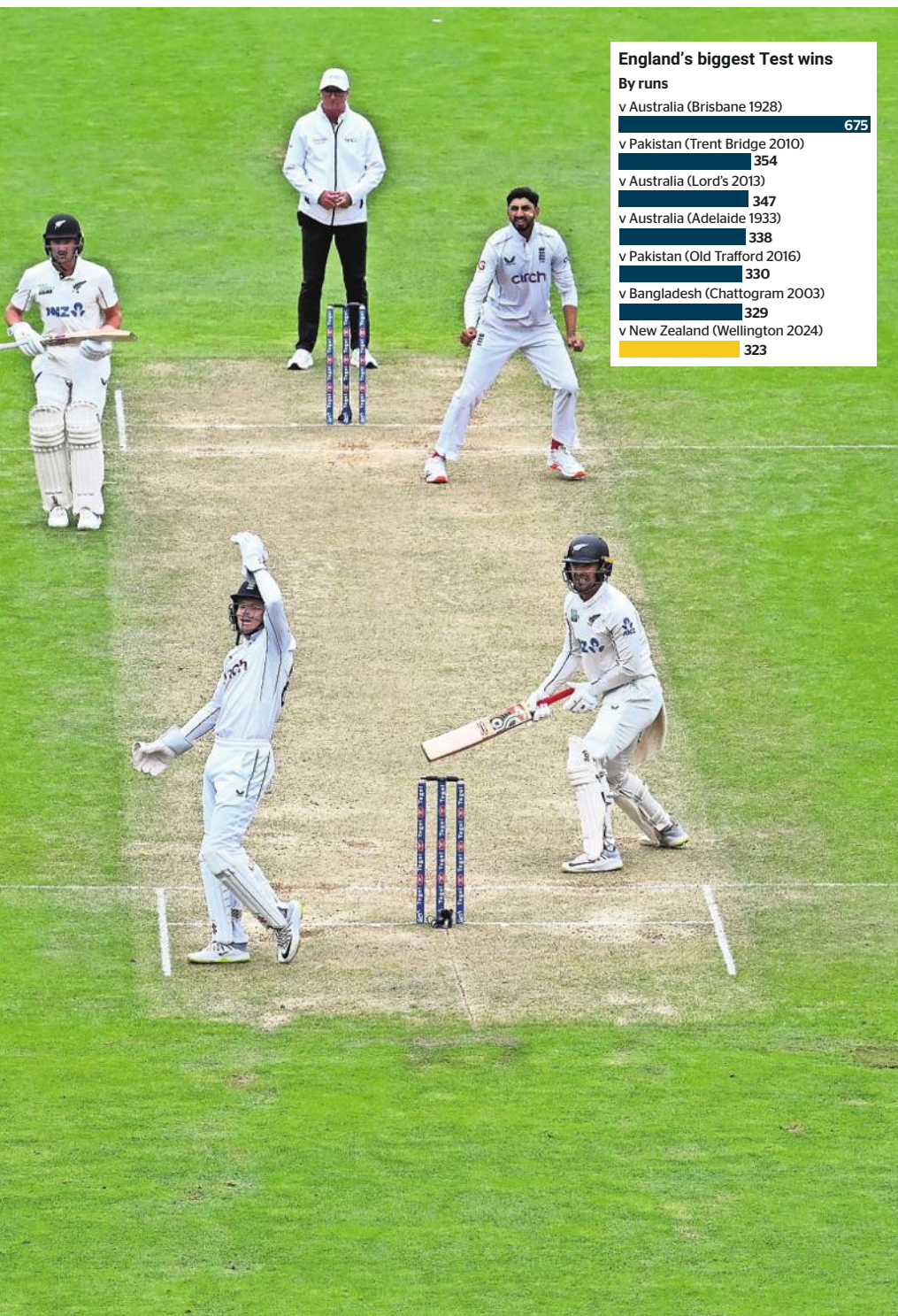
For both it was simple enough: Harry Brook, the player of the match for his stupendous first-day hundred that dictated the course of the rest of the game. Stokes was uncertain what he wanted to do at the toss: Latham was certain he wanted to bowl. Both captains felt the pitch was at its most helpful then and so Brook's innings, his eighth Test hundred and by his own estimation his best, was the reason En-

gland were able to ride out any disadvantage to end up winning by 323 runs on day three.

Of Brook, Stokes said: "He's just phenomenal. You take a step back and no one has a right to go out and score 120 on that wicket against the attack New Zealand have."

"New Zealand have got some incredibly skilful bowlers and for him to play like that was just exceptional. There are only a few players in the world who could go out and play like he did on day one. I'm glad he's in our team."

Latham agreed. "It's the pressure they are able to put you under, especially with the bat," the New Zealand captain said. "I think on day one it was offering enough for our bowlers and the



England's biggest Test wins

By runs

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| v Australia (Brisbane 1928)     | 675 |
| v Pakistan (Trent Bridge 2010)  | 354 |
| v Australia (Lord's 2013)       | 347 |
| v Australia (Adelaide 1933)     | 338 |
| v Pakistan (Old Trafford 2016)  | 330 |
| v Bangladesh (Chattogram 2003)  | 329 |
| v New Zealand (Wellington 2024) | 323 |

Blundell's defiance to an end. The New Zealander's knock of 115 from 102 balls was the top score of his side's second innings

Final scoreboard from Basin Reserve, Wellington

| ENGLAND First Innings   |     |     |     | ENGLAND Second Innings   |     |     |     |
|---|-----|-----|-----|--|-----|-----|-----|
|   | R   | B   | M   |  | R   | B   | M   |
| Z Crawley   | 17  | 23  | 30  | Z Crawley  | 8   | 7   | 5   |
| b Henry   |     |     |     | c Conway b Henry   |     |     |     |
| B M Duckett   | 0   | 8   | 14  | B M Duckett  | 92  | 112 | 179 |
| c Latham b Henry  |     |     |     | b Southee  |     |     |     |
| J G Bethell   | 16  | 28  | 42  | J G Bethell  | 96  | 118 | 154 |
| c Blundell b Smith  |     |     |     | c Blundell b Southee   |     |     |     |
| J E Root  | 3   | 7   | 13  | J E Root   | 106 | 130 | 208 |
| c Mitchell b Smith  |     |     |     | c Blundell b O'Rourke  |     |     |     |
| H C Brook   | 123 | 115 | 194 | H C Brook  | 55  | 61  | 93  |
| run out   |     |     |     | c O'Rourke b Phillips  |     |     |     |
| †O J D Pope   | 66  | 78  | 122 | †O J D Pope  | 10  | 26  | 29  |
| c Ravindra b O'Rourke   |     |     |     | c Mitchell b Henry   |     |     |     |
| *B A Stokes   | 2   | 15  | 14  | *B A Stokes  | 49  | 42  | 66  |
| c Latham b O'Rourke   |     |     |     | not out  |     |     |     |
| C R Woakes  | 18  | 43  | 54  | Extras   | 11  |     |     |
| c Blundell b O'Rourke   |     |     |     | (lb 2, w 8, nb 1)  |     |     |     |
| A A P Atkinson  | 4   | 3   | 1   | TOTAL (6 wkts dec, 82.3 overs)   | 427 |     |     |
| c Phillips b Smith  |     |     |     |  |     |     |     |
| B A Carse   | 9   | 8   | 13  | Fall of wickets 1-9, 2-196, 3-211, 4-306, 5-327, 6-427.  |     |     |     |
| c O'Rourke b Smith  |     |     |     | Bowling Southee 14-0-72-2; Henry 18-0-100-2; Smith 16-0-74-0; O'Rourke 18.3-0-104-1; Phillips 16-0-75-1. |     |     |     |
| S Bashir  | 0   | 2   | 5   |  |     |     |     |
| not out   |     |     |     |  |     |     |     |
| Extras  | 22  |     |     |  |     |     |     |
| (b 1, lb 7, w 12, nb 2)   |     |     |     |  |     |     |     |
| TOTAL (54.4 overs)  | 280 |     |     |  |     |     |     |
| Fall of wickets 1-12, 2-21, 3-26, 4-43, 5-217, 6-222, 7-259, 8-263, 9-275.                            |     |     |     |  |     |     |     |
| Bowling Southee 12-0-62-0; Henry 15-5-43-2; Smith 11.4-1-86-4; O'Rourke 12-1-49-3; Phillips 4-0-32-0. |     |     |     |  |     |     |     |



Root scored his 36th Test century

| NEW ZEALAND First Innings   |     |    |    | NEW ZEALAND Second Innings  |     |     |     |
|---|-----|----|----|---|-----|-----|-----|
|   | R   | B  | M  |   | R   | B   | M   |
| *T W M Latham   | 17  | 32 | 70 | *T W M Latham   | 24  | 35  | 46  |
| b Stokes  |     |    |    | c and b Carse   |     |     |     |
| D P Conway  | 11  | 27 | 25 | D P Conway  | 0   | 5   | 11  |
| c Brook b Atkinson  |     |    |    | b Woakes  |     |     |     |
| K S Williamson  | 37  | 56 | 79 | K S Williamson  | 4   | 16  | 22  |
| c Pope b Carse  |     |    |    | c Pope b Woakes   |     |     |     |
| R Ravindra  | 3   | 10 | 18 | R Ravindra  | 6   | 16  | 36  |
| c Carse b Woakes  |     |    |    | c Pope b Carse  |     |     |     |
| D J Mitchell  | 6   | 12 | 26 | D J Mitchell  | 32  | 70  | 98  |
| c Pope b Carse  |     |    |    | c Pope b Atkinson   |     |     |     |
| W P O'Rourke  | 0   | 26 | 38 | †T A Blundell   | 115 | 102 | 149 |
| lbw b Carse   |     |    |    | c Duckett b Bashir  |     |     |     |
| †T A Blundell   | 16  | 20 | 26 | G D Phillips  | 16  | 11  | 15  |
| b Carse   |     |    |    | b Bashir  |     |     |     |
| G D Phillips  | 16  | 16 | 28 | N G Smith   | 42  | 51  | 78  |
| not out   |     |    |    | c Pope b Stokes   |     |     |     |
| N G Smith   | 14  | 12 | 20 | M J Henry   | 4   | 7   | 11  |
| b Atkinson  |     |    |    | c Bethell b Stokes  |     |     |     |
| M J Henry   | 0   | 1  | 2  | T G Southee   | 8   | 13  | 17  |
| c Duckett b Atkinson  |     |    |    | c Woakes b Stokes   |     |     |     |
| T G Southee   | 0   | 1  | 3  | W P O'Rourke  | 1   | 4   | 8   |
| lbw b Atkinson  |     |    |    | not out   |     |     |     |
| Extras  | 5   |    |    | Extras  | 7   |     |     |
| (lb 1, nb 4)  |     |    |    | (b 1, lb 2, nb 4)   |     |     |     |
| TOTAL (34.5 overs)  | 125 |    |    | TOTAL (54.2 overs)  | 259 |     |     |
| Fall of wickets 1-18, 2-53, 3-64, 4-74, 5-79, 6-95, 7-96, 8-125, 9-125.         |     |    |    | Fall of wickets 1-9, 2-25, 3-33, 4-59, 5-106, 6-141, 7-237, 8-247, 9-254.                           |     |     |     |
| Bowling Woakes 8-1-26-1; Atkinson 8.5-0-31-4; Carse 10-2-46-4; Stokes 8-0-21-1. |     |    |    | Bowling Woakes 10-4-20-2; Atkinson 12-0-68-1; Carse 11-0-53-2; Bashir 19-2-110-2; Stokes 2.2-0-5-3. |     |     |     |

Umpires A T Holdstock (South Africa) and R J Tucker (Australia).  
TV umpire A Raza (Pakistan). Reserve umpire C Black (New Zealand).  
Match referee D Boon (Australia). Man of the match H C Brook (England).

Series details: First Test England won by eight wickets (Hagley Oval, Christchurch). Third Test: Dec 14-18 (Seddon Park, Hamilton).

# Bethell at No 3 – but brilliant Brook was matchwinner'

way Harry played in that innings was outstanding. Credit where it's due. The way he played put us under pressure from ball one. He played some incredible shots that you don't necessarily see from other teams around the world."

Brook's innings, a high-risk but calculated assault, could be seen as the essence of Bazball, which is to try to put bowlers off their ability to bowl the same ball over and over again, as they would have been able to do at more defensively orientated batsmen of the past.

"Our ethos with bat in hand is that we know we have to absorb pressure at times, but understanding that we need to put it back on them at some point as well. That was a great example on day

Most wins as England Test captain

|                 | Won | Lost | Drawn |
|-----------------|-----|------|-------|
| Joe Root        | 27  | 26   | 11    |
| Michael Vaughan | 26  | 11   | 14    |
| Alastair Cook   | 24  | 22   | 13    |
| Andrew Strauss  | 24  | 11   | 15    |
| Peter May       | 20  | 10   | 11    |
| Ben Stokes      | 19  | 11   | 1     |
| Mike Brearley   | 18  | 4    | 9     |
| Nasser Hussain  | 17  | 15   | 13    |

one from Harry Brook and Ollie Pope [who scored 66], unbelievable bravery and backing of their own ability," Stokes said.

"We got bowled out in 50 overs [54.4] but we had 280 runs on the board which was a good score on that day-one wicket and then we obviously had time left with the ball to be able to make some inroads. To score 280 and take five wickets at the end of day one really set this game up.

"I'm just very proud of the way that we've gone out there and backed our ability and our way of thinking when we have been put under pressure. To put it back on them and see how they respond. Brook was a great example on day one, running down the wicket, hit-

ting sixes over cover, then they started bowling bouncers, so it does work every now and again," the captain added.

Clearly, it requires batsmen of exceptional ability to be able to do that, which underpins the selection of the likes of Jacob Bethell, who is high on talent but short, so far, of achievement in the first-class game. Stokes was quick to praise the 21-year-old's contribution in the second innings when falling four runs short of what would have been his maiden Test (and first-class) hundred.

"I know there was a bit made of Beth batting at No3 with his inexperience and the lack of first-class cricket batting up the top of the order. Should we bat him lower down and ease him into the trials and tribulations of Test cricket?

But we don't think like that," Stokes said. "You've got a young lad with so much potential and so much talent, why not let him go out there and expose himself to Test cricket at its toughest?"

"If it hadn't have gone well for him in those first two Test matches, that wouldn't have changed anyone's mind in our dressing room or our perception of him as a player. If he hadn't batted in the top three, he wouldn't have come into this game with the confidence of smacking 50 [at Christchurch], which I've no doubt led him into this game to play with the confidence he did in our second innings.

"I think he's proved a lot to a lot of people and proved why we rate him so highly."

## Sport Abu Dhabi Grand Prix

## Norris victory earns first title

## Molly Hudson

Motor Racing  
Reporter,  
Abu Dhabi



As one British driver, Lewis Hamilton, marked the end of a trophy-laden era at Mercedes, Lando Norris drove McLaren to some silverware of his own.

After a first-lap spin for his team-mate, Norris almost single-handedly secured McLaren's first constructors' title in 26 years, in a calm, mature drive to seal the win. "Next year is going to be my year too [in the drivers' championship]," was his determined response, after his cheers of celebration, and he also promised that he would get "absolutely hammered" with Zak Brown, McLaren's chief executive officer.

McLaren held a 21-point lead over Ferrari before the race, but the Italian team piled on the pressure, finishing second and third. It is a remarkable turnaround for McLaren; in 2020 they were a few months from being unable to start the next season, such were their financial troubles. Their more assured off-track structure with external investment, and the promotion of Andrea Stella to team principal, have brought them back to the front of the grid. Both of their drivers were not even born when the team last lifted this trophy, in 1998.

When Brown joined McLaren in 2016, he found a problem that has contributed to the downfall of many great teams in Formula 1. When things did not go well, members of the leadership team and other senior figures criticised each other instead of working collectively. He reminded them that they were all operating together to make progress. That mentality has been the cornerstone of their success this season, and morphed into a phrase from Stella: "No poison biscuits," whether offered internally, or by other teams. But the win did not come easily.

As the sun set at the Yas Marina circuit, chaos reigned. McLaren began the race in a one-two, Norris on pole and Oscar Piastri second. They had been told, under strict instructions, that the team came first this weekend, with the constructors' title in play.

A few seconds after the lights went out, that title was in rather more jeopardy, as Max Verstappen attempted a move down the inside of Piastri, sending them both for a spin, with the McLaren dropping to the back of the race.

"Move of a world champion, that one," came the sarcastic response from Piastri, and Verstappen was duly awarded a ten-second penalty by the stewards. After serving it, he said: "Could we ask for 20 seconds, stupid idiots."

Piastri fought back to finish tenth, with McLaren winning the title by 14 points. "Sometimes adversity gives you the opportunity to show your strengths and I think that's exactly what happened today," Stella said.

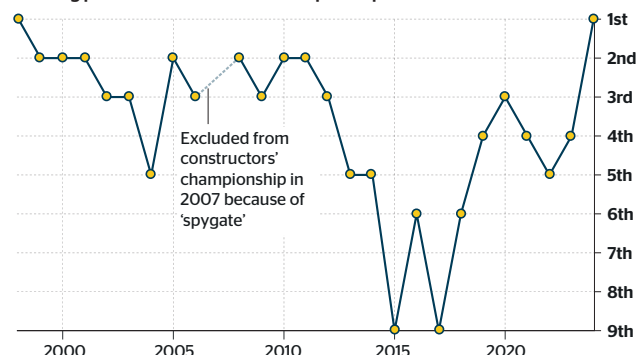
In the opening-lap pandemonium, Zhou Guanyu had a false start, Yuki Tsunoda stalled and Sergio Pérez was driven into by Valtteri Bottas, leading to his retirement.

Those could be Pérez's final moments in Formula 1 — and almost certainly with Red Bull. The Mexican has had a torrid season and is set to be replaced by Liam Lawson after a senior leadership meeting today. That Pérez has a contract at Red Bull for next season means little when he has finished only eighth in the drivers' championship, and the huge points differential between him and his world champion team-mate Verstappen meant they could not retain the con-



## McLaren's long wait

Finishing position in constructors' championship



The McLaren team celebrate their long-awaited triumph in the constructors' championship, with Norris, top left, and chief executive officer Brown basking in the

structors' championship. "I just know I've got a contract to race [next] year, unless something changes in the coming days," Pérez said, with the first public hint his return would not be a certainty.

Hamilton and Charles Leclerc were the happiest with the drama playing out in front of them. "The best tribute to our 12 years together would be a great result on track," Mercedes had said before the race, although those hopes were somewhat scuppered on Saturday evening.

A broken bollard made its way under Hamilton's car, ruining the final corners of his most important timed lap, which he was on in the dying seconds of the session thanks to an error that Toto Wolff, the Mercedes team principal, described as "inexcusable". Hamilton qualified 18th, but started in 16th because of other drivers' grid penalties. He had progressed to 12th by the time

the virtual safety car was deployed for Pérez's stricken Red Bull, and Leclerc was eighth. The Ferrari driver had had a weekend to forget, with a ten-place grid penalty after requiring a new energy store for his power unit, and then qualifying in 14th, but starting 19th.

He had a brilliant first lap, navigating around the cars ahead of him with a brave move on the brakes around turn six. "I think we've done the maximum [we could]," a dejected Leclerc said. "It hurts, obviously, because the season was so close until the end."

His team-mate, Carlos Sainz, signed off from Ferrari with second place, before he is replaced by Hamilton. Such is the nature of Formula 1 that Sainz will today drive in a Williams for the first time in a filming day.

This was a weekend of goodbyes, with Franco Colapinto thanking his Willi-

ams team before the race for making "his dreams come true" having replaced Logan Sargeant mid-season, but he does not have a seat next year and was forced to retire because of a suspected power-unit issue.

Zhou, Kevin Magnussen and Bottas were also departing, and the latter two collided after Bottas had a lock-up as he attempted to pass the Haas. The damage forced Bottas to retire.

Lawson had his race ruined after an unsafe release from a pitstop resulted in a ten-second stop-and-go penalty, while Piastri received a ten-second time penalty for causing a collision with Colapinto earlier in the race. Lawson also retired late on in Abu Dhabi.

Norris serenely secured victory, his fourth of the season, to finish second in the drivers' championship behind Verstappen. "I've certainly not come out on

top as often as I would have liked in certain moments as a driver, especially in my fights against Max," he admitted. "As much as it hurts sometimes, I'm probably happy about it now that I'm going to go into next season knowing that I can fight."

Hamilton had started on the opposite tyre strategy to his rivals, in an attempt to make up the deficit from qualifying, which set up a late charge on the medium tyre, while his team encouraged him that a podium was not out of reach.

That proved too much of an ask, with Hamilton eventually finishing fourth, with a vintage final-lap move on his team-mate, George Russell, at turn nine. His bright red outfit worn to the paddock was a reminder of what is to come at Ferrari, but for now he begins a Mercedes farewell tour, including visits to Kuala Lumpur and Stuttgart.

# for McLaren in 26 years



JAKUB PORZYCZAK/REUTERS



success, which was last achieved by Hakkinen and Coulthard, top right, in 1998

## CONTINUED FROM BACK

Rwanda forfeit for Verstappen programme organised by the Rwanda Automobile Club. The activity will also involve an FIA Affordable Cross Car that was built locally using blueprints provided by the governing body.

Mohammed Ben Sulayem, the FIA president, has recently cracked down on swearing. Charles Leclerc, the Ferrari driver, was fined €10,000 (about £8,200) — half of which is suspended on the condition he does not commit the same offence in the next 12 months — for swearing in a press conference after the Mexican Grand Prix in October. His offence was deemed less severe because he “was immediately apologetic”.

Verstappen already has experience of this style of punishment, as a result of shoving Esteban Ocon after the

Brazilian Grand Prix in 2018. That time Verstappen was ordered to observe stewards at the Formula E race in Marrakesh, Morocco, in 2019 before participating in a stewards’ workshop organised by the FIA. The punishment must be served at an FIA, or related, event.

The Red Bull driver finished sixth in the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix yesterday, but accumulated two more penalty points on his licence, as well as a ten-second penalty, for a collision with McLaren’s Oscar Piastri at the first corner. Drivers serve a one-race suspension if they accumulate 12 penalty points across 12 months — Verstappen now has eight. This week the Dutchman and his partner, Kelly Piquet, announced they were expecting a baby. “Maybe I’ll make sure I get to 12 points when the baby is born. Then I can go on paternity leave,” Verstappen joked.

## How they finished

|    |                         |               |
|----|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1  | L Norris McLaren        | 1hr 26min 33s |
| 2  | C Sainz Ferrari         | +5.832s       |
| 3  | C Leclerc Ferrari       | +31.928s      |
| 4  | L Hamilton Mercedes     | +36.483s      |
| 5  | G Russell Mercedes      | +37.538s      |
| 6  | M Verstappen Red Bull   | +49.847s      |
| 7  | P Gasly Alpine          | +72.560s      |
| 8  | N Hülkenberg Haas       | +75.554s      |
| 9  | F Alonso Aston Martin   | +82.373s      |
| 10 | O Piastri McLaren       | +83.821s      |
| 11 | A Albon Williams        | +1 lap        |
| 12 | Y Tsunoda RB            | +1 lap        |
| 13 | J Doohan Alpine         | +1 lap        |
| 14 | L Stroll Aston Martin   | +1 lap        |
| 15 | Zhou Guanyu Kick Sauber | +1 lap        |
| 16 | K Magnussen Haas        | +1 lap        |
| 17 | L Lawson RB             | DNF           |
| 18 | V Bottas Kick Sauber    | DNF           |
| 19 | F Colapinto Williams    | DNF           |
| 20 | S Pérez Red Bull        | DNF           |

## Overall standings

|    |                       |        |
|----|-----------------------|--------|
| 1  | M Verstappen Red Bull | 437pts |
| 2  | L Norris McLaren      | 374    |
| 3  | C Leclerc Ferrari     | 356    |
| 4  | O Piastri McLaren     | 292    |
| 5  | C Sainz Ferrari       | 290    |
| 6  | G Russell Mercedes    | 245    |
| 7  | L Hamilton Mercedes   | 223    |
| 8  | S Pérez Red Bull      | 152    |
| 9  | F Alonso Aston Martin | 70     |
| 10 | P Gasly Alpine        | 42     |

## Fastest lap

K Magnussen 1:25.637

## Constructors

|    |              |        |
|----|--------------|--------|
| 1  | McLaren      | 666pts |
| 2  | Ferrari      | 652    |
| 3  | Red Bull     | 589    |
| 4  | Mercedes     | 468    |
| 5  | Aston Martin | 94     |
| 6  | Alpine       | 65     |
| 7  | Haas         | 58     |
| 8  | RB           | 46     |
| 9  | Williams     | 17     |
| 10 | Kick Sauber  | 4      |

## Hamilton: This has been the longest year of my life

Molly Hudson

Lewis Hamilton admitted that this season has felt like the longest year of his life, after ending his tenure at Mercedes with a “world champion drive”.

News leaked before the start of the season that the 39-year-old would be joining Ferrari next year, leaving a potentially awkward and prolonged departure from his 12-year association with Mercedes.

It has been a tumultuous year, winning races in Silverstone and Spa, while also struggling in qualifying and finishing 22 points behind his team-mate George Russell in the drivers’ standings.

In Abu Dhabi, the scene of perhaps his most painful Mercedes moment when a potential eighth world title was snatched away from him in 2021, he managed to progress from 16th on the grid, to finish fourth. “It’s not that I need to have confidence, I’ve always had the confidence, but it’s definitely really nice to finish with a strong, hard battle,” Hamilton said. “No mistakes, solid drive.”

“It’s been a really turbulent year, probably the longest year of my life, I would say, because we’ve known it from the beginning that I’m leaving, and it’s like a relationship, when you’ve told whoever the counterpart is that you’re leaving, but you’re living together for a whole year. Lots of ups and downs emotionally, but we finished off with a high today.”

“This year we’ve definitely as a team had our ups and downs, there’s been certain feelings because I’ve chosen to go a certain way and it’s not been easy for people to accept and to get over. But then bit by bit through the year, what’s come through is that there’s

real love at the end of the day.”

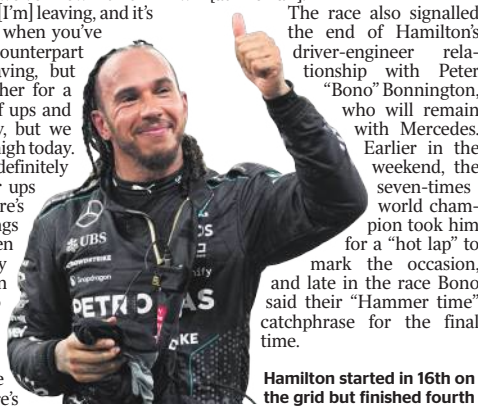
Hamilton was given permission to park on the grid with the top three at the end of the race, after he had performed doughnuts on the pit straight. He then climbed out, and paused for a moment, crouched next to his car, deep in thought, as though saying goodbye.

In an emotional radio message, he thanked the team. “What started as a leap of faith turned into a journey into the history books,” he said. “Thank you for all the courage, the determination, the passion, and for seeing me and supporting me.”

Toto Wolff, the Mercedes team principal, praised Hamilton’s recovery after his qualifying session was ruined by a bollard which lodged under his car. “That was the drive of a world champion,” he said. “I always try to be analytical and if the bollard hadn’t been in our way yesterday then we could have fought for victory. On the other side, he said to me, ‘We’ve had so many wins and so much success, these last few races they don’t change how we feel.’”

Wolff told Hamilton on the radio afterwards: “If we can’t win, you should win [at Ferrari].”

The race also signalled the end of Hamilton’s driver-engineer relationship with Peter “Bono” Bonnington, who will remain with Mercedes. Earlier in the weekend, the seven-times world champion took him for a “hot lap” to mark the occasion, and late in the race Bono said their “Hammer time” catchphrase for the final time.



Hamilton started in 16th on the grid but finished fourth

## Wilcox to fill gap amid search for replacement

### CONTINUED FROM BACK

July. The amount of compensation paid has never been publicly disclosed but it is understood to be more than United’s original offer of £2 million, with sources suggesting it was closer to £5 million.

Jason Wilcox, the technical director who joined United in April, will take on Ashworth’s duties in the short term as the club look at potential replacements. As well as Ashworth and Wilcox, Ineos appointed Christopher Vivell, the former Chelsea and RB Leipzig technical director, as director of recruitment in July.

United have very little to spend in the January transfer window because they shelled out £200 million on five players in the summer window. Only three of those came in after Ashworth’s appointment on July 1 (Manuel Ugarte, Matthijs de Ligt and Noussair Mazraoui), but it is likely that he would have been made aware of the club’s pursuit of the other two targets, Joshua Zirkzee and Leny Yoro. Mazraoui, who joined from Bayern Munich in a £17.2 million deal, won the club’s player of the month award in November and has been the only one of the new signings to make a positive impact.

Those five players were supposed to help Erik ten Hag turn things around at United after his team’s eighth-place Premier League finish last season, but the Dutchman endured a miserable start to this campaign and was sacked in



Ashworth joined United in July after leaving Newcastle

October, with United 13th. They remain in that position after losing successive matches under Ten Hag’s replacement Ruben Amorim, who had won two and drawn one of his first three games in charge.

It is understood that Ratcliffe had serious reservations about Ten Hag staying on as manager, but he was persuaded to stick with the 54-year-old after he led the team to victory against Manchester City in the FA Cup final in May.

Before kick-off on Saturday, *United We Stand* published an impactful interview with Ratcliffe, who criticised the recruitment of the pre-Ineos reign and said that United’s data analysis capability was “in the last century”. Ratcliffe said that “inertia” had caused United to become a “mediocre” club. He also defended the decision to sack 250 staff and hike ticket costs.

The 72-year-old has come under fire from fans for scrapping concessions of what the club says are the 3 per cent of tickets that remain unsold for Premier League matches and introducing a minimum price of £66.

“I know we get criticism but we do need to challenge the cost of running this club because what I want to be free to do is buy really good footballers, not spend so much of our infrastructure,” he said. “We can’t run a business at a loss, which is where United have been. If you are losing money, you have to borrow from the bank to pay for the losses. Eventually that becomes unsustainable.”

“The other big one is we need to run the club efficiently and well. We need to sweat every pound so that we have more capacity for the investment in players.” Martin Samuel, *The Game*, page 8

# Sport

## Ashworth out after only 159 days at United

Tension with Ratcliffe led to sporting director's exit

Paul Hirst, Matt Lawton, Charlotte Duncker, Martin Hardy

Dan Ashworth has left Manchester United only five months after being appointed sporting director because of a breakdown in his working relationship with Sir Jim Ratcliffe and other members of the club's board.

Sources said that it had become clear that Ashworth was not a good fit for the club and vice versa, so it was decided on Saturday evening that he should depart, after 159 days in the job.

It is understood that tension had begun to grow between Ashworth and other members of the United hierarchy, including the club's co-owner Ratcliffe, who had championed the 53-year-old's appointment.

This year Ratcliffe, who owns a 27 per cent stake in United, described Ashworth, who was brought in from Newcastle United, as "clearly one of the top sporting directors in the world".

Ratcliffe was thought to be unhappy with some of the responses that Ashworth and Omar Berrada, the chief executive, gave in a question-and-answer session with newspaper reporters at Old Trafford on September 1, and some of the decisions that Ashworth took.

It is unclear which answers from the press briefing annoyed Ratcliffe, but he felt that they conflicted with his own point of view.

Multiple sources said that Ratcliffe's public praise of Berrada during an interview with the fanzine *United We Stand* demonstrated that he still has

faith in his chief executive, who joined United in July after a successful spell as chief football operations officer for the City Football Group, of which Manchester City are a part.

Ratcliffe described Berrada, 46, as a "great chief executive", but the absence of praise for Ashworth during the interview, which was published on Saturday, signalled that all was not well between the former FA technical director and his new employers.

Ashworth was summoned to the United boardroom at Old Trafford on Saturday night after the 3-2 defeat by Nottingham Forest and it was decided then that he should leave his position.

United communicated the decision in a press release at 10.30am yesterday, stating that Ashworth's departure was "by mutual agreement". "We would like to thank Dan for his work and support during a transitional period for the club and wish him well for the future," the statement read.

Ashworth's departure is all the more surprising given that United fought tooth and nail to bring him to the club this year. Newcastle, who employed Ashworth as their sporting director, placed him on gardening leave in February after he had told them of his desire to move to Old Trafford.

Ashworth, who had moved to the North East from Brighton & Hove Albion in February 2022, had threatened to take Newcastle to arbitration in an effort to resolve the impasse, but an out-of-court settlement was agreed in

Continued on page 57



### Bazball at its finest

Masterful Joe Root leads England to crushing Test series victory

Mike Atherton, pages 54-55



MARK PAUL/ALAMY

## Rwanda forfeit for Verstappen

Molly Hudson

Motor Racing Reporter, Abu Dhabi

Max Verstappen will complete his community service-style punishment, for swearing in a press conference, in Rwanda next week.

Verstappen, 27, will visit the country for the FIA's annual prize-giving gala on Friday, where he will collect his fourth consecutive world championship trophy. The Dutch driver was told to "accomplish some work of public interest" after saying his car was "f\*\*\*ed" during a press conference in Singapore in September, when referencing the struggles he had at the Azerbaijan Grand Prix the previous week.

The Times understands that he will serve the punishment while in Kigali, Rwanda's capital, undertaking some work with junior competitors as part of the grassroots development

Continued on page 57



## Chelsea embarrass Spurs and go second

Cole Palmer scores two penalties — including a Panenka — as Chelsea come from 2-0 down to claim 4-3 win against London rivals, *The Game*, pages 2-3



## Surgery after Antonio crash

Matt Lawton

Chief Sports Correspondent

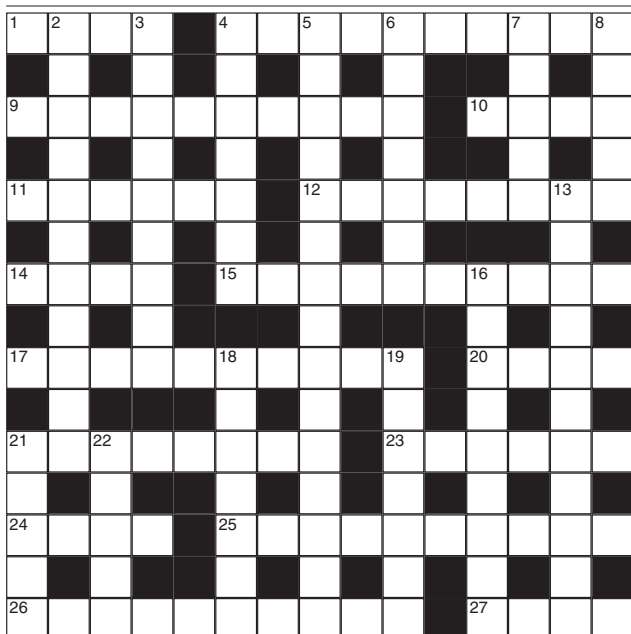
The West Ham United striker Michail Antonio has undergone surgery after breaking his leg in a horrific car accident.

The 34-year-old was taken to hospital on Saturday after pictures of his severely damaged Ferrari in Epping Forest, Essex, were shared on social media.

West Ham, who face Wolves in the Premier League this evening, released a statement yesterday, which read: "Michail Antonio has undergone surgery on a lower limb fracture following a road traffic accident on Saturday afternoon. Michail will continue to be monitored in hospital over the coming days.

"Everyone at the club wishes Michail a speedy recovery and wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the football family at large for the overwhelming support shown since yesterday's news."

## Times Crossword 29,095



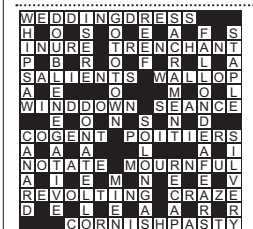
### ACROSS

- 1 Feature of building computer programs, we hear (4)
- 4 Good humour always at home in the course of game (10)
- 9 Looked at team showing anger maybe after trick (10)
- 10 Capital this person's invested in American city (4)
- 11 Left in Calais, unable to communicate successfully? (6)
- 12 Competes in race that's most laborious (8)
- 14 Pitch made by one favouring war? (4)
- 15 What's carried by ship is scary — discarded loot (10)
- 17 Small unit that could make mice tremor (10)
- 20 Irishman bringing post around (4)
- 21 One drafted in — being cute, I end getting redeployed (8)
- 23 Figure is round and not totally lifeless (6)
- 24 Meeting female, give false account willingly (4)
- 25 British journeys frenetic, needing introduction of one female attendant (10)
- 26 Insignificant person to enforce delay upon being picked up (10)
- 27 Numbers given hotel grub (4)

### DOWN

- 2 Form of impropriety when academic leads a country (11)
- 3 Poet's village festival entertaining a hundred folk regularly (4,5)
- 4 King, say, upset, being taken in by bounders and scroungers (7)
- 5 Momentous things are threat somehow (5-10)
- 6 Flighty type narrated story in auditorium (7)
- 7 Old priest with the heartless description of the chosen people (5)
- 8 Barely sufficient examination taking minimal time (5)
- 13 Unexpected gains with politicians — those endorsing proposal? (11)
- 16 A three-legged race location (4,2,3)
- 18 Greek character leading board not necessarily permanent (7)
- 19 Identity needed to enter sporting occasion? That is obvious (7)
- 21 African country set up to accommodate second religion (5)
- 22 Part of ship storing bit of rotten rubbish (5)

### Prize solution 29,088



Check today's answers by ringing 0905 757 0141 by midnight. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke 0333 202 3390.

The winners of Prize Crossword No 29,088 are E Aiken, Aldergrove, Co Antrim A Crisp, Horam, East Sussex J Drewry, Haxby, North Yorkshire J Keer, Hawkey, Hampshire J Marcetic, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands

### Newspapers support recycling

The recycled paper content of UK newspapers in 2023 was 45.5%



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# N°5





## ‘King Charles was the only person who didn’t ask about my love life’

Explorer Levison Wood on bachelorhood and his career as a modern-day Indiana Jones

times2

## Sober office Christmas parties? After one boozy do, we were four in a bed

### Shane Watson



GETTY IMAGES

**H**ands up all those who are looking forward to their office party. No? Bit knackered? Worried about getting the train back (70 per cent chance it'll terminate three stops before yours, and you'll have to get a minicab costing your entire Christmas present budget)?



Or maybe you're just a bit over office Christmas parties, since the rules of engagement memo; and the rumour that the venue's been changed because the lighting at Starbursts is considered to be too low; and the other rumour about the drink coupons (two each); and the ban on salami (because of the incident last year) and the ban on using the lifts (because of the incident the year before); and the ban on sparklers (Matt's still wearing the protective healing gloves); and the strong rumour (someone saw him in the meeting room with a white board) that Geoff from HR is going to ask everyone to write a short account, after the party, of their experience and how it could be improved.

If you aren't that much looking forward to your office Christmas party then you are not alone — and it's not just the Gregg Wallace effect (anyone seen to be removing or unbuttoning clothing will be asked to leave immediately and may face further action).

According to new stats, the Christmas Office Knees-up is this year being shelved in favour of group activities that don't involve dressing up, or drink, or sticky-floored venues with karaoke machines. A fifth of big firms are opting out of the traditional bar-more-bar-and-where-are-we-

going-next Work Do, and organising dry events based around crazy golf or ping pong.

Let's pause to allow the potential fun of ping pong plus elderflower cordial and gluten-free bites with your colleagues to sink in. Yup. That's a whole night of your life, and it's a night in the lead up to Christmas — or maybe they're asking employees to give up Saturday afternoons for these joyful events? Sunday mornings, why not? After a group run or a game of Frisbee.

To be clear, it's not that those of us old enough to remember work parties in the golden age of work parties didn't have office party dread and some big reservations. Of course we did. Plenty. We dreaded the inevitable killing hangover — always the absolute worst of the year because of the Freixenet followed by the white wine that had no label, compounded by the fact that you were duty bound to stop off at an off-licence and get some kind of Malibu drink to plug on the way to wherever would let you in afterwards.

There was the nagging anxiety about ruining your dress (never wear anything nice to an office party *should* have been the rule as, at the very least, you would end up with a fag burn, at

worst a rip sustained while scrambling over a wall) and yet you always did. Because it was a party and you wanted to look your best and maybe get noticed by Alan from Accounts. I know! Proper 20th century behaviour.

And even more shocking: back then, if anything the office parties were wilder than the ones you were asked to on your own time. They had a

School's Out feeling. A bravado. And, sometimes, an undercurrent of sexual tension that was extra fun because nine and a half times out of ten nothing could come of it: "Definitely will regret this in the morning so let's just carry on at the party and maybe dance more!"

At a real-world party involving friends, if you like someone it might be the beginning of something. Nothing stopping you. At work people have other lives. And you don't really know them, yet at the same time you sort of know them better and have more in common with them than the people at home — and you all know it. On top of that, everyone in the room has to be at work tomorrow so there's a kind of weird race to the bottom going on, plus a promise to help propp each other up in the morning.

In one job I had in the Eighties, six of us in our department slept in someone's flat after the Christmas do (four in the bed, two on the floor) and went straight into work the following day.

So far as I can remember we had ended the evening not with a light orgy but a game of "stuff her arms in the poster roll and see if she can get out" and singing loudly to REM while wearing hats.

I'm sorry but it beats crazy golf.



## Why Chris McCausland makes us all weep

Luckily for the beleaguered BBC, *Strictly Come Dancing* has been in the news for all the right reasons this season.

The judges are said to be furious that the best dancers keep being voted off (we don't

believe it, they're just reminding us that *Strictly* is like football, anyone can win on the day). Meanwhile they have a fantastic line up for the final.

The gorgeous natural dancer Tasha Ghouri. The come-so-far-you-cannot-believe-it JB Gill (four 10s!). The gutsy firecracker fiftysomething Sarah Hadland.

And the funny, determined, extraordinary Chris McCausland, who is blind. As his dance partner summed it up after their waltz on Saturday night — he has done all of this without being able to copy any move, or watch any video playback, or see

the standard of his competitors.

He is that most overused and abused of words — inspiring.

And if you watched his semi final waltz, the way he placed his open hand in mid air for her to take it and danced with such upright pride, you'll know it was lump in throat if not sobbing time.

You realise you're doing something important he said, when your mates stop taking the piss. Magic.

# I was a sex novice but wrote erotica to fund uni

Between MA lectures at Cambridge, I churned out X-rated online reads — I learnt far more than how to describe the cowgirl position. By Tyler Bennett

**T**here is a pleasing irony to my career as an erotic writer. When you think "adult literature expert" I doubt you picture a 23-year-old me working from my parents' shed in my pyjamas, using Pornhub as source material and with only a handful of orgasms notched on my bedpost. But so it was during the summer of lockdown, when writing erotica became my main stream of income and was putting me through a creative writing master's at Cambridge (which I was doing to write serious poetry, not smut).

It was an acquaintance from high school who had recommended the gig after she had completed a piece for an erotic library. But, she told me, she only had one story in her (a threesome with a CEO and his analyst — she was an accountant), and thought I may have more. This in itself was mystifying — where we grew up, the luxury of a shower head between your legs and intimate knowledge of the clitoris was essentially a trade secret. But I applied to the site anyway and was commissioned immediately — £200 for "1,000 words focused on her pleasure, a hidden kink and an intense (and orgasm-filled) experience".

Ah. Like many twentysomething women you could whittle down my sexual highlights to a number of casual encounters and evenings that were less orgasm-filled and more orgasm-adjacent, and when it came to kinks I had nothing clutch-your-pearls outrageous.

So I researched. I scoured the (private browser) web, discovered porn-scrolling (doom-scrolling of adult material), fan-fic and chick lit, feminist X-rated films and audio erotica apps such as Quinn, which counts Andrew Scott among its narrators. I titled my first story *Meeting à Trois*. I was met with a request for a *nom de plume* (I proffered Iona Whip and was promptly refused — an injustice that still rankles) and further commissions.

Soon I was churning out a couple of stories a week, often based on sex

positions that sounded to me like appetisers (the "pretzel dip", anyone?). Erotica uses the language of soft porn with multi-rolling perspectives that invites the reader to insert themselves into any point of the story. Many erotic libraries have explicitness ratings, kink tags and trigger warnings, while the higher-brow sites accompany pieces with bespoke artwork or photoshoots.

In visual porn, exposition tends to be badly lit with questionable dialogue. In erotic literature, context is everything. The set-up itself needs to drip with sensuality and possibility. Picture a dark bar with plush cushions, tassel lamps emitting a golden glow, murmured propositions in shadowy corners. Or else a naturally enticing setting — a spring evening, dusted in the sweet smell of flowers, the air warm and buttery. You are setting a scene not just for sex but for pleasure, wonder and freedom.

Next, draw attention to physical sensations. Imagine a character sucking on the plump, juicy rump of

**“I spent hours googling things like: what does vibrating jelly do?”**

a maraschino cherry, the fruit a splash of red against glossy lips, the juice dripping down an exposed throat and disappearing into cleavage.

Euphemisms, I find, are fiddly and easily overdone. I spent some time editing translated erotica for a Swedish women-first company. The narrative would be rich with phrases that were probably provocative in their native tongue but in English sounded as if the target market was a particularly randy cow. "Her furry mountains gushed," read one. "His woodpecker gnawed relentlessly at her hollow tree," read another.

I also partnered with an adult store to write stories that would accompany their products. Unfortunately the



company didn't send me the merchandise so I spent hours googling things like "what does tingle vibrating jelly do" (exactly what it says on the tin) or asking friends if they had experience with a twisted glass nine-inch dildo and how would they describe it ("like an intense smear test," one friend told me. I still wonder if that was the intended sensation).

Projects like these were pitched in specific, oddly hilarious one-liners, such as "The Magneto Burrower: A trendy couple's toy. Story where foreplay starts long before hitting the sheets." I'd turn the piece around in a couple of hours between lectures, and would receive notes such as "the material is only compatible with water-based lube" and "the wand isn't really that bendable (as I recall)". One of the most humbling moments was a response to a story I'd spent hours on, which simply read: "You find this sexy?" More often than not, though, the feedback would be: "Sex comes too fast!"

This is the golden rule of erotica: you've got to eke it out. Stats show that most people prefer foreplay to last twice as long as intercourse and that prolonged tension heats up the sexual barometer. We thrive off the will-we won't-we tug of war, like a whodunnit for the sexually active. The whole story should be a slow dance of touch that quickens to a two-step and twirls away into flirtation before the big move. Combine the first meeting with a sensual kiss, tongues playing tango, hands creeping up seams; introduce

drawn-out touches, hot breath and murmured instructions.

Most erotica needs to be an eight-minute read, which is the average time it takes a woman to climax from self-pleasure (probably why male-centred erotica would be a much faster return on investment), so you don't have the luxury of a rom-com novel and Colleen Hoover-length courtship to get your reader off.

By the time I submitted my thesis I was out of debt and the lockdowns were lifting. I found myself approaching sex with a professional curiosity I hadn't had before, asking about sexual appetites on first dates — one man revealed to me that he didn't "get" the point of sex in any position but missionary (intriguing), while another revealed that he liked to choose safe words based on Sylvia Plath poems (such as *Daddy*, I asked. No, he said, such as *Doom of Exiles*).

I have discovered that erotica promotes an awareness of the tactile, intimate and taboo parts of sex, and can serve as inspiration, self-indulgence or foreplay. I like that underneath the guise of being a cheeky young adult writing about threesomes in my parents' shed, there's a provocative, confident side to me now — one that knows at least 15 ways to describe the cowgirl position.

Journalism and fiction writing has meant that I've been less able to meet the demanding deadlines and liberal inspiration the job requires but, you never know, perhaps it's time to recover my whip and cock my pen.

Tyler Bennett

## Dad found love online — so I logged on too

When Lotte Brundle's father had the perfect date, she wanted the same thing

My dad had a first date so perfect, it could have been pulled straight out of a Richard Curtis film. In 2020, at 59 years old, he turned up to a coffee shop wearing a shirt that we had agreed beforehand suited him well. There he met a woman. They talked and laughed and (I assume, but don't like to think about it) flirted, and found that they liked each other so much that, after their first date had ended, they agreed to meet again, this time for dinner.

When were they both next free? That very same night.

Spurred on by the keen sting of Cupid's arrow, which had struck right in the heart of suburban Kent, or perhaps by the practical approach to making plans my dad has always had, they parted ways. Each got changed into something more dinner-appropriate and then they met up again. And here's the kicker: it was Valentine's Day.

Oof. They are still together. As a lifelong romantic who practically ate Katherine Heigl films for breakfast as an acne-ridden teenager, I felt Dad's story was hard to top. But almost exactly four years later I had a very good go. And like Dad, I fell in love with someone I met online.

What I found, in a pub in Greenwich on a chilly Thursday evening in April, was pretty much the same as what Dad found on that first, and then second, date on Valentine's Day. Not exactly the same, mind you — Dad found a "stylish lady" in her early fifties with her own PR firm, and I found a 23-year-old Scotsman with adorable curly hair who lived in a mould-beset flatshare. But we both found someone we went on to fall in love with.

Recently it was reported by Ofcom that, for the first time, the number of users for matchmaking platforms such as Tinder, Hinge, Bumble and Grindr had gone down. Many millennials and Gen Zers are holding out for an IRL meet-cute.

I am 25 and this wasn't the case with me. Meeting people in real life was getting me nowhere and I knew instinctively that if I was on the apps, chances were that someone like-minded would be on them too.

They do say you have to kiss a few frogs before you find your prince and that proved true. I dated a man who only realised he wasn't over his ex after we'd slept together. And another who, after three months, got scared when I bought him a book and flowers, because he didn't want a girlfriend. I also went on one bizarre date with a man who asked me to read an Angela Carter novel aloud to him then took two weeks to reply to a text.

My dad dated a few people too. All lovely, none who behaved nearly as weirdly. But it took a few tries until he met Josie. They now live together in the home I grew up in. In the home

which, for a while, felt empty with just Dad and me, but which now feels full of life.

My dad and I are living proof that the agonising over which photos to use — "definitely not that one, Dad" — the swiping, messaging and, finally, nerve-racking first date can all be worth it. But don't just take my word for it ...

### And here's what Dad has to say

By Pete Brundle, 63

Internet dating? You must be joking. I thought — but my daughter and close friends were very persuasive. So there I was, seven years after my marriage had broken down, waiting with nervous anticipation at the entrance to the garden centre coffee shop for a date that changed my life.

Online dating is exciting and overwhelming. The first lesson I learnt was the importance of choosing the right dating site. This took some trial and error as some of the more modern stuff just didn't work for me. I'm old-school.

Second lesson: there are a lot of



Pete and Lotte Brundle

people in your situation that are just as nervous as you are. It took three years until I got the courage up to do it, then four years off and on after that before I found the perfect person.

I soon learnt that the best way to establish a connection was to actually meet up with someone. Managing my expectations and choosing a venue where I could exit quickly if required was also key.

When I was my daughter's age, having just left college and coming from a farming background, there were very limited dating options — I was fishing in a small pond. Now you can fish in the ocean but, like with all fishing, you need to be patient.

My dating experience took time. During it, I became comfortable being on my own and therefore not willing to compromise on my choice. I didn't believe I'd meet someone like Josie — she's perfect. We're on the same wavelength, share the same sense of humour and she gets on really well with my children, which is the most important part. And, the added bonus is, I can always remember when our anniversary is!

times2

# I bought the Porsche and I lived like a rock star. I let myself get carried away

Afghanistan veteran turned explorer Levison Wood on fame, Prince Harry and hanging out with the King. By Hilary Rose

Ten years since Levison Wood launched a career as an explorer by walking the length of the Nile, he's considering the law of unintended consequences. When he set out to walk 4,250 miles across Africa he was an ex-soldier and jobbing tour guide, sofa-surfing and skint. Not long after he came back, he was a bestselling author and TV celebrity.

"I did a lot of daft stuff," he says. "My life completely changed in every regard. I bought the sports car, I bought the Aston Martin and the Porsche, I bought the beautiful house and I lived like a rock star for a little while. I was in all these ridiculous lists in glossy magazines, bachelor of the week and all that nonsense. I think I probably let myself get carried away by it all, then I realised that it's not a particularly fulfilling lifestyle. It's fun but it's a bit nuts. I can see why people go off the rails."

We meet the week *I'm a Celebrity* ... starts and *Strictly* gets into its stride, and a few weeks before *Dancing on Ice* gets going. Seeing as Wood is 42, unmarried and not just another soap actor, you'd think he'd be catnip to the casting agents but apparently not. He says he's only been approached to do programmes like *Celebrity First Dates* and that *Strictly* have never asked, but that he quite likes the idea of *Dancing on Ice*.

"I like to challenge myself so *Dancing on Ice* might be hilarious. I don't think I'd do the jungle one," he says, referring to *I'm a Celebrity*, where photos of Coleen Rooney gritting her teeth while covered in swarming creepy-crawlies have just gone viral. "It'd be a bit too easy," he shrugs. "It's just bugs, isn't it?"

Today he's chatting in his £15 million flat in a flashy south London development, having sold the Georgian doll's house in Hampton Court, which he bought in the first flush of wealth. Big Georgian houses, he discovered, are romantic but not terribly practical for professional travellers. What you need, in the brief



window between getting back from a literary festival in Rajasthan and heading off to Bali, is different: somewhere turnkey, with secure parking for your motorbike, and above a "general" store selling Sicilian artisan cheese, designer chickpeas, £11 tins of tuna and three types of Earl Grey. His flat is the high-spec, developer-grade bland of someone who's rarely there, with neat piles of coffee table books, a generic gold octopus ornament and a small Indian deity.

Wood describes himself as spiritual more than religious. "I definitely believe in a higher power. The more I travel and learn and study, the more it's given me a sense of faith and belief in something."

It's a long way from his home town of Stoke-on-Trent, where he was brought up with his younger brother Pete in a bungalow on the edge of the Peak District. His parents were working-class teachers (his description), his ancestors were potters and the careers adviser at his Catholic state school laughed out loud when the 11-year-old Wood told him he

wanted to be an explorer when he grew up.

His first job was a little more prosaic: he worked at Alton Towers every summer when he was still at school, flipping burgers at McDonald's, driving the hot-dog wagon and filling vending machines. He went to Nottingham University, funded a post-degree gap year with his Alton Towers savings and embarked on his military career at Sandhurst aged 22. He reckoned that most explorers and many of the historical figures he admired had first spent time in the military, so that's what he did too.

"And I was fascinated by Greek mythology," he says. "The idea that we can all follow a quest, find dragons to battle in our own way ... I believe that to this day. Why be constrained by boring convention? We can all embrace our Indiana Jones."

He was at Sandhurst at the same time as Prince Harry, of whom he says simply, "He's great." Wood ran into him again recently when Harry was in the UK for

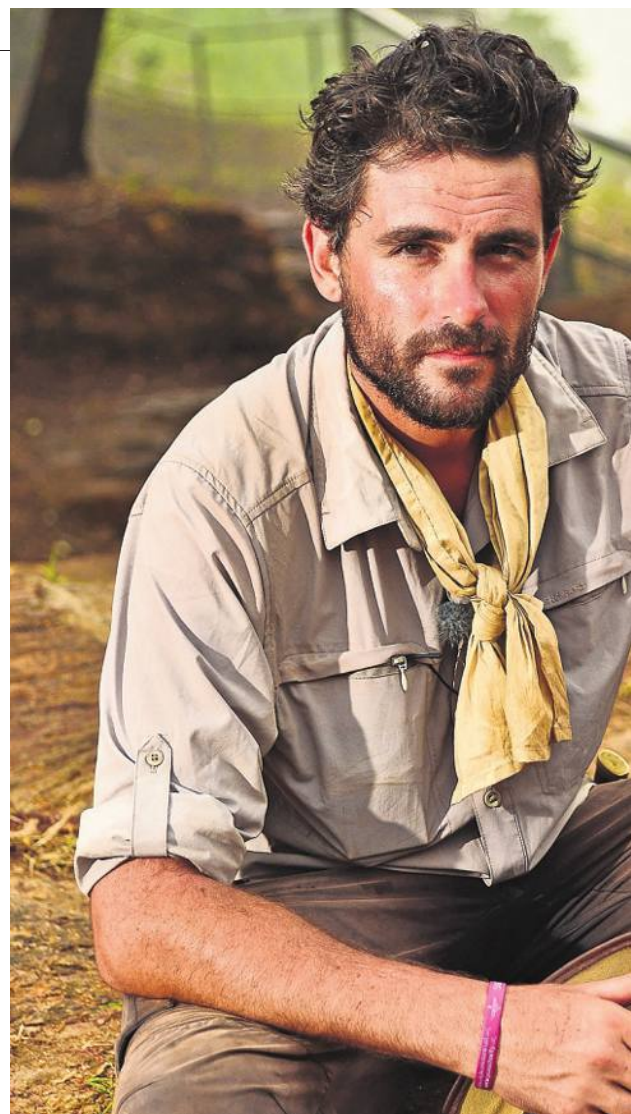
a charity event. Both men served in Afghanistan, with Harry coming in for considerable flak when he boasted in his autobiography *Spare* about how many Taliban he'd killed on active service.

"I personally wouldn't have done that," Wood says, "but he's sold a lot more books than me, hasn't he?"

It's ten years since British combat troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan and three since the US withdrawal. He sighs.

"Was it worth it? In hindsight, of course, it is a complete mess, and it's sad and tragic to see the state of Afghanistan now. But frankly, the Taliban won fair and square. I don't believe I or any other soldier hold any resentment towards the Taliban personally. I joined the army to serve. It's not for soldiers to reason why, that's for politicians. You go where you're told to go and do what you're told to do."

He left the army after five years, aged 27, having reached the rank of



Levison Wood in Uganda in 2014 and, left, at Windsor Castle in 2015. Below: with Prince Harry in 2018



captain and flunked his chance at SAS selection when he was thrown from a horse at a rodeo in Mexico and broke his leg. It would have been another two years before he could reapply and he was anxious not to end up drifting into his thirties still in the army, the explorer dream growing ever more distant. So he quit,

earned a living as a freelance writer, photographer and expedition guide, and plotted the grand attention-grabbing stunt — he prefers the word "challenge" — that would launch his next career.

"I figured I needed to do something groundbreaking and noteworthy to make a name for myself, so I chose the biggest, most ambitious thing I could think of, which was walking the length of the longest river in the world," he says. "In those days I felt like I had something to prove."

Does he still? "No. Not at all."

Walking the Nile, he notes in the new tenth anniversary edition of his book of that name, had defeated better men than him, from ancient Romans to eminent Victorians. I expect him to say that he succeeded where they failed because of modern tech or kit or mental resilience.

"Absolutely not!" he says cheerfully. "It was modern medicine for the most part, anti-malarials. It was disease that got most people, malaria and dengue."

Over the years, he's been shot at, chased by hippos and crocodiles, had motorbike and car accidents, and

**Walking the Nile by Levison Wood is published in paperback on December 19 (Simon and Schuster, £12.99)**



somehow survived hurtling off the edge of a 200ft cliff in Nepal in a taxi. Writing about the hippo incident, he makes it sound as if it were exhilarating. He was more reckless then, he says. "I'm not sure I fancy being chased by a hippo now. The fact you got shot at occasionally and chased by hippos was all part of the adventure. I worried all the time I was pushing my luck but I had a pact with myself that it was make or break. I knew I had to do it. I didn't give myself a plan B at all."

Over the years he's been photographed at events with glamorous women but always said that he's content with his own company — and that women find that annoying. He doesn't rule out marriage.

"Possibly," he says gnomically. "If anyone will have me." His mother pesters him for grandchildren "but my brother's just had a baby. Very considerate."

He's been reluctant to talk about his relationship status since a female stalker was jailed four years ago for seriously harassing him. When it comes to his career, the lack of a plan B has clearly paid off: as well as the books and TV programmes, he's a Unicef ambassador, chancellor of the university of Staffordshire and confidant of the King.

"I've met him a couple of times, he invited me for a nice cup of tea at Clarence House," he says. "He wanted to know about my trips and we had a chat about Yemen. He was the one person who didn't ask about my love life."

# Drunk sledging? We older Brits go mad in ski resorts

**A middle-aged woman just lost her claim after an après accident. Simon Mills can relate to her antics**

Something happens to middle-class British men and women of a certain age when they go to the mountains. They start behaving like absolute maniacs. Normal, well-balanced people with proper jobs and mortgages and families, who work in finance and wear sensible, dreary-toned clobber when at home will suddenly find themselves in the grip of madness once the combination of snowfall and schnapps kicks in.

It begins with the clothes. Fleece piled like yeti pelts, sunglasses the size of compact discs, perhaps some hilarious Rastafarian-referencing headgear with fake dreadlocks hanging from the back.

And when you are too sozzled to ski, from three or four Jägermeister and Red Bull cocktails, why not chase your chalet boy host home down a darkened red run on a plastic bum sled? What a scream!

This is what happened to the financial consultant Charlotte Barber, a self-described "sensible adult", a few winters ago. A smart-looking blonde woman who works for the high-flying CVC Capital Partners private equity and investment advisory firm, Barber decided in February 2018, having concluded an après-après-ski session of Jägerbombs (and wine and brandy) along with her "flirty", party-loving chalet host, to try a shortcut back home on sledges the size of a mouse mat.

What could go wrong? The drunken Jägerbombers gathered speed and lost control, the host Alex Tweedy crashing into Barber from behind. She ended up going home to Battersea in a full body brace — head injuries, a fractured spine, nerve damage and ten months off work.

When Barber decided to sue the ski travel agency Snowchateaux Ltd for £75,000, a Central London county court judge ruled — just last week — that the agency could not be held responsible for her "frolic" as the impromptu drinking session was not part of the holiday package.

This despite the plaintiff's claim that the après-sesh had been suggested by the Snowchateaux host himself that same morning. And you are thinking, who gets up on a sunny, blue-skied morning and starts planning for Jägerbombs? Well, lots of skiers do. Brit ones, especially. Downhill and dipso-mania, schussing and chugging, being, one can't help noticing in Tignes and Zermatt and St Anton, inexorably linked.



On arrival at the chalet, straight off the plane? Why not a bit of fizz? Then booze before dinner, at dinner and after dinner, then more booze at the disco until 3am. Wake up feeling like a parrot just slept in your mouth but confident that the vertiginous medicine administered by grand cru air and above sea level heights will clear the head in no time. (As a keen skier of some 35 years and many mountain hangovers, I'm speaking from experience here, btw.)

It is estimated that on any given Alpine day 23 per cent of British skiers still have up to seven units of alcohol in the blood on the morning after the night before. Which is, when you add snow and ice, scary-steep gradients, newly waxed Rossignols and thousands of other people to the mix, quite a dangerous combination.

Even the pros admit this. A few years back I skied a few champagne-augmented runs in Telluride with the US ski champ Bode Miller. The Olympic and World Championship gold medalist, who had admitted to actually racing drunk once or twice, was totally unaffected but honest about the added edge that alcohol can bring to competition. "Skiing when you're wasted ... it's not easy," Miller said. "Try and ski a slalom? You're putting your life at risk ... It's like

**Simon Mills. Below: Charlotte Barber**

driving drunk, only there are no rules about it in ski racing." (There is also no one else to crash into.)

Oh, I agree with Miller — I actually ski better after a mid-morning sharpener, I hear you say. Well, yes, an alco-stop elevenses at a cute, slope-side hutte might un-stiffen the body a bit, help you to carve your turns more confidently, but it will also encourage you to take more risks, to ski faster and more fearlessly. And why not end the day at a mountain rave? La Folie Douce has outposts in Chamonix, Méribel, Val Thorens, Avoriaz.

There is house music, standing on tables (in ski boots), champagne delivered to guests via mini cable car waiters. The short run down to the car park from La Folie Douce, Val d'Isère, looks like carnage at closing time. Drunken bodies strewn all over the snow. It's the only disco where the door staff tell people that they are too drunk to leave.

I'm afraid it's mostly Brits (and a few Swedes) who behave like this. The Direct Line survey figures tell of a black-iced, whited-out mogul field of potential disaster. Nearly 400,000 British skiers and snowboarders will take to the slopes under the influence of alcohol this winter season.

In Italy it is now compulsory for all people taking part in winter sports to have third-party liability insurance and it is illegal to ski or snowboard under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Drinking and skiing is explicitly illegal in many US ski states too.

A few years ago I was sternly told off by a schoolmarmish instructor in Vail for having two glasses of wine at lunch. I showed her what this mountain Briton is made of by skiing the blacks like Bode Miller for the rest of the afternoon. Then crashed into a boarder ... who stank of weed.



## life

## Ask Professor Tanya Byron

## How can I rebuild my relationship with my daughter and see my grandchildren again?

**Q** My daughter is highly intelligent, sailed through school, dropped out of a university course due to depression, seemed positive about various jobs and relationships but nothing stuck for long. A feature was depressive episodes. (Her father was similar, and very introspective, like my daughter, whereas I just got on with things and muddled through.)

She has been on disability benefits for many years and is now divorced in her forties with young children. She has a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, plus possibly ADHD. When the children were babies she found it very hard to cope and leant heavily on me.

After her father died she had a huge row with me. She said I treat her like a child, I've never helped her, she was cutting me out of her life and that would make her feel less suicidal. I feel some of this is influenced by her new boyfriend, who has cut himself off from his family.

She is a grown woman and needs to stand alone but I miss the grandchildren, who I was so close to. I have apologised and tried to initiate conversations but we now communicate only rarely via text. I am grieving for the grandchildren, and their less-than-perfect life, and also for the closeness with my daughter. A complicating factor: cannabis is part of her daily routine. Can you help?

Tina

**A** In a world where expectations and norms are designed for people who are neurotypical, being neurodivergent like your daughter can be very challenging. Imagine living among others who express themselves and see the world and relationships differently. How challenging and stressful would that be? This sense of "otherness" is common for people like your daughter who live with an autism spectrum condition (ASC).

The notion of a spectrum highlights how the challenges and their impact vary widely between different people. Difficulties emerge around issues that require an ability to understand what others are thinking and feeling, making social situations and relationships stressful.

The sense of "otherness" is keenly felt when those with ASC are misunderstood for not getting social rules and so seeming blunt, rude or disinterested. Expression of feelings is difficult and, if challenged, can lead to anxiety-causing shutdown (withdrawal) or meltdown (extreme emotional response). Sensory sensitivities (noise, touch, texture) can make environments and interactions overwhelming and distressing.

All these differences can amplify over time, contributing to the decision to become estranged.

Estrangement refers to the deliberate distancing or cessation of contact by one or more family members from the rest of their family. This process can range from limited communication to complete disconnection. As a definitive solution, estrangement can work for people with an ASC who see the world in more black-and-white terms.

Navigating the demands of the neurotypical world will have been, and will continue to be, daunting for your daughter. You've clearly been a huge support. However, I do wonder whether the dependence your daughter once had on you now feels so uncomfortable that, in an effort to have a more adult (rather than parent-child) relationship, she has gone from one extreme to the other.

You and she have had what is referred to as an enmeshed relationship — one where personal boundaries between family members become blurred, compromising individuality, autonomy and emotional independence. The enmeshment can develop due to well-meaning but over-involved behaviours. Your daughter may feel overly reliant on you and struggle to know how to address this.

She expressed this when she said that you treat her like a child. Her need for your support may have meant that relationship boundaries have been blurred and her development of identity compromised. You may have struggled to take a step back from your daughter's life when needed. I notice that you refer to your grandchildren's life as "less than perfect" — is this a feeling your daughter picks up from you and which maintains the expectations of a level of involvement she didn't want?

Without a want or need for your help with her children, your daughter may struggle to understand the purpose and value of a relationship with you. Adjusting to an enmeshed relationship requires everyone to change in terms of their identity and function in the relationship; this also includes how you see yourself and function as a mother, as well as how your daughter can function as a less dependent adult child.

Her father's death will have significantly impacted the relationship difficulties. Your role as a mother and grandmother will be so important to you as you navigate the loss

If you would like Professor Tanya Byron's help, email [proftanyabyron@thetimes.co.uk](mailto:proftanyabyron@thetimes.co.uk)

**“Tolerate limited contact while the nature of the relationship changes**

of your husband and, understandably, that could create an emotional dependency on your daughter and her children for your comfort and stability. This could feel threatening to your daughter. She may struggle with guilt and feel trapped between supporting you and developing her independence.

Being with you might also trigger confusing and overwhelming feelings of grief — an estrangement enables those feelings to be avoided. Working from a hypothesis that the blurred relationship boundaries, due to her emotional and practical overdependence on you, has left your daughter confused about her own identity as your adult child, how can you tackle the sudden, very upsetting reduction in contact? My advice would be to approach this in a way that doesn't feel threatening to your neurodivergent daughter. You should set, and then respect, clear boundaries. Tolerate limited contact while the nature of the relationship changes, and create more adult interactions built around exchanging news rather than giving advice.

I am actually optimistic given that there's some sporadic contact between you via text. These messages enable a different kind of communication where you can be interested in your daughter as an adult while not infantilising her (in her mind) with concern or advice. The pace of redefining your relationship might be very slow and frustrating for you. However, if you maintain a careful communication that is not infused with emotion, you may in time be able to suggest meeting in a neutral place for a catch-up.

You wonder about the influence of your daughter's partner, who regards estrangement as a solution. This is something you would only be able to understand better once you have a more adult relationship with your daughter and, even then, to question her relationship directly will immediately compromise the continuation of yours.

Whatever the reason for her partial estrangement, how you approach redefining the relationship is key. You also mention cannabis. If you research what the scientific and autism communities are saying, there are indications that for some people cannabis can have a therapeutic effect on some conditions associated with autism, such as challenging behaviour, sleep difficulties and anxiety. However, for others the experience might negatively affect them. The charity Thinking Autism has a very comprehensive fact sheet: [thinkingautism.org.uk](http://thinkingautism.org.uk).

Online you will find that the issue of autism and estrangement is written about as an experience common to some families. There are therapists with expertise in neurodivergence and relationships who could help you think about how to adjust your relationship. There are also family therapists who could offer support to you and your daughter if and when she feels that might be helpful. See [autism.org.uk](http://autism.org.uk). I wish you well.



**M**y mother was born Charlotte Fawcett in Oxford in 1942, in the middle of the war. She was a Pears' soap cutie with bubble curls and a gap-toothed smile. Like so many war babies, she had a memory of a strange man in uniform turning up one day at the house in Park Town, a gracious Georgian crescent in north Oxford, and being told that this was her father. She was three.

She felt plump, spotty and hairy in a large family of competitive thinness, musical ability and cleverness, a house of anorexia, anxiety and alopecia. And she had uncontrollable creativity coming out of every pore.

In the Park Town house, her parents gave Charlotte a box of paints. "It was something I could make my own and be clever at," she recalled. "None of the others could paint." It must have been a survival mechanism. As she told her older sister Sarah years later, "If I don't paint, I die."

My mother had her first breakdown in her teens. Aged 16 she was expelled from her convent, Mayfield, for whistling at boys in the car park. To her dying day she maintained this was a false accusation as she couldn't whistle.

She went to Westminster Tutors, and got a place at Lady Margaret Hall to read English, and was then awarded a very good second. She was not conventionally pretty but she was sexy, in the smoky style of a Marianne Faithfull. She'd tell me of Roman holidays as a teenager, when men would fuse themselves to her from behind as she crossed a road, with one hand clamped on each of her buttocks. She was unshockable.

She met Stanley, our father, at a lunch at All Souls, where her professor father was the domestic bursar. They



Rachel Johnson and Charlotte Johnson Wahl in 2015

were both glamorous, bohemian undergraduates. Stanley had just won the Newdigate prize for poetry and made her laugh and follow him to America. "I thought I was marrying a poet," she would say, somewhat darkly.

She had Alexander [better known these days as Boris] in New York in 1964, then came back in 1965 to complete her English degree, while pregnant with me. Leo was born in 1967, and we moved to England from America, back and forth, until Jo's birth in 1971. It was around this point that her genetic predisposition to anxiety became something she could no longer live with nor control. It had begun to control her.

As her discharge summary put it: "In 1967 when pregnant with 3rd child became very upset and panicky over several incidents when her two other children daubed faeces all over themselves and their playroom. After this began to obsessively clean the whole house daily, and follow people round with a damp cloth. Her obsessional cleaning activities continued largely unobserved until she became upset and anxious when pregnant again in 1971."

Al and I had removed Leo's fully loaded nappy and, with the instinct of mischievous disruptors that has never properly left us both, we had done the worst thing we could have done.

Things accelerated when we lived at Nethercote for a year, in about 1970, in the cottage on the family farm. It was glorious for us — idyllic — but not so much for my mother, who was in sole charge of three small children, while our father wrote books on population and the environment and travelled the third world; she had no car and mod cons: a sputtering Rayburn in the corner of the small kitchen looking across the river to a bracken-clad hill opposite. No dishwasher (my father used to say, "Tunisian women don't have dishwashers"), no washing



Extracted from *A Mother's Work* by Rachel Johnson. The full essay can be read in this month's Prospect; *What It Felt Like: the Maudsley Hospital paintings of Charlotte Johnson Wahl* is at Bethlem Museum of the Mind from Wednesday to March 29, museum ofthemind.org.uk

# How my mother turned her breakdowns into art

Her life was scarred by anxiety, OCD and at times brutal treatments. But Charlotte Johnson Wahl's painting gave her release, says **Rachel Johnson**

machine, but what the cottage was well equipped with were copper pipes that were poisoning us.

We threw up lustily until my parents had the copper pipes taken out. It was around then that my mother was plagued with intrusive thoughts and understandable doubts that with three and then four small children in a cottage in the country nothing was ever clean — and nothing could ever be clean enough.

My mother had, among other neuroses, the classic fear of dirt, especially urine and faeces, products that are repeatedly and freely generated by small children. She would stand at the sink washing her hands till they were red, raw and chapped, and then we would watch her try to turn the tap off with her elbows so she wouldn't have to touch the taps again with her hands, fail, and carry on rinsing and soaping them, for what seemed like hours.

She had OCD before OCD was even a thing. She had, her professors confirmed, the worst case of obsessive-compulsive disorder her many doctors had ever seen. She was, I am proud to say, the patient zero of OCD.

"This is to verify that Mrs Charlotte Johnson was admitted to this hospital suffering from an acute anxiety neurosis with obsessive-compulsive rituals," one of her medical letters reported, sent from the Bethlem Royal Hospital and the Maudsley Hospital. The letter is dated April 3, 1974, when I was eight years old.

She always told us the rupture was awful. "I hated leaving you children," she would say, searching our faces for signs of lasting trauma and anger. But I'm sure for her that it was also, secretly, a release. She used hospitalisation as a period of proper respite from being a wife and mother, and that respite unstopped a tremendous gush of creative energy.

"My husband and I were not making

each other happy, to put it mildly. It was ghastly, terrible," she told The Telegraph in 2008. "The children used to come over from Brussels to see me in hospital. They'd run down the passage and it was sickeningly painful because then they'd go away again. It took me a long time to recover."

As her Times obituary noted, "Much of her art from this time has a dark tinge, with bold black outlines and vivid expressionism. A self-portrait screams anguish and pain, with a haunted face and oversized, outstretched hands giving the distorted figure a Christ-like aura. 'I couldn't talk about my problems, but I could paint them,' she said."

After her death in 2021, aged 79, I went to see Patricia Allderidge, the art historian and curator of my mother's exhibition in 1974, and asked her how on earth my mother had found space and time to paint the 78 paintings that she showed at the historic exhibition called *Hands* at the hospital, amid her punishing daily timetable of analysis with professors, aversion therapy and group therapy.

"She had this little studio down in the basement of the Maudsley among the heating pipes," Allderidge told me. "I walked in the morning she finished *It Has Not Worked*. She was standing beside it, paint still wet on the picture, paint still wet on her hands, looking almost like she does in the painting. And she said, 'If I kill myself will you promise to go ahead with the exhibition?'"

When my mother left the Maudsley she gave the painting to the hospital as a leaving present — but also as a parting shot. Her treatment, which involved electric shock therapy, and daubing her hands and arms and personal possessions with urine and faeces, had not worked.

I don't remember whether we children went to the exhibition — those months are a bit of a blank —

but it was a smash hit. A sellout. Jilly Cooper bought *Canteen With No Food*. Harriet Bridgeman, who went on to found the Bridgeman Art Library, bought *Group Therapy*.

The New Statesman reviewed it. "I doubt anyone can claim total immunity from phobias and irrational fears, but they cling to Johnson like leeches," wrote Robert Melville. "One hopes that it's a closed period in her life, but her pictorial treatment of it reveals an astonishing gift of visual storytelling which she should not abandon." She did not abandon it. When she died, she was working on at least three pictures.

As Raymond Levy, her late professor, explained to me: "She left [the Maudsley] because she had to go back to Brussels, to you." Levy knew that her treatments hadn't worked, and why. "The mother's work is never done — you complete a task and you have to do it all over again — there is no end to the work and therefore the worry," he said. I asked him if he ever got to the bottom of what caused it. "Four small children and feeling out of control and having a husband who was in charge of waste at the EEC [European Economic Community]," he mused. "That is a wonderful ironic coincidence."

When I saw *It Has Not Worked*, the painting she gave to the Maudsley on discharge, it was a low point of 1974. It was my mother's clear message to us that she was not better, a message underscored in thick black outline by her painting *First Supper Home*, where she is screaming with her head thrown back, as we all stare at her expectantly over the dinner table, gripping cutlery.

She came home but she was shortly admitted to another clinic, St Josef, in Flanders, and then, one by one, we were sent off to boarding school in Sussex. We had a wonderful, exhilarating childhood and two remarkable parents. It was an adventure and we always felt loved, but 1974 was — for me, anyway — the end of childhood.

It's sad even as a middle-aged daughter to read her discharge summary, which suggests that although the Fawcett pilot light of neurosis always burnt within her, it was Johnson family life that made it blaze. To read that she was "very depressed" and had been "intermittently suicidal" for more than four months.

Bethlem Royal Hospital and the Bethlem Museum of the Mind, where a 50-year retrospective of her work opens on Wednesday, was built in 1928 and was then called New Bedlam. *It Has Not Worked* and some of my mother's other works are in the permanent collection. To find it, I climbed the stairs, turned left, into a gallery, and there she was.

Recreated in front of my eyes, in brushstroke after brushstroke in a basement room in the Maudsley Hospital, almost half a century before. Standing more than lifelike in a blue skirt above the knee and blue rollneck jersey, brown hair hacked, eyes fixed on the distance, three quarters face, cheekbones highlighted in grey. She had painted her soul on her face. Outstretched arms hang pendulous, hands outsized and thick fingers telescopic and articulated, her gold wedding band prominent on her ring finger.

She could not solve her problems, but she could paint them — and that was just as important.

# first night

## classical

### Messiah

Smith Square Hall, SW1

★★★★☆

Handel's *Messiah* must have been performed hundreds of times each year, usually in December, for the best part of three centuries. Yet still resourceful performers come up with fresh new ways of doing it. This tour by the ambitious Wild Arts ensemble presents it as an in-the-round semi-staging, devised in workshops with director Tom Morris.

It's often riveting: a real dramatic response to a radical choice of texts, drawn from scripture, that are often heard (or performed) like a ritual incantation because we are over-familiar with them. But it's also a bit of an inconsistent evening. The eight singers deliver their allotted solos with verve and many telling gestures, but then clutch their scores and mostly revert to choir formation for the choruses, which as a consequence often sound and look mundanely characterised by comparison.

Similarly, the musical direction from the harpsichord by Orlando Jopling is fastidiously authentic in many ways — his excellent minimum-forces band of period instrumentalists embellish their lines and phrase beguilingly throughout — but also full of disconcerting cuts. Some of them, such as the dumping of the orchestral endings to arias so the next chorus bursts in immediately after the solo voice ends, make sense as a way of keeping the drama moving. I can even see the theatrical sense of chopping the opening four bars of the Hallelujah Chorus, heretical though it may be.

But removing a chunk of Handel's glorious polyphony mid-way through "Worthy is the Lamb" seems like a cut made out of fear that the voices may be tiring. It undermines the epic finale that this oratorio needs. And Jopling's decision to leave the choruses entirely without any choral continuo does make numbers such as "And the Glory of the Lord" and "His Yoke is easy" sound bare in places.

The performance is constantly lifted, though, by the full-blooded, sometimes even angry, way in which solo numbers are tackled, particularly by the mezzo-soprano Catherine Backhouse and the bass Edward Hawkins. His deep, dark power, unleashed in "Why do the Nations?", provides the most thrilling moment.

**Richard Morrison**

Now touring, [wildarts.org.uk](http://wildarts.org.uk)



The lavish costumes and backdrop of draped baubles bring the characters and *Nutcracker* magic to life

# Festive and fabulous

## Scottish Ballet's vintage staging proves it's still a clear winner for Christmas, says Allan Radcliffe

### dance

#### The Nutcracker

Theatre Royal, Glasgow

(110min)

★★★★☆

Last festive season Scottish Ballet created something of a talking point with a delightful reimagining of *Cinderella* in which the lead role was danced by either a man or a woman on different nights. This year, it has fallen back on an old favourite, *The Nutcracker*, featuring the choreography of Peter Darrell, the founder of the company. First staged in 1973, Darrell's version is regularly updated.

For the opening sequence at the Stahlbaums' party we are in familiar territory, with the festivities taking place within the arched proscenium frame of Lez Brotherston's gorgeous Victorian parlour set, red velvet drapes drawing back to reveal a sumptuously adorned Christmas tree. The choreography here, by Darrell and Christopher Hampson, the company's artistic director, is at times so subtle as to be nearly invisible, until you pull back a little and get full purchase on a crowded scene where everyone involved is moving, sometimes almost imperceptibly.

The star turn here is Grace Horler, as Drosselmeyer, the magician, bringing the same straight-backed flourish to this role as she did to Mazelda, the fortune teller, in the company's *Snow Queen*. The interplay between Darrell and Hampson's steps,

Tchaikovsky's music (played with verve by the orchestra conducted by Martin Yates) and Brotherston's costumes, from the lavish swirl of the conjurer's cape to the restrained swish of the bustle dresses, brings the characters to life.

As ever the transition from party scene to the otherworldly Land of Sweets is seamlessly accomplished, and although we are accustomed to the mouth-watering backdrop of multicoloured draped baubles, this year the choreography has been revisited by an array of artists for the selection box that informs the ballet's second act. Among these, the Chinese divertissement, choreographed by Annie Au, and first seen in the 2021 production, is a highlight, danced with expressive lightness and softness by Danila Marzilli and Madeline Squire. By way of contrast, Sophie Laplane's rendition of the Russian dance goes for all-out slapstick, mixing rough-and-tumble with exuberant pratfalls.

The mix of respectful reverence and invention in the production finds its fullest expression in the pas de deux of the *Nutcracker* Prince (Yuri Marques) and the Sugar Plum Fairy (Jessica Fyfe), which in its precision and restraint manages to be incredibly moving, and devoid of camp or sugary sweetness.

Touring to Feb 8, [scottishballet.co.uk](http://scottishballet.co.uk)

## theatre

### Pan

Chickenshed, N14 (120min)

★★★★☆

After two years of hi-tech revamps of old stories — a video-game universe enfolding *Jack and the Beanstalk*, *Pinocchio* updated to the era of AI — the 50th anniversary Christmas production by north London's Chickenshed theatre is almost radically faithful to its source. Perhaps that's because JM Barrie's *Peter Pan* is weird enough unvarnished. Stick to his script — and this show cleaves pretty closely — and its macabre atmosphere still disturbs. That there is a massive dog employed as family nanny is fun; that a guilt-racked Mr Darling decides to swap places with her, living in a kennel and howling for his food, is worthy of a *Black Mirror* episode.

The dog is a persuasive puppet on stage here. As ever, almost every inch of remaining space is occupied by human beings of many types and abilities. This year the ensemble stretches to 800, split into five rotating companies. Lost Boys are now Lost Ones, and a big chunk of the cast play them — a teeming, enjoyably feral horde who establish Neverland as a place of chaos more than refuge.

Fluent directors Michael Bossisse and Louise Perry do embellish events with the addition of "Storytellers" — possibly from a dystopian, low-tech future — who are relating *Peter Pan* almost as a community ritual. This nonplussed my seven-year-old, but it adds a useful sense that this fantasy taps into a sort of universal longing for escape. Superbly swishy sets by Andrew Caddies settle us in bourgeois London domesticity before they crack open to take us into Pan's realm.

The massed setpieces and exuberant musical numbers keep the energy high and the choreography is witty and propulsive. My quibbles would be that Barrie's Wendy is a bit of a sap — a challenge that, in the cast I saw, Abbi Ella Dockerty's tender portrayal couldn't quite surmount — and that Tristan Manzi's Peter needs more insouciance, more swagger. But Jonny Morton's Hook has unctuous charisma, Mustafa Salahi made a strikingly droll Michael, and although the tiny Tinkerbell is essentially mute here, the far from retiring Lucy-Mae Beacock exuded justified stropiness. In short, it's an awfully big adventure.

**Neil Fisher**

To Jan 11, [chickenshed.org.uk](http://chickenshed.org.uk)

## theatre

### A Christmas Carol

Northern Stage, Newcastle

(135min)

★★★★☆

The last time Dickens's perennial favourite appeared at Northern Stage, it was in a flurry of Jazz Age glitz courtesy of Mark Calvert's 1920s update. Natalie Ibu's production of *A Christmas Carol* takes as its basis Karen Louise Hebden's adaptation, first staged in 2003, although there are plenty of innovative touches amid the stage smoke and quotable dialogue.

From the opening scene, when the ensemble appear in puffer jackets and bobble hats to perform upbeat versions of carols, there is a playful sense of fluidity to the period setting. This clash of influences extends to all corners of Ibu's production, which draws on a range of techniques in staging the story's supernatural elements. The arrival of Marley's



Holly May Austin as Frederica

ghost, manifesting as a pair of arms embracing his one-time business partner Scrooge (Michael Hodgson) through the back of an armchair, and then disappearing through the floor in a green haze, is hair-raising.

Elsewhere, the mix of concepts and traditions is less harmonious. Marley, as well as the spirits of Christmas Past, Present and Future, are played by the same actor, Malik Ibheis, using a range of performance skills, including aerial arts and stilt walking, that ultimately proves distracting. Ibu's decision to have Ibheis ventriloquise the voices of other actors as a means of ramping up the ambient sense of the uncanny has a distancing effect which at times unintentionally borders on the comic.

With seven out of eight members of the ensemble switching in and out of

a variety of roles, the impact of individual characterisations tends to get lost amid the more unwieldy elements of the mise-en-scène. At one climactic moment, Gabriel Akamo's Bob Cratchit disappears from view behind a piece of scenery.

Hodgson is more desolate than Grinch-like in the lead, although he and the production come into their own in the final scenes, imparting an infectious air of joy at the possibility of second chances. The reconciliation between Scrooge and his niece Frederica (Holly May Austin) is the most uplifting moment in a show that throws too many ideas at a festive staple that requires little in the way of trimmings.

**Allan Radcliffe**

To Jan 4, [northernstage.co.uk](http://northernstage.co.uk)

# 'I've been doing Nazis nonstop'

**Patrick Marber tells Alice Jones about reviving *The Producers* and delving into his Jewish roots**

Patrick Marber — star of *The Day Today*, co-creator of Alan Partridge, playwright of the era-defining *Closer* and, most recently, the Tony award-winning director of Tom Stoppard's *Leopoldstadt* — would rather you didn't call him any of those things. "I really think of myself as a failed writer who's had some success. And a quite successful director who hasn't completely failed yet," he says, taking a furtive puff on his vape. "I live in a weird world of not really feeling like a pro at anything."

Certainly, at 60, with piercing blue eyes imprisoned behind owl-like giant glasses, silver hair bristling, he has the air of a man constantly surprised by where his career has taken him. Not least that for the past few years his work has acquired a particular focus. Or, as he puts it drily, "I've been doing Nazis nonstop."

We are sitting in a chilly arts centre in east London in the middle of winter. But inside the rehearsal room it is *Springtime for Hitler* once more. This month *The Producers* returns to the London stage for the first time in 20 years, with Marber at the helm. It is his first time directing a musical and he had to be vetted by Mel Brooks, the creator of the 1967 film and the 2001 musical about the crooked producer Max Bialystock and his accountant pet, Leo Bloom. The pair hatch a money-making scheme to stage a surefire flop — *Springtime for Hitler: A Gay Romp with Adolf and Eva at Berchtesgaden* — which is undone when it becomes a hit.

Marber is on a remarkable run: at the start of the new year he will have three shows running. As well as *The Producers* there is *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank* — a bracing exploration of Jewish identity, given a five-star review in *The Times*, that has just extended its run at the Marylebone Theatre — and in February he will open David Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross* on Broadway, with a fever dream of a cast led by Bob Odenkirk, Kieran Culkin and Bill Burr.

"I've gone deep into Jewish experience," Marber says. "I knew eventually that as a Jewish writer-director I was going to have to, in some form, say my piece. I'd done my Jewish play, *Howard Katz*, which was about secular Judaism, and then *Leopoldstadt* arrived and I thought, I have to do this but I'm very scared."

After *Leopoldstadt*, Stoppard's tragic epic about a Jewish family living in Vienna through the rise of the Nazis, came *Nachtländ*, a black comedy about two siblings who find an original Adolf

EVAN AGOSTINI/INVISION/AP; MANUEL HARLAN; MARK SENIOR



Hitler painting in their late father's loft. "That's my territory now. It didn't happen consciously but in these identity-obsessed times, no one can say, 'Get off that, it's not yours.' I've got every right to do *The Producers*."

Does Marber feel, then, that a non-Jewish director couldn't direct it? "No, I think one of the reasons the rights were given to me was that I was from a Jewish comedy background. But anyone can direct *The Producers*. And Nathan Lane was immortal, but I think it does bring something slightly different to it that I've got Andy Nyman, a Jewish actor, playing Max — that's the character. I think there are non-Jews who can play Jews brilliantly." He points to Helen Mirren playing Golda Meir in the 2023 film *Golda*. "It's one of the greatest performances I've ever seen. She smokes magnificently, her accent is brilliant. She's every inch a Jew."

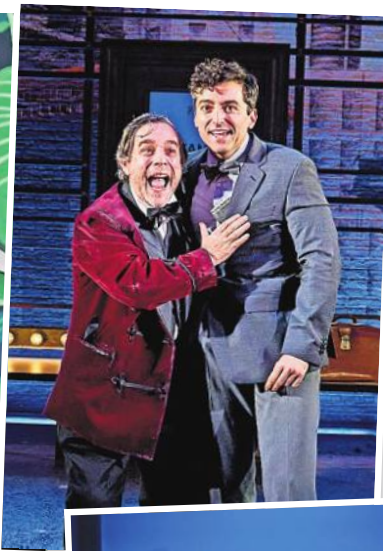
As for *The Producers*, Marber is presenting it as a "timeless fable".

"There are moments that are still quite shocking," he says. "But I don't think it's offensive. It feels like we live in a society, an age, in which people are easily offended. But that hasn't been my experience. We thought people were going to walk out of *Nachtländ* — but no one did. The culture is more liberal than we give it credit for."

*What We Talk About ...* might be a case in point. In Nathan Englander's short story turned play, two Jewish-American couples — one secular and living in Florida, one orthodox and

***The Producers* is at the Menier Chocolate Factory, SE1, to March 1, menierchocolatefactory.com; *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank* is at Marylebone Theatre, NW1, from January 20 to February 15, marylebonetheatre.com**

**“I don’t want to be bumming a ride on the Holocaust but anyone who writes about it is, to an extent**



Caroline Catz, Joshua Malina, Simon Yadoo and Dorothea Myer-Bennett in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Anne Frank*. Top: Andy Nyman and Marc Antonin in *The Producers*. Left: Patrick Marber

living in Israel — eat a bit, drink a lot and argue endlessly about the Holocaust, Hamas and where serves the best kosher food. It takes its title — and final scene — from a game Englander used to play with his sister whereby every new person they met was assessed through the prism of one question: "In the event of a second Holocaust, would they hide us?"

Marber and Englander were working on a draft when the October 7 attacks happened. A year of rewrites later, it opened in London. One "major London theatre" refused to stage it, though. "The artistic director was very keen to programme it. The board liked the play too but vetoed a production due to 'fear of potential optics,'" Marber says. He won't say which theatre. "I like the AD very much."

In the programme for the play, Marber recounts how, five or six years ago, he and the film director Jonathan Glazer met for breakfast. Glazer had acquired the rights to Martin Amis's *The Zone of Interest* — about the Auschwitz commandant and his family living next door to the concentration camp — and wanted to talk to Marber about how their generation might dare to tackle the Holocaust. The breakfasts became a regular fixture.

"They were great conversations. And very soon after that I was offered *Leopoldstadt*. So we both did our Holocaust projects," Marber tells me. "He's sort of the only person with whom I can share the anxiety of even touching that material."

Marber says he is not religious, "but I do have faith". Growing up his family observed Friday nights and his father attended synagogue. After his father died in 2018, Marber found a family tree he had written out for his son with "murdered by the Nazis" written by several names.

"Sam Mendes told me of a phrase that Peter Hall used which haunts me. He said of someone, 'Yes, well, he's bumming a ride on the Holocaust.' Agh! I don't want to be bumming a ride, but anyone who writes about it is, to an extent. And yet ... Glazer and I concluded informally that it's our duty as Jews, of being another generation traumatised in their own way, to keep talking about it."

Marber grew up in Wimbledon, the son of Brian, a TV writer turned stockbroker ("He got fired from the BBC, he had a temper ...") and Angela, a secretary to the playwrights Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall. Marber attended St Paul's (he was expelled) then Oxford and became a stand-up. It was Armando Iannucci — who called him up on the strength of a couple of sketches he'd

written for Radio 4 to join the *On the Hour* team with Steve Coogan and Chris Morris — who gave him his break. He still describes directing as a side hustle from his main job of writing. "I couldn't make a living as a playwright." Is that a comment about the state of theatre? "No," he says. "It's about the state of my playwrighting. I don't write enough plays. I write one a decade so that's not going to help."

The last time I interviewed Marber was in 2015, and he had just written his first play in eight years, *The Red Lion*. Then, he told me that he'd had writer's block since moving to the Sussex countryside with his wife, the actress Debra Gillett, and their three sons. "I called it writer's block but ... after many years of analysis I own it as depression," he says now.

Last year he and his son Albie were diagnosed with ADHD. "We saw a specialist and she said, 'Oh yeah, off the scale, both of you.'" He now takes Ritalin. Will he write more now?

"Theoretically, yes. But it seems that however much speed I take, it doesn't quite get me to the desk."

He is writing a new play, set in the room of a tutor he used to visit before he sat his A-levels. "But it's not about me or a teacher. Really it's about an old hooker." He's also writing a sitcom with Tom Hollander "about disgrace" for Sky.

Next year he'll mark 40 years in showbiz and is planning to throw a party. He still has "the ego of a performer", he says. "I haven't had an audition in five years but I still live in hope." Ideally he'd become a character actor in his seventies. "I hope I won't still have the desire to write and direct like I have now. It's exhausting. But even in his eighties Tom Stoppard wanted to write *Leopoldstadt*. That writing thing ..." Another puff on his vape. "If it's in you, you can't escape it."

times2

# Your weekday brain boost

More  
puzzles  
Pages 14-16

Every day, Monday to Thursday, a page of extra puzzles to give your brain an extended workout

## Samurai easy

Fill each grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length.

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| 6 |   |   | 7 |   |   |   |   |  |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

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## Suko

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Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

## Mini Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x2 box contains the digits 1 to 6

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
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| 4 |   |   |   |   | 5 |
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|   | 5 |   | 6 |   | 3 |
| 6 |   | 3 |   | 4 |   |

Solutions in tomorrow's Times2

## Codeword

Every letter in the crossword-style grid, right, is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded.

|    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
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| 3  | 21 | 8  | 20 | 4  | 11 | 23 | 8  | 15 |    | 19 |    | 14 |
|    | 25 |    | 1  |    | 1  |    |    | 10 |    | 2  | 10 | 16 |
| 5  | 10 | 1  | 24 | 21 | 11 | 8  | 10 |    |    | 16 |    | 4  |
|    | 11 |    | 24 |    | 10 |    | 17 | 23 | 1  | 17 | 10 | 22 |
| 23 | 17 | 16 | 10 |    | 24 |    | 18 |    |    | 10 |    | 22 |
|    | 21 |    | 11 | 4  | 23 | 8  | 3  | 4  | 11 | 23 | 21 |    |
| 5  |    |    | 10 |    | 13 |    | 26 |    | 8  |    |    | 7  |
| 13 | 21 | 1  | 17 | 18 |    | Y  |    | 26 | 4  | 23 | 9  | 5  |
| 4  |    | 6  |    |    | 3  |    | 23 |    | 23 | 8  | 3  | 12 |
| 24 | 21 | 16 | 10 | 11 | 21 |    | 16 |    | 6  |    | 4  |    |
| 24 |    | 21 |    |    | 3  | 1  | 13 | 1  | 6  | 4  | 16 | 13 |
| 16 | 23 | 22 | 6  |    | 21 |    | 10 |    | 10 |    | 6  |    |
| 10 |    | 24 |    | 3  | 1  | 8  | 17 | 23 | 17 | 1  | 13 | 10 |

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

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| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |

## Sudoku super fiendish

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

## Killer deadly

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

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| 29 |  |    |    |    | 8  |    |  |    |  |    |  |  |
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| 17 |  |    |    | 22 | 14 |    |  | 4  |  | 12 |  |  |
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## Train Tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

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## Futoshiki

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

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## Thursday's solutions

### SAMURAI

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

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

### KILLER

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| 4 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 5 |
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| 7 | 9 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
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### CODEWORD

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# Brilliant lasagne, shame about the jumper

## Carol Midgley TV review



### Jamie Cooks Christmas

Channel 4  
★★★★☆

The publicity photos for **Jamie Cooks Christmas** have Jamie Oliver clad in a ghastly green Christmas jumper. But in episode one there was no sign of said jumper, merely Oliver in his usual checked shirt and, later, a garish number decorated with cacti, which if I were his wife I'd "accidentally" put in the charity bag. Good. I don't know anyone who wears festive sweaters featuring reindeer and penguins around the house, do you? It is a myth perpetuated by makers of TV programmes and *Bridget Jones's Diary*. And Gyles Brandreth.

Besides, once-a-year garments are an eco insult and Oliver seems to be an antiwaste kind of chap. At least judging by the way he refused to throw away the top, dark green part of the leeks he was using to make a cauliflower and romanesco lasagne. Good man. I can never understand people who only use the white bits. The green parts taste the best. He also used the stalks of the cauliflower, which not everyone does, only the florets. I use the cauliflower leaves too.

Anyway, this Christmas cauliflower lasagne was the best thing I have seen Oliver make. Yes, I obviously think that because I am vegetarian. But it all looked so lovely — and it would cost so little for the ingredients. Of course, we don't all grow our veg and herbs in the grounds of our swanky house like Oliver does, but a massive cauliflower at Tesco costs £1.80. I couldn't be fagged making my pasta like he did, though. Life's too short.

He's right that people only associate salads with summer but there are some lovely winter leaf salads. Interestingly there was not a morsel of turkey in sight amid these festive recipes, which seemed to row back on meat, making winter vegetables the main characters. Such as Christmas cracker parcels with winter salad and hasselback root veg, featuring parsnips, carrots and beetroot.



Jamie Oliver's recipes ditched the turkey for winter vegetables

True, there were chicken and pancetta skewers served on creamy polenta, which Oliver's wife, Jools, tasted and said were "insane". They used that clip as a trailer at the start but I wasn't wholly convinced she meant it as a compliment.

I always feel for documentary-makers filming Christmas shows in what is clearly dank early November, stringing up festive lights in the rain. Do you reckon he gives the camera crew some doggy bags to take home? It is always slightly excruciating when the "guests" arrive and they have to do that fake socialising thing, enthusing and nom-nomming over the food with a camera in their faces.

Remember last year when Nigella Lawson did a special on a houseboat in Amsterdam and people suddenly materialised to enjoy her "Christmas Cup"? Who were they? At least Oliver's guests seemed to be genuine friends and family making short work of his sticky toffee coffee pudding which — I'm sorry, Jamie — sounded to me like a heart attack on a plate.

What is a mystery is why they don't make more — a lot more — of Oliver's gorgeous brown and white collie, Conker. He made a brief appearance, his face covered in mud, but he's an underused resource. Take it from me: like Monty Don's golden retrievers Nigel and Nell, Conker could be a crowd-puller.

## Radio choice

Clair Woodward



### Dame Judi Dench at the BBC

BBC Sounds

Radio 2 celebrates the actress's 90th birthday today with a programme that looks back at her life and work through her BBC interviews. She discusses performing Shakespeare for Arnold Schwarzenegger and the fact that, despite playing spymaster M in the Bond movies, her technical skills don't run as far as operating a bicycle pump. And in the *Shakespeare Unlimited* podcast, Dench, above, and co-author Brendan O'Hea discuss their book *Shakespeare: The Man Who Pays the Rent*, in which she unpacks her many roles, as well as the contribution the audience makes to a production.

## OUR TV NEWSLETTER

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## Times Radio

Digital, web, smart speaker, app  
**5.00am** Rosie Wright with *Early Breakfast*  
**6.00am** Aasmah Mir and Stig Abell with *Times Radio Breakfast* **10.00am** Hugo Rifkind **1.00pm** The Times at One with Nick Wallis **2.00pm** Jane Garvey and Fi Glover **4.00pm** John Pienaar with *Times Radio Drive* **7.00pm** The Evening Edition with Kait Borsay. Engaging evening conversation **10.00pm** Carole Walker **1.00am** The Story **1.30am** The Best of Times Radio

## Radio 2

FM: 88-90.2 MHz  
**6.30am** The Zoe Ball Breakfast Show **9.30am** Vernon Kay. Wham! legend Andrew Ridgeley chooses his Tracks of My Years **12.00pm** Tina Turner **2.00pm** DJ Spooky **4.00pm** Sara Cox **6.30pm** Sara Cox's Half Wower **7.00pm** Jo Whalley's Shiny Happy Playlist **7.30pm** Jo Whalley **9.00pm** The Blues Show with Cerys Matthews. With guest Jack Savoretti **10.00pm** Trevor Nelson's Rhythm Nation **12.00pm** DJ Borg **2.30am** One Hit Wonders with DJ Borg **3.00pm** Pick of the Pops (r) **4.00pm** Owain Wyn Evans

## Radio 3

FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz  
**6.30am** Breakfast  
Petrico Trelawny presents  
**9.30am** Essential Classics  
Georgia Mann presents music and features  
**1.00pm** Classical Live  
Tom McKinney showcases the best performances by BBC orchestras, choirs, ensembles and other great performing groups from Europe and around the globe. The week begins with a live concert from London's Wigmore Hall given by the Julian Bliss Septet. Plus, a performance by the tenor Liam Bonthron and the pianist Michael Pandya at the Glenarm Festival of Voice in Co Antrim. Debussy (*Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune*); Saint-Saëns (*Nina Simone* (Theme from *Samson et Delilah*); Lully (*Six Entrées* to Francesco Cavalli's opera *Scerse* for two oboes, strings and basso continuo); Franck (*Symphony in D minor*, Op 48); Rameau (*Suite from Les Indes Galantes*, Paris 1735, for two oboes, strings and basso continuo); Glenarm Festival of Voice — George Butterworth (*The Lads in Their Hundreds*); Cheryl Frances-Hoad (*Marching Through Time*); Britten (*A Riddle — The Earth*); and *Ladlie's Song*); Cheryl Frances-Hoad (*Lily Maynard*); Britten (*Nightmare*); and Debussy (*Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maison*)

## 4.00 Composer of the Week:

**A Latin American Christmas**  
Kate Molleson explores the region's festive music, introducing the composers who shaped local celebrations across centuries and longitudes. She begins with Mexico, where the Iberian conquistadores first imported Christmas to Latin America, taking in resplendent baroque choral music, Aztec lullabies, the folk carolling tradition known as Las Posadas and festive ranchera music from José Alfredo Jiménez. Trad (*Esta Noche es Nochebuena*); Zéspedes (*Convidando esta la noche*); Gaspar Fernandes (*Xicóchi Conetzintle*; *Tleycantimo Chochilili*; and *A Belén me llevo, Tío*); Zumaya (*Celebren publique*; *El de pedro solamente*; and *Angelicas milicias*); Trad (*Mañanitas guadalupanas*); Trad (*Miren cuántas luces*; *De larga jornada*; and *La Piñata*); José Alfredo Jiménez (*Amarga Navidad*; and *Se va diciembre*); and Arturo Márquez (*Conga del Fuego Nuevo*)

## 5.00 In Tune

Live music in the studio by the choir of Merton College, Oxford  
**7.00am** Classical Mixtape  
A selection of classical favourites mixed with jazz, folk and music from around the world  
**7.30pm** Live Radio 3 in Concert  
Martin Handley presents a live concert from London's Barbican, with Khatia Buniatishvili joining the Academy of St Martin in the Fields for Mozart's Piano Concerto No 23. Plus, the orchestra takes centre stage in overtures by Mozart and Mendelssohn, and the last of Haydn's London symphonies. Mozart (*Don Giovanni* Overture; and Piano Concerto No 23 in A, K 488); Mendelssohn (*Hebrides Overture*); and Haydn (*Symphony No 104 in D, London*)  
**9.45pm** The Essay: Vivaldi in a Warming World  
Kate Molleson hears from composers writing seasonal music in an era of climate change, beginning with Magnus Lindberg talking about his 1985 piece *Kraft*  
**10.00pm** Night Tracks  
A soundtrack for late-night listening  
**11.30pm** Round Midnight  
Tina Edwards hosts, while this week's guest in the Flowers feature is Jessica Lauren  
**12.30am** Through the Night

## Radio 4

FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz LW: 198kHz MW: 720 kHz  
**5.30am** News Briefing  
**5.43pm** Prayer for the Day  
**5.45pm** Farming Today

## 6.00 Today

**9.00am** Start the Week  
Discussing the future prospects for Germany, Britain and the EU in the face of growing conflicts around the world  
**9.45am** Dementia: Unexpected Stories of the Mind  
Jules Montague and William Miller meet a man who was diagnosed with dementia with Lewy bodies — or DLB (2/5) (r)  
**10.00am** Woman's Hour  
Nuala McGovern presents the magazine offering a female perspective on the world  
**11.00am** County Lines  
Phoebe McIndoe reveals how austerity and social breakdown created fertile ground for county lines, from youth club closures to a crumbling care system. Last in the series  
**11.45am** Book of the Week: Patriot  
The autobiography of Russian opposition leader, anti-corruption campaigner and political prisoner Alexei Navalny. Read by Benedict Cumberbatch (1/5)  
**12.04pm** You and Yours  
**1.00pm** The World at One  
**1.45pm** The Wildpower Detectives  
How one man took control of the finances of scores of vulnerable people (1/7)  
**2.00pm** The Archers (r)  
**2.15pm** Hennikay  
Guy decides to visit his mum in search of answers. Last in the series (r)  
**2.45pm** Marple: Three New Stories  
*Murder at the Villa Rosa* by Elly Griffiths. An author plots murder in the sun (1/10) (r)  
**3.00pm** Great Lives  
Wildlife cameraman Doug Allan nominates oceanographer Jacques Cousteau (1/9)  
**3.30pm** History's Youngest Heroes  
Nicola Coughlan celebrates people who have changed history at a young age, beginning with Nelson Mandela's life as an activist working to overthrow apartheid (1/12)  
**4.00pm** Missing Pieces: The Lesbian Mothers Scandal  
The history of cases where the UK courts removed children from lesbian mothers (r)  
**4.30pm** The Kitchen Cabinet  
Panel show from Dorchester (4/6) (r)  
**5.00pm**  
**6.00pm** Six O'Clock News  
**6.30pm** I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue  
From the Great Hall in Exeter (1/6)  
**7.00pm** The Archers  
Alan faces a tricky negotiation  
**7.15pm** Front Row  
Kelsey Mann discusses *Inside Out 2*  
**8.00pm** The Briefing Room  
Examining the possible collapse of the regime controlling Syria (r)

## 8.30 BBC Inside Science

Arla Food's trial of Bovaer with three big supermarkets and 30 farms in the UK (r)  
**9.00am** Start the Week (r)  
**9.45am** Mythical Creatures  
Rhianna Pratchett explores the world of water demons (3/10) (r)  
**10.00pm** The World Tonight  
With James Comarasa  
**10.45pm** Book at Bedtime: Our Evenings  
By Alan Hollinghurst (6/10)  
**11.00pm** English Rose  
By Helen Cross. Last in the series (r)  
**11.30pm** Today in Parliament  
**12.00pm** News and Weather  
**12.30am** Book of the Week: Patriot (r)  
**12.48pm** Shipping Forecast  
**1.00am** As BBC World Service

## Radio 4 Extra

Digital only  
**8.00am** In and Out of the Kitchen **8.30am** Fall: The Mystery of Robert Maxwell **8.45pm** Things Fall Apart **9.00pm** Yesterday in Parliament **9.30pm** A Cause for Caroling **9.45pm** Daily Service: **10.00pm** Sounds Natural **10.30pm** Tropicalia: Revolution in Sound **11.00pm** Unofficial Rosie **11.30pm** Trueman and Riley **12.00pm** Like They've Never Been Gone **12.30pm** The Navy Lark **1.00pm** In and Out of the Kitchen **1.30pm** Fall: The Mystery of Robert Maxwell **1.45pm** Things Fall Apart **2.00pm** Just a Minute **2.30pm** Hay Fever **4.00pm** Sounds Natural **4.30pm** Tropicalia: Revolution in Sound **5.00pm** Unofficial Rosie **5.30pm** Trueman and Riley **6.00pm** Like They've Never Been Gone **6.30pm** The Navy Lark **7.00pm** In and Out of the Kitchen. Damien is persuaded to appear on a topical television panel show **7.30pm** Fall: The Mystery of Robert Maxwell. By John Preston **7.45pm** Things Fall Apart. By Biyi Bandele **8.00pm** Just a Minute. With Paul Merton, Charles Collingwood, Josie Lawrence and Chris Neill **8.30pm** Hay Fever. By Noel Coward **10.00pm** Comedy Club: Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz. Paul tests an audience in Merthyr Tydfil on their knowledge of Welsh heroes. Last in the series **10.30pm** Alice's Wonderland. Comedy sketches by Alice Lowe, set in Wonderland, dubbed the Poundland of magical realms **11.00pm** The Naked West. Satire **11.30pm** The Confessional. Stephen Mangan examines the conscience of the historian Antonia Fraser

## Radio 5 Live

MW: 693, 909  
**5.00am** Wake Up to Money **6.00pm** 5 Live Breakfast **9.00pm** Gordon Smart **11.00pm** Naga Munchetty **2.00pm** Matt Chorley

**4.00pm** 5 Live Drive **7.00pm** 5 Live Sport: The Monday Night Club. With Mark Chapman **9.00pm** 5 Live Sport: 5 Live Cricket. A review of the final day of the second Test between New Zealand and England **10.00pm** Tony Livesey **1.00am** Dotun Adebayo

## talkSPORT

MW: 1053, 1089 kHz  
**5.00am** Early Sports Breakfast **6.00am** talkSPORT Breakfast with Jeff Stelling **10.00pm** Jim White and Simon Jordan **1.00pm** Hawksbee and Jacobs **4.00pm** talkSPORT Drive with Andy Goldstein and Darren Bent **7.00pm** Live GameNight: West Ham United v Wolverhampton Wanderers (Kick-off 8.00). Commentary on the Premier League match from London Stadium **10.00pm** The Sports Bar **1.00am** Extra Time with Paul Ross

## Talk

Digital only  
**6.00am** Mike Graham **10.00pm** Julia Hartley Brewer **1.00pm** Ian Collins. Hard-hitting monologues and debates **4.00pm** Jeremy Kyle **7.00pm** Kevin O'Sullivan **10.00pm** Petrie Hosken **1.00am** Paul Ross **5.00pm** Petrie Hosken

## 6 Music

Digital only  
**5.00am** Chris Hawkins **7.30pm** Nick Grimshaw **10.30pm** Mary Anne Hobbs **1.00pm** Craig Charles **4.00pm** Steve Lamacq's Teatime Session **7.00pm** New Music Fix Daily **9.00pm** Riley & Coe. With a live session by Perret Perret **11.00pm** 6 Music Artist in Residence: Autechre. Themed tracks **12.00am** Laurie Anderson at the BBC **2.00am** Laurie Anderson Live **3.00pm** The First Time with Laurie Anderson **4.00pm** The Laurie Anderson Playlist

## Virgin Radio

Digital only  
**6.30am** The Chris Evans Breakfast Show **10.00pm** Vogue Williams on The Ryan Tubridy Show **1.00pm** Jayne Middlemiss **4.00pm** Leigh Francis **7.00pm** Bam **10.00pm** Olivia Jones **1.00am** Sean Goldsmith **4.00pm** Steve Denyer

## Classic FM

FM: 100-102 MHz  
**6.30am** Breakfast with Dan Walker **9.00am** The Classic FM Hall of Fame Hour with Dan Walker **10.00am** Alexander Armstrong **1.00pm** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00pm** Margherita Taylor **7.00pm** Relaxing Evenings **10.00pm** Calm Classics **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00pm** Early Breakfast

television & radio

Picks of the day

**Nutcracker: Backstage with English National Ballet Sky Arts/Now, 8pm**

When Aaron S Watkin tells off a group of dancers for chatting during rehearsals you get a flavour of the pressure that the English Nation Ballet's newish artistic director is under. As the co-choreographer of the ENBs latest production of *The Nutcracker* he has to freshen up

ballet's best-known work while also dealing with the overall repertoire and all the other administrative headaches that come with the job. This fly-on-the-studio-mirror documentary also allows us to witness everything that goes into the first night of a show which daringly gives a more pronounced role for Ivana Bueno's Clara. But the visual beauty as well as the strong personalities in this series make it a compelling watch. Even for those with little interest in dance.

**Music Box: Yacht Rock: A Documentary Sky Documentaries/Now, 9pm**

"Not that it doesn't rock, but it doesn't rock too hard," is the singer-songwriter Mac DeMarco's accurate description of a genre that may make you think of Californian beach gigs featuring men with beards and lounge suits with the sleeves rolled halfway up. Actually, this distinctive sound didn't have a name until a mid-Noughties comedy web series

identified the phenomenon. But if you hear a yacht rock tune, you know. It's acts like Toto, the Doobie Brothers, Steely Dan and Kenny Loggins. It's a characterisation that sums up the amiable approach of the director Garret Price: affectionate, fun but factually rigorous.

**MasterChef: The Professionals BBC1, 9pm**

It's the finals week and the chance for those who cook as their job to win

big in sequences that were filmed long before the presenter Gregg Wallace got into hot water over allegations of inappropriate conduct. Today's remaining quartet are catering for the Chef's Table at the Goring Hotel, the place where Kate Middleton and her family stayed the night before she married Prince William. The finalists have four hours to prepare one course each before one is eliminated and the final trio have to make just one plate of food. And it had better be good.

|       | BBC1   | BBC2   | ITV1   | Channel 4  | Channel 5   |
|-------|--|--|--|--|---|
| Early | <b>6.00am</b> Breakfast <b>9.30</b> Morning Live at Christmas. Michelle Ackley presents <b>10.45</b> Caught Red Handed. A detective uncovers a criminal who is targeting elderly people (r) <b>11.15</b> Celebrity Homes Under the Hammer. Martin Roberts is joined by guest presenter Scarlett Moffatt (AD) <b>12.15pm</b> Bargain Hunt. From an antiques fair in Wolsingham, County Durham <b>1.00</b> BBC News at One; Weather <b>1.35</b> BBC Regional News; Weather <b>1.45</b> BBC News at One; Weather <b>2.00</b> Countryfile Treasures. Reports on winter from around the country (r) <b>3.00</b> Escape to the Country. Ginny Buckley helps a couple from Slough to relocate to Berkshire <b>3.45</b> The Vintage French Farmhouse. Three dealers head to the French town of Pézenas in search of antiques, picking up items including a French bamboo-effect mirror and a pair of 1930s mustard yellow chairs (r) <b>4.30</b> Antiques Road Trip. David Harper and Catherine Southon go treasure hunting in Kent, where items include a menagerie of mechanical animals and a hammer that would put any auctioneer's gavel to shame (r) <b>5.15</b> Pointless. Alexander Armstrong is joined by co-host Vick Hope (r) <b>6.00</b> BBC News at Six; Weather <b>6.30</b> BBC Regional News; Weather | <b>6.15am</b> My Life at Christmas with Anita Rani (r) (AD) <b>7.15</b> Bargain Hunt (r) <b>8.00</b> Sign Zone: The Repair Shop — Favourite Fixes (r) (AD, SL) <b>9.00</b> BBC News <b>12.15pm</b> Politics Live <b>1.00</b> Impossible. Rick Edwards hosts the quiz (r) <b>1.45</b> The Tournament. Knockout quiz hosted by Alex Scott (r) <b>2.30</b> Beat the Pack. Jake Humphrey hosts the general knowledge quiz in which contestants demonstrate their bluffing skills and powers of persuasion (r) <b>3.15</b> Celebrity Best Home Cook. The contestants show off their celebration cakes for Mary's Ultimate Challenge, and take part in Chris's all-vegetarian Rustle up in a bid to avoid Angela's dreaded Eliminator (r) (AD) <b>4.15</b> A Very Country Christmas. Ellie Harrison and Angelica Bell celebrate Christmas traditions from three distinct parts of Britain, beginning by joining Advent preparations in the Highlands (r) (AD) <b>5.15</b> Flog It! Featuring previously unseen finds from the show's travels around Britain, visiting sites including Muncaster Castle in Cumbria and the Bowes Museum in Co Durham (r) <b>6.00</b> Richard Osman's Festive House of Games. With Clare Balding, Ivo Graham, Ugo Monye and Su Pollard (r) <b>6.30</b> Strictly: It Takes Two. An interview with the latest couple to be voted off | <b>6.00am</b> Good Morning Britain. News, current affairs and lifestyle features <b>9.00</b> Lorraine. Entertainment, current affairs and fashion news, as well as showbiz stories and gossip. Presented by Lorraine Kelly <b>10.00</b> This Morning. A mix of chat, lifestyle features, advice and competitions. Including Local Weather <b>12.30pm</b> Loose Women. Interviews and studio discussion from a female perspective <b>1.30</b> ITV News; Weather <b>1.55</b> Regional News; Weather <b>2.00</b> Alan Carr's Epic Gameshow. The comedian hosts an updated version of <i>Child's Play</i> with four contestants trying to decipher what words are being described by a cast of children (r) (AD) <b>3.00</b> Tipping Point: Lucky Stars. The comedian Ellie Taylor, the Olympic boxing champion Anthony Ogogo and former royal correspondent Jennie Bond put their wits to the test (r) <b>4.00</b> Deal or No Deal. Stephen Mulhern hosts the game show as a contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order for the chance to win a life-changing cash prize <b>5.00</b> The Chase. Bradley Walsh presents as four contestants answer questions and work as a team to take on one of the Chasers and secure a cash prize <b>6.00</b> Regional News; Weather <b>6.30</b> ITV News; Weather | <b>6.25am</b> Cheers (r) <b>7.45</b> The King of Queens (r) (AD) <b>9.10</b> Frasier (r) (AD) <b>11.10</b> Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. Mike & Nellie's Steakhouse in Oakhurst, New Jersey (r) <b>12.05pm</b> Channel 4 News Summary <b>12.10</b> Undercover Boss USA. Stephanie McMahon of the WWE meets aspiring wrestlers and fans (r) <b>1.05</b> Jamie's Night Before Christmas. Jamie Oliver helps people improve their festive dishes (r) (AD) <b>2.10</b> Countdown. Rory Bremner is in Dictionary Corner <b>3.00</b> A Place in the Sun. Laura Hamilton helps a mother daughter duo find a holiday home in the medieval town of Sarlat, France with a budget of £250,000 (r) <b>4.00</b> Château DIY at Christmas. There's a festive frenzy in the Loire Valley, with an ambitious project to create the tallest Christmas tree in France (r) (AD) <b>5.00</b> Four in a Bed. The competition kicks off at Clachan Garden B&B in the Scottish Highlands <b>5.30</b> Kirstie's Handmade Christmas. New series. Kirstie Allsopp begins 2024's festive countdown with a tree decorating competition with Kirsty Wark on hand as guest judge (AD) <b>6.30</b> The Simpsons. Homer is duped into enlisting in the army, and falls foul of a hard-nosed officer. With the voice of Kiefer Sutherland (r) (AD) | <b>6.00am</b> Milkshake! <b>9.15</b> Jeremy Vine. The broadcaster and guests discuss the issues of the day with co-host Storm Huntley joining him for phone-ins and reading out viewers' correspondence <b>11.30</b> Storm Huntley. Debate on the day's talking points continues with the host taking viewers' calls on the biggest stories <b>12.55pm</b> 5 News at Lunchtime <b>1.00</b> Friends. The pals celebrate Rachel's 30th birthday and reminisce about their own, including Monica's attempt to hide her intoxication from her parents (r) (AD) <b>1.30</b> FILM: Christmas on the Menu (PG, TVM, 2020) A chef unexpectedly falls for the restaurant critic who gave her first bakery a damning review. Festive romance starring Kim Shaw and Clayton James <b>3.15</b> FILM: Love at the Christmas Market (PG, TVM, 2023) An ornament-maker reconnects with her heritage at the Heidelberg Christmas Market in Germany. Romantic drama starring Ginna Claire Mason and Frederic Brossier <b>5.00</b> 5 News at 5 <b>6.00</b> Puppy School for Guide Dogs. Cameras follow guide dogs at every stage of their journey — from newborns to trainees and veterans — as well as the humans that both train them and rely on them (r) (AD) <b>6.55</b> 5 News Update |



Jane and Fi take it

Join Jane Garvey and Fi Glover on their weekday podcast as they share what they really think. With warmth, wit and a host of top guests, don't miss candid and entertaining conversation on *Off Air with Jane & Fi*.

|      |   |  |  |  |  |
|------|---|--|--|--|--|
| 7PM  | <b>7.00 The One Show</b> Alex Jones and Roman Kemp present the first visit of the week to the <i>One Show</i> studio  | <b>7.00 Villages by the Sea</b> An insight into how Buckler's Hard in Hampshire became a bustling naval shipyard (5/6)   |  | <b>7.00 Channel 4 News</b>   | <b>7.00 Traffic Cops</b> Officers are out in force on a bank holiday weekend, while a biker takes a tumble down a steep embankment after losing control on a bend and somehow miraculously escapes serious injury (r)  |
|      | <b>7.30 EastEnders</b> There's drama in the Mitchell family as Peggy's reopens under new name Harry's Barn (AD)   | <b>7.30 Mastermind</b> Specialist subjects are Mark Cavendish, the music of the Darkness, <i>The Day Today</i> , and the poet Sylvia Townsend Warner   | <b>7.30 Emmerdale</b> Cain is consumed by guilt, Brenda lets slip about Tracy and Caleb's affair, and Ross is flocked to find that Moses is petrified of him (AD)  | <b>7.55 The Political Slot</b> With James Evans MS, a Welsh Conservative politician  | <b>7.55 5 News Update</b>  |
| 8PM  | <b>8.00 Panorama</b> Current affairs report   | <b>8.00 Only Connect</b> Victoria Coren Mitchell hosts the second match of the knockout stage of the quiz as the Hoptsters take on the Al Frescons   | <b>8.00 Coronation Street</b> Tensions flare between Daniel and Debbie, while Dee-Dee fails to show up to her scan. Meanwhile, Shona attends a secret meeting in a hotel room, and Evelyn threatens Steve with legal action (AD)   | <b>8.00 Ultimate Christmas Gift Guide with Josie Gibson</b> A look at the year's best festive buys. Josie is joined by guests including Ollie Locke and Jenny Eclair plethora of experts to review gifts and offer money and time-saving hacks (1/2) (AD)  | <b>8.00 Police Interceptors</b> Officers are thrust into a high-stakes pursuit when a driver's erratic behaviour signals imminent disaster. On the A14, officers pull over a van for no insurance, MOT, or tax and to top it off find out the driver is banned   |
|      | <b>8.30 Miranda</b> The joke-shop owner dreams of the perfect Christmas without her parents and decides to celebrate at home with her friends (6/6) (r) (AD)  | <b>8.30 University Challenge</b> The second round of the student quiz continues  |  |  |  |
| 9PM  | <b>9.00 MasterChef: The Professionals</b> The last four contenders face the first challenges of finals week at a luxury five-star hotel in London, where they must prepare a meal for 24 of the industry's most revered chefs. See picks of the day (AD)  | <b>9.00 Renaissance — The Blood and the Beauty</b> Against a backdrop of political upheaval in Florence, Michelangelo and Leonardo jostle for artistic supremacy, but the arrival of young prodigy Raphael threatens both men. See picks of the day (2/3) (AD)   | <b>9.00 The 1% Club</b> Quiz game show hosted by Lee Mack in which the questions have nothing to do with remembering facts, but are all about logic and common sense with 100 contestants in every show having a chance of winning up to £100,000 (AD)   | <b>9.00 24 Hours in Police Custody: The Murder of Jane Doe</b> The case of a couple who found themselves in a flat thousands of miles from home, one unconscious and not breathing while the other claims to have no memory of how they got there  | <b>9.00 Casualty 24/7: Every Second Counts</b> A 78-year-old man is suspected of having severe cellulitis and is also paralysed from the neck down, while a 37-year-old woman has a serious arm injury after being thrown from a horse (AD)  |
| 10PM | <b>10.00 BBC News at Ten</b>  | <b>10.00 QI</b> With Cally Beaton, Nish Kumar, Laura Smyth and Alan Davies. The host Sandi Toksvig asks questions on the theme of visionaries  | <b>10.00 ITV News at Ten</b>   | <b>10.00 24 Hours in A&amp;E</b> Following the stories of three mothers who have triumphed over extraordinary adversity — the death of a child, a cervical cancer diagnosis and bringing up a child who needed extra care (2/6) (r)  | <b>10.00 Motorway Cops: Catching Britain's Speeders</b> Two PCs are patrolling when they spot a shift driver in a car that is the worse for wear. As the vehicle turns into a cul-de-sac, they signal for him to stop but he rams their police car and takes off, sparking a high-speed pursuit (6/10) (r)   |
|      | <b>10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather</b>  | <b>10.30 Newsnight</b> Headline analysis   | <b>10.30 Regional News</b>   |  |  |
|      | <b>10.40 Have I Got a Bit More News for You</b> Mel Giedroyc hosts an extended episode of the current affairs quiz, with team captains Ian Hislop and Paul Merton joined by Jamie MacDonald and Anushka Asthana (9/10)  |  | <b>10.45 The Playboy Bunny Murder</b> Marcel Theroux investigates the murders of four young women that have remained unsolved since the 1970s and reveals a dark and violent side of London's nightlife (1/2) (r) (AD)   | <b>11.05 24 Hours in A&amp;E</b> At Queen's Medical Centre in Nottingham, an incident causes a Jamaican-born security guard to reveal the challenges of working on the hospital frontline. Plus, the mother of a seven-year-old patient talks about the patience it takes to care for a neurodiverse child (r) (AD)  | <b>11.05 Cause of Death</b> A man is found dead on a sofa. As the coroner's team investigate, they discover he was involved in a road traffic accident eight months earlier that could link to his death, and whether an altercation in a car park played any part in the death of an elderly woman (3/6) (r)  |
| 11PM | <b>11.25 Evicted: Tenants on the Edge</b> Following the stories of four young renters who face being priced out or pushed out of their homes as the law in Scotland changes (r)   | <b>11.05 Highland Cops</b> Torrential rain from two winter storms leads to flooded roads and fields with police searching for missing person turning into an urgent hunt for a wanted man. Last in the series (r) (AD)   | <b>11.45 The Playboy Bunny Murder</b> Marcel Theroux's investigation takes an unexpected turn (2/2) (r) (AD)   |  |  |
| Late | <b>12.25am Michael McIntyre's The Wheel</b> Mel B, Tom Davis, Motsi Mabuse, Gyles Brandreth, Zara McDermott, Richie Anderson and Mark Clattenburg are the week's experts. They must help a trio of contestants to answer questions on specialist subjects in a bid to build the jackpot (r) <b>1.30-6.00</b> BBC News | <b>12.05am Sign Zone: Countryfile</b> John Craven and Margherita Taylor explore Woodoaks Farm, Hertfordshire (r) (SL) <b>1.00</b> The Listeners. Unable to experience the hum of the way the others can and increasingly guilty about her relationship with Kyle, Claire has a crisis (r) (AD, SL) <b>1.45-2.45</b> Rage Against the Regime: Iran (r) (AD, SL) | <b>12.35am Shop on TV</b> <b>3.00</b> Prince William: We Can End Homelessness. The prince checks in with his Homewards team across the UK, and draws on the guidance of people with experience of homelessness (r) (AD, SL) <b>3.50</b> Unwind with ITV. Daily escape <b>5.05-6.00</b> Deal or No Deal. Game show hosted by Stephen Mulhern (r) (SL) | <b>12.05am 24 Hours in Police Custody: Living The High Life</b> (r) (AD) <b>1.00</b> Untold: The Rise and Rise of Taylor Swift (r) (AD, SL) <b>1.30</b> Ramsay's 24 Hours to Hell and Back (r) (AD, SL) <b>2.15</b> Undercover Boss Canada (r) <b>3.00</b> Grand Designs (r) (AD, SL) <b>3.55</b> Jamie's Comfort Food (r) <b>4.05</b> Frasier (r) (AD) <b>5.45-6.25</b> Countdown (r) | <b>12.05am Police Interceptors</b> (r) <b>1.00</b> Live NFL: Dallas Cowboys v Cincinnati Bengals (Kick-off 1.15). The week 14 match at AT&T Stadium <b>4.30</b> Entertainment News on 5 <b>4.40</b> Wildlife SOS (r) (SL) <b>5.05</b> House Doctor (r) (SL) <b>5.30</b> Entertainment News on 5 <b>5.35</b> Paw Patrol (r) (SL) <b>5.50-6.00</b> Thomas: Big World! Big Adventures! (r) (SL) |

television & radio

Renaissance — The Blood and the Beauty  
BBC2, 9pm

Michelangelo — brilliantly played looking ferociously back on his life by Charles Dance — may be basking in the success of his *Pietà* but there are other candidates for top dog status in a Florence reborn after a period of religious puritanism. It's 1501, Leonardo da Vinci has returned to the city and a young prodigy from Urbino called Raphael looks as if he may

have a bit of promise too. Marrying dramatic intensity with scholarly expertise from the talking heads, this is a must-see series. **Ben Dowell**

Streaming choice

The First Lady

**U** American power as seen through the eyes of three first ladies — Eleanor Roosevelt, Betty Ford and Michelle Obama — in a



Nutcracker, Sky Arts/Now, 8pm

drama (first shown on Paramount+ in 2022) that isn't subtle in presenting its message about independent women forging their own path in a man's world. The Oscar-winner Viola Davis is Obama. Gillian Anderson is Roosevelt and, in the best storyline, Michelle Pfeiffer is the alcoholic Ford. The Danish director Susanne Bier (*The Night Manager*) has assembled quite a cast, which also includes Kiefer Sutherland and Aaron Eckhart. **Andrew Male**

Film choice

Rosaline (15, 2021)  
Film4, 9pm

This Shakespearean remix benefits from a droll turn by Kaitlyn Dever. It tackles *Romeo and Juliet* from the viewpoint of Rosaline (Dever), the girlfriend left by Romeo (Kyle Allen) for Juliet (Isabella Merced). Stung by rejection, Rosaline initiates madcap interventions that threaten the fate of the lovers. (95min) **Kevin Maher**

Sky Max

**6.00am** Stargate SG-1 (r) **8.00** Supergirl (r) **9.00** Stargate Atlantis (r) **11.00** DC's Legends of Tomorrow (r) **12.00** Supergirl (r) **1.00pm** S.W.A.T. (r) **AD** **3.00** Magnum P.I. (r) **AD** **4.00** MacGyver (r) **5.00** DC's Legends of Tomorrow. Sci-fi fantasy adventure (r) **AD** **6.00** Stargate Atlantis. Dr Beckett returns (r) **7.00** Stargate Atlantis. Shepard finds himself in a future version of Atlantis (r) **8.00** Christmas at the Movies. Famous faces talk about their favourite festive films and seasonal specials (1/2) (r) **AD** **9.00** Christmas at the Movies. Favourite festive films and seasonal specials (2/2) (r) **AD** **10.00** Never Mind the Buzzcocks. Comedy music quiz with Beth Ditto, Meganan, Nick Grimshaw and Kimberly Wyatt (r) **AD** **11.00** The Walking Dead (r) **12.00** Warrior (r) **AD** **1.10am** The Force: Manchester (r) **2.10** Road Wars. Officers combat vehicle crime (r) **3.10** Magnum P.I. (r) **AD** **4.10** MacGyver (r) **5.00** Highway Patrol (r) **AD**

Sky Atlantic

**6.00am** The Guest Wing (r) **AD** **7.00** Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets (r) **AD** **8.00** The Sopranos (r) **10.10** Six Feet Under (r) **12.20pm** Game of Thrones (r) **AD** **1.25** Boardwalk Empire (r) **AD** **3.35** The Sopranos (r) **5.45** Six Feet Under. Double bill of the drama (r) **7.55** Game of Thrones. Jon enlists the help of an unexpected ally, while Daenerys makes a difficult decision in Mereen (r) **AD** **9.00** Dune: Prophecy. Tula attempts to understand the origins of the acolytes' disturbing dreams after they all have the same nightmare, while Valya sets her plan in motion to redeem House Harkonnen (AD) **10.15** The Day of the Jackal. Ulla Dag Charles believes himself safe on his island (r) **AD** **11.20** Gangs of London. Marian Wallace is forced out of hiding and made to confront her past as Koba launches an attack (r) **AD** **12.25am** The Nevers (r) **AD** **1.35** Big Little Lies (r) **AD** **2.35** The Staircase (r) **AD** **3.35** Richard E Grant's Hotel Secrets (r) **AD**

Sky Documentaries

**6.00am** The Story of Late Night (r) **7.00** Discovering: Brad Pitt (r) **8.00** The Directors (r) **AD** **9.00** Ghislaine Maxwell: Epstein's Shadow (r) **AD** **10.00** Janet Jackson (r) **AD** **10.55** Shaq (r) **AD** **12.00** Laurel and Hardy: Their Lives and Magic (r) **AD** **2.00pm** Brandy Hellville & the Cult of Fast Fashion (r) **AD** **3.50** My Icon: Michael Campbell (r) **AD** **4.00** The Directors (r) **AD** **5.00** Discovering: Brad Pitt (r) **AD** **6.00** Ghislaine Maxwell: Epstein's Shadow. The mysterious life of the former socialite (r) **AD** **7.00** Janet Jackson. A profile (1/4) (r) **AD** **7.55** Shaq. Documentary series (r) **AD** **9.00** Yacht Rock: A Documentary. Chronicling the rise of soft rock. *See picks of the day* **11.00** FILM: Kurt Cobain — Montage of Heck (15, 2015) The filmmaker Brett Morgen explores the Nirvana frontman's life **1.30am** Pete Doherty: Stranger in My Own Skin (r) **AD** **3.20** FILM: Rock and a Hard Place (PG, TVM, 2017) Inmates in a boot camp programme (AD) **5.00** Discovering: Brad Pitt (r)

Sky Arts

**6.00am** Jonas Kaufman at Arena di Verona. The German tenor performs **8.00** The Joy of Painting **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering: Kevin Costner (AD) **12.00** Portrait Artist of the Year **2019 2.00pm** Artist of the Year: Masterclass (AD) **2.00** Cleo Laine: The Unseen Home Movies (AD) **3.00** Portrait Artist of the Year 2024 (AD) **4.00** Reinventing the Orchestra with Charles Hazlewood **5.00** Portrait Artist of the Year 2019 **6.00** Artist of the Year: Masterclass **7.00** André Rieu: Magic of Maastricht **8.00** Nutcracker: Backstage with English National Ballet. Part one of two. Going behind the scenes of a new production of Tchaikovsky's classic. *See picks of the day* **9.00** Matthew Bourne's Romeo & Juliet. A New Adventures production of the ballet **10.40** André Rieu: Starry Night in Maastricht (r) **AD** **3.20** FILM: Rock and a Hard Place (PG, TVM, 2017) Inmates in a boot camp programme (AD) **5.00** Landmark (AD)

Sky Main Event

**6.00am** Sky Sports News **7.00** Good Morning Sports Fans **7.30** Live Test Cricket: South Africa v Sri Lanka. Coverage of day five of the second Test at St George's Park in Gqeberha **4.00pm** Sports Desk. Sports news with live analysis and comments **5.00** Sports Centre **6.00** Sports Centre **6.30** Live MNF: West Ham United v Wolverhampton Wanderers (Kick-off **8.00**). Coverage of the Premier League match from London Stadium. The Hammers did the double over Wolves last term, winning 3-0 here and 2-1 at Molineux. They will be hopeful of another three points this evening given the Midlanders' struggles in the early stage of the campaign **11.00** Behind the Ropes: Usyk v Fury 2. A look at preparations for the rematch between Oleksandr Usyk and Tyson Fury **11.30** Sky Sports News **1.00am** Live NFL: Dallas Cowboys v Cincinnati Bengals (Kick-off **1.15**). Coverage of the week 14 match at AT&T Stadium **5.00** Sky Sports News

Variations

**BBC1 N Ireland**  
As BBC1 except: **7.00pm** Hope Street. The team investigates a shooting and an attempted robbery (AD) **7.45** If Walls Could Talk. Londonderry residents talk about special times they've shared in the Guildhall **8.00** EastEnders **8.30-9.00** Panorama. In-depth current affairs report **10.40** Chancers **11.10** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.55** Evicted: Tenants on the Edge (r) **1.00am** Michael McIntyre's The Wheel (r) **2.00-6.00** BBC News

**BBC1 Wales**  
As ITV1 except: **8.00pm-8.30** A Special School. The pupils are going to Paris for a once in a lifetime trip **10.40** Panorama. In-depth current affairs report **11.10** Have I Got a Bit More News for You **11.55** Evicted: Tenants on the Edge (r) **12.55am-6.00** BBC News

**ITV1 Wales**  
As ITV1 except: **10.45pm** Sharp End. Political discussion, presented by Rob Osborne **11.45-12.35am** The Playboy Bunny Murder. Marcel Theroux investigates the unsolved murders of four young women (r) **AD**

**STV**  
As ITV1 except: **10.30pm** STV News; STV Weather Central **10.40** Scotland Tonight **11.05** The Winter King. Arthur and the Tribe Kings enter peace talks (AD) **12.05am-3.00** Shop on TV **3.50-6.00** Unwind with STV

**UTV**  
As ITV1 except: **10.45pm** View from Stormont. Political developments in Belfast, London and Dublin **11.45-12.35am** The Playboy Bunny Murder (r) **AD**

off air

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BBC3

**7.00pm** Top Gear. Jeremy Clarkson drives the Jaguar F-Type, Richard Hammond tests the Range Rover Sport and James May goes out in one of London's New Routemaster buses **8.00** Gavin & Stacey. The couple are welcomed home after their honeymoon, but a confession from Nessa threatens to spoil the occasion **8.30** Gavin & Stacey. Smithy goes missing following Nessa's revelation, and the boys track him down to help him accept his responsibilities. Stacey prepares to move in with Gavin **9.00** FILM: Captain Phillips (12, 2013) The captain of an American cargo ship travelling around the coast of Somalia is taken hostage when pirates raid the vessel. Fast-paced thriller starring Tom Hanks and Barkhad Abdi **11.05** The Rap Game UK. The artists are tasked with writing a song about their heritage, and are then put face-to-face with industry experts who grill them about their plans after the contest **12.05am** The Young Offenders **1.05** High: Surviving a Dubai Drugs Bust. Karl tries to make a life for himself in prison **1.40** Top Gear. Jeremy Clarkson drives the Jaguar F-Type **2.40** Charlotte in Sunderland **3.40-4.00** Spud

BBC4

**7.00pm** Canals: The Making of a Nation. How the construction of canals led to a better understanding of the earth below **7.30** Winter Walks. The Rev Richard Coles walks through the North York Moors to Rievaulx Abbey. Last in the series (AD) **8.00** On Camera: Photographers at the BBC. The working practices, lives and opinions of some of the greatest photographers of the last 60 years, drawn from the BBC's archives (AD) **9.00** Lucy Worsley's Royal Photo Album. Lucy Worsley tells the story of the royal photograph, showing how the Royal family worked with generations of photographers to create images that reinvented the British monarchy (AD) **10.00** Da Vinci: The Lost Treasure. A recently discovered painting by Leonardo da Vinci (AD) **11.00** Craftivism: Making a Difference. Jenny Eclair meets people doing extraordinary things with knitting, cross-stitch, banners and felt to change hearts and minds across the world **12.00** Canals: The Making of a Nation **12.30am** Da Vinci: The Lost Treasure (AD) **1.30** Winter Walks. Last in the series (AD, SL) **2.00-3.00** Lucy Worsley's Royal Photo Album (AD, SL)

Talking Pictures

**6.00am** The Westerner (b/w) **6.35** FILM: Cotton Queen (U, 1937) (b/w) **8.15** Four Star Theatre **8.45** FILM: The Glass Cage (PG, 1955) Mystery starring John Ireland and Honor Blackman (b/w) **9.55** FILM: Doublecross (U, 1956) Thriller starring Donald Houston (b/w) **11.25** FILM: The Return of October (U, 1948) Comedy starring Glenn Ford **1.10pm** FILM: Brandy for the Parson (U, 1952) Comedy starring Kenneth More (b/w) **2.45** Look at Life **3.00** The Saint (b/w) **4.00** Bonanza **5.00** Dixon of Dock Green (b/w) **6.00** For the Love of Ada. Ruth goes into labour **6.30** Out of Town. Looking for wildlife **7.00** The Footage Detectives. Vintage vespas **8.00** Public Eye. Frank searches for a girl (6/7) **9.05** FILM: Scandal Sheet (PG, 1952) The Crime drama starring John Derek (b/w) **10.45** Look at Life. A 1964 survey **11.05** FILM: Element of Doubt (15, 1996) Thriller starring Nigel Havers and Polly Adams **1.15am** FILM: The Groundstar Conspiracy (PG, 1972) Thriller starring George Peppard **3.10** FILM: Play Dirty (15, 1968) Wartime adventure **5.30** Dangerous Assignment (b/w)

Film4

**11.00am** True Grit (PG, 1969) **1.40pm** Father Goose (U, 1964) Comedy drama **4.00** Ice Cold in Alex (PG, 1958) An alcoholic army officer leads the crew and passengers of an ambulance across a desert. Second World War drama starring John Mills (b/w) **AD** **6.40** GI Joe: The Rise of Cobra (12, 2009) Two soldiers join a top-secret military strike force to battle terrorists who have stolen a deadly experimental weapon. Action adventure with Channing Tatum and Sienna Miller (AD) **8.55** The Northman Interview Special **9.00** Rosaline (15, 2022) When dumped by Romeo for her cousin Juliet, Rosaline schemes to foil their romance. Comedy starring Kaitlyn Dever and Isabella Merced. *See film choice* **10.55** London Has Fallen (15, 2016) The US president and the head of his Secret Service must foil a terrorist attack on the city of London. Action thriller sequel to Olympus Has Fallen with Gerard Butler and Aaron Eckhart (AD) **12.50am-3.10** Kes (PG, 1969) A shy boy in a northern town finds a baby kestrel and decides to keep it as a pet. Ken Loach's British drama starring David Bradley and Colin Welland

More4

**8.55am** Kirstie's House of Craft **9.15** A Place in the Sun **10.05** A New Life in the Sun: Where Are They Now? **11.05** Find It, Fix It, Flog It **1.05pm** Car SOS (AD) **2.05** Four in a Bed **4.50** Narrow Escapes (AD) **5.50** Car SOS (AD) **7.55** Grand Designs. Kevin McCloud follows the progress of a man who promised his wife and children he would build them a super-modern underground home on a hill outside Canterbury **9.00** Matt Baker: Christmas Travels with Mum & Dad. Matt takes his parents on two very special Christmas trips (1/2) (AD) **10.00** Billion Pound Cruise. Daily life on the mammoth cruise ship the Symphony of the Seas, revealing how some of the 6,680 guests occupy themselves on board this billion-pound vessel. Last in the series (AD) **11.05** Emergency Helicopter Medics: Home Emergencies. The medics race to help out at serious home emergencies, including a man who has been crushed by a collapsed wall (AD) **12.10am** 24 Hours in A&E. A suspected heart attack (AD) **1.15** Matt Baker: Christmas Travels with Mum & Dad (AD) **2.20** Billion Pound Cruise (AD) **3.25-3.55** Food Unwrapped (AD)

BBC Scotland

**2.30pm** Sign Zone: Landward (r) **3.00** Sign Zone: Craft Christmas at Beechgrove (r) **3.30-4.30** Sign Zone: Island Crossings (r) **7.00** My Kind of Town: Wick (r) **AD** **7.30** Eat the Town (r) **8.00** Life on the Bay (r) **8.30** Scotland's Greatest Escape (r) **9.00** The Nine **10.00** River City (AD) **10.30** Only Child (r) **AD** **11.00-12.00** The Scotts (r)

BBC Alba

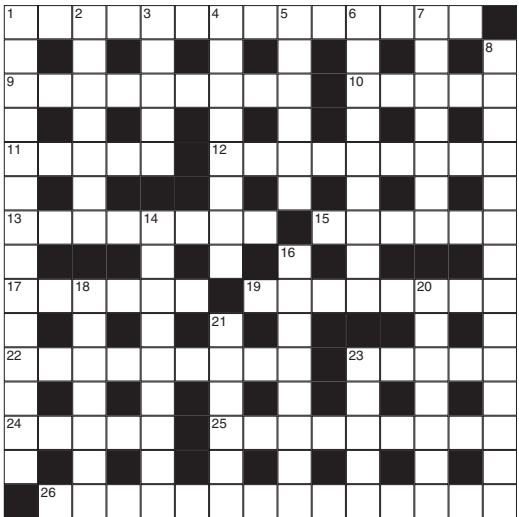
**6.00am** Alba Today **5.00pm** Bing (r) **5.15** Boban is Fuijgeag **5.30** AH-AH/No-No (r) **5.35** Su Pìr (Peek Zo) (r) **5.45** Meaban is Moo (r) **5.50** Stòiridh (r) **6.00** Belle agus Sebastian (r) **6.25** Dùbhlain (BBC ALBA) (r) **6.30** Bogaisean is Gumbalan/Bottersnicks and Gumbles (r) **6.40** Ai Chùil (r) **6.50** Flìx (r) **7.00** Dealbhan Fraoich (r) **7.30** SpealGaeltì: **8.00** An La **8.30** Immigration Tracks — Canada, le Anne NicAlpine (r) **9.00** Trusadh — An Geamhradh (r) **10.00** Bannan (The Ties That Bind) (r) **10.35** Rum gu Rum na Nollaig (r) **11.25** Belladrum Shorts (r) **11.35** Binneas: Na Trads (r) **12.00-6.00am** Alba Today

S4C

**6.00am** Cyw: Cwylion Bach **6.10** Cwylionbach (r) **6.20** Timpo (r) **6.30** Pablo (r) **6.40** Dal Dy Ddannedd (r) **7.00** Garu Canu (r) **7.05** Sion y Chef (r) **7.15** Fferm Fach **7.30** Sam Tan (r) **7.40** Amser Maith Maith yn Ôl (r) **8.00** Blodiau Llwi (r) **8.05** Digbi Draig (r) **8.20** Sbarc (r) **8.35** Odo (r) **8.45** Ne-wff-on (r) **9.00** Bing (r) **9.10** Twt (r) **9.20** Jen a Jim Pob Dim (r) **9.35** Pentre Papur Pop (r) **9.45** Gacammwci (r) **10.00** Cwylion Bach (r) **10.10** Cwylionbach (r) **10.20** Timpo (r) **10.30** Pablo (r) **10.40** Dal Dy Ddannedd (r) **11.00** Garu Canu (r) **11.05** Sion y Chef (r) **11.15** Fferm Fach (r) **11.30** Sam Tan (r) **11.40** Amser Maith Maith yn Ôl (r) **12.00** News: Weather **12.05pm** Sgwrs Dan y Lloer (r) **12.30** Heno (r) **1.00** Taith Tyluan yr Eira (r) **2.00** News: Weather **2.05** Prynhadn Da **3.00** News **3.05** Cwnefin (r) **4.00** Awr Fawr: Cwylion Bach (r) **4.10** Anffeilidach Bet y Byd (r) **4.20** Sigldigwr (r) **4.35** Joni Jet (r) **4.50** Byd Tad-Cu (r) **5.00** Stwnsh: Lego Frindiau — Amdani Ferched! (r) **5.15** Bywystfi (r) **5.25** Lloipol (r) **5.50** News! **Ni 6.00** Richard Holt: Yr Academi Felys (r) **6.30** Rownd a Rownd (AD) **6.57** News **7.00** Heno **7.30** News: Weather **7.40** Sgwrs Dan y Lloer **8.25** Bwrdd i Ddi (r) **AD** **8.55** News: Weather **9.00** Cefn Gwlad. An Anglesy farm diversified to breed goats over 20 years ago (AD) **9.30** Sgorio **10.00** Jess Davies (r) **10.35** Pen Petrol (r) **11.00-11.30** Cheer am Byth (r)

MindGames

General Knowledge Crossword No 263



- Across
- 1 County of Wisbech, Ely and Peterborough (14)

9 Person skilled in telling entertaining anecdotes (9)

10 Hole at the end of the outward half of a typical golf course (5)

11 Reverend W ---, creator of Thomas the Tank Engine (5)

12 Vessel for serving sauces (5,4)

13 Government department often led by a cabinet member (8)

15 Forename of the author JK Rowling (6)

17 Small ornaments worn on a bracelet or necklace (6)

19 Freshwater crustacean resembling a small lobster (8)

22 --- Ridgeback, dog breed once used for tracking lions (9)

23 Member of a religion whose festivals include Diwali (5)

24 Horseshoe-shaped bone at the base of the tongue (5)
- 25 Motorised craft that may be used for towing water-skiers (9)

26 Actress who played Mrs Bennet in the 1995 BBC *Pride and Prejudice* adaptation (6,8)

Down

- 1 US author of *No Country for Old Men* and *The Road* (6,8)

2 Ancient kingdom ruled by Alexander the Great (7)

3 Egon ---, food critic famed for his restaurant guides (5)

4 Vessels used to clear sediment from canal and river beds (8)

5 Otic secretion also known as cerumen (6)

6 Seminal David Bowie album featuring the tracks *Changes* and *Life on Mars?* (5,4)

7 Cheshire town on the south bank of the Mersey (7)

8 US vocalist whose version of *I Will Always Love You* was UK No 1 for ten weeks (7,7)

14 British stage and screen director who made *Skyfall* (3,6)

16 Wing of a church at right angles to the nave (8)

18 Mexican salamander now popular as an exotic pet (7)

20 *The Lord of the Rings* actor who played Bilbo Baggins (3,4)

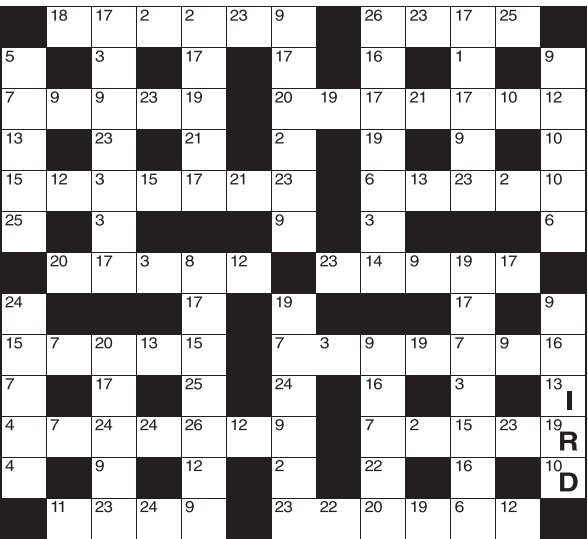
21 Surname shared by a 20th-century UK prime minister and US president (6)

23 Many-headed monster of Greek myth (5)

Last week's solution



Codeword No 5393

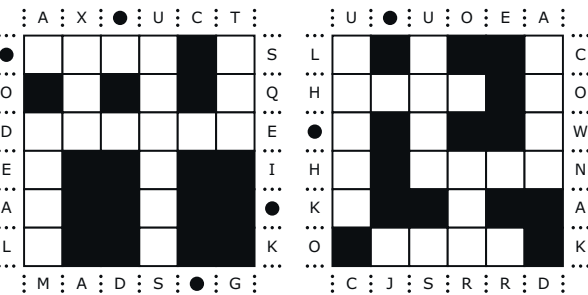


|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J  | K  | L  | M  | N  | O  | P  | Q  | R  | S  | T  | U  | V  | W  | X  | Y  | Z  |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |

Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Saturday's solution, right*

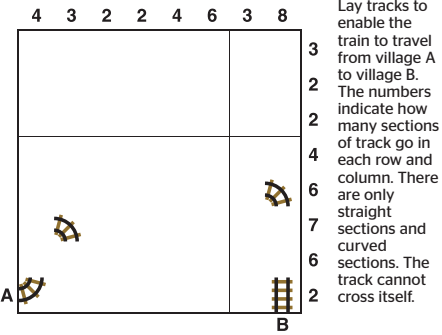
**Cueclines Stuck on Codeword?** To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

Lexica Easy No 7827 Hard No 7828



Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

Train Tracks No 2420



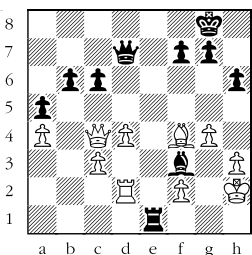
Quintagram®

Solve all five cryptic clues using each letter underneath once only

- 1 You really should catch this sheep (5)
- 2 Dine lavishly with son, inspired by heroic deed? (5)
- 3 Worked on boat hastily put together, I hear (6)
- 4 In favour of dependant being bold (7)
- 5 I clout one dreadful delivery (9)

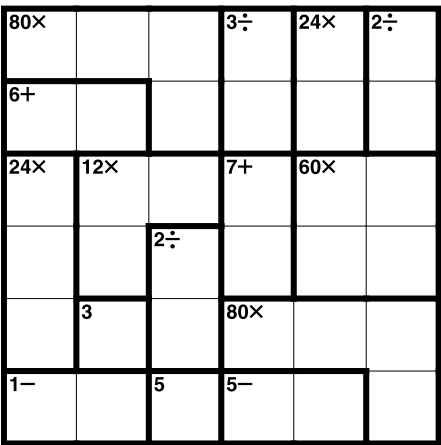
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | A | C | C | D | D | D | E |
| E | E | E | F | F | I | L | L |
| L | N | O | O | O | O | R | R |
| R | S | T | T | U | W | W | Y |

Winning Move



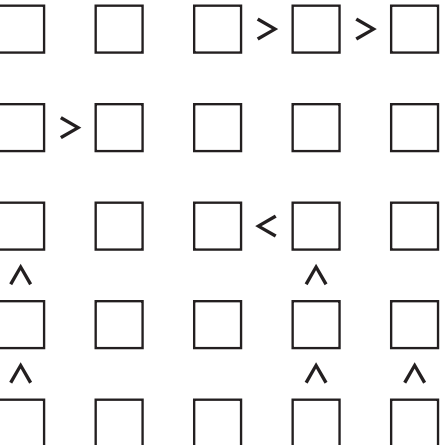
**Black to play.** This position is from Malicka-Gdansk, Warsaw 2024.  
Positions with opposite-coloured bishops (one side has dark-squared, the other light-squared) generally favour the player who is attacking. That was certainly the case here. How did Black finish?

KenKen Easy No 6385



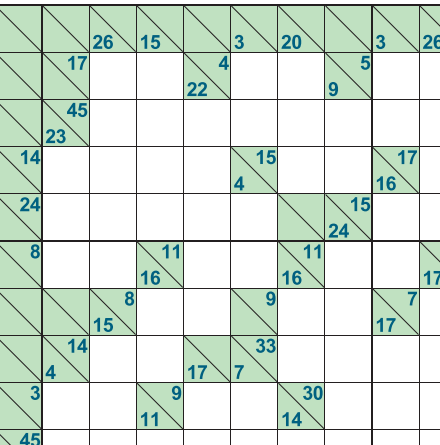
All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

Futoshiki No 4933



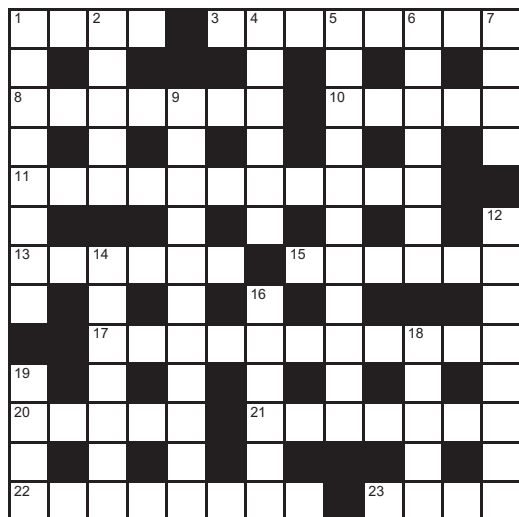
Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 3892



Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

## times2 Crossword No 9709



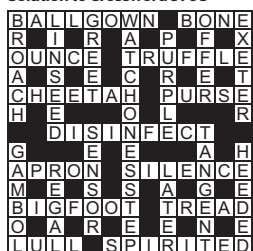
## Across

- 1 Having a pale grey colour (4)  
3 Act of retaliation (8)  
8 Spiritualists' meetings (7)  
10 Parisian river (5)  
11 Successful deed (11)  
13 Write (music) using marks and symbols (6)  
15 Stem the flow of (blood) (6)

## Down

- 17 Go on instinct, improvise (4,2,2,3)  
20 Small round hill (5)  
21 Directed (a vehicle) (7)  
22 Tell off, chide (8)  
23 Split into strands (4)  
1 Chooses not to vote (8)  
2 1970s prime minister (5)  
4 Springtime festival (6)  
5 Decent, worthy of esteem (11)  
6 English cheese (7)  
7 Untruths (4)  
9 Very disappointed (11)  
12 Maundy ---, occasion prior to 4D (8)  
14 Drinking place with beer available on draught (7)  
16 Gestures of affection made with the lips (6)  
18 Mistake (5)  
19 Ladies' fingers (4)

## Solution to Crossword 9708



Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

## Bridge Andrew Robson

To someone who is not an expert bridge player, NLP may be neurological programming. To an uber-modern bridge player, it stands for Non-Leaping Michaels.

If an opponent has opened at the Three-level, say 3♠, experts will seldom want to bid a natural single-suited 4♠/♦ — where's the vig in that? They'd prefer to pot 3NT or, if there's no trace of a spade stopper (although the lack of spade stopper won't put off all experts), jump to 5♠/♦ or simply pass and hope partner can act.

Enter Non-Leaping Michaels. A bid of 4♠/♦ shows five-five (or longer) in the bid minor and the other major (here, hearts). Let's now travel all the way to Buenos Aires for the 16th World Bridge Games and watch Andrew McIntosh and Tom Paske for England v Sweden.

Tosh received ace and another heart v his 4♠. At trick three, he ran the queen of spades to West's king. West switching to his singleton ten of diamonds.

Winning dummy's ace, declarer crossed to the ace of spades (removing West's second spade) then, crucially leaving out the remaining spade, reverted to diamonds, cashing the king, crossing to dummy's queen and ruffing a fourth diamond with his third spade.

At trick nine, declarer led the king of clubs (to keep West off lead and a trump promotion via a third heart). East won the ace but declarer could ruff his queen of clubs return, cash the jack of spades (felling East's ten) and enjoy the fifth diamond. Ten tricks made.

Dealer: West, Vulnerability: Both

Teams

♠ QJ874  
♥ KQ  
♦ A942  
♣ 10

♠ K2  
♥ A1098632  
♦ 10  
♣ 543

♠ A95  
♥ J5  
♦ A93  
♣ K9876

S(McIntosh) W N(Paske) E

3♥(1) 4♦(2) Pass

4♠(3) End

(1) Weak with seven decent hearts.  
(2) Non-Leaping Michaels. North is absolutely rock-bottom minimum for the action; but any bid that shows one's exact shape is worth a stretch.

(3) South must have been confident as he bid 4♠. It is easy to construct NLPs where 6♠ is easy eg ♠KQJxx, ♥-, ♦AQxxx, ♣Kx. As ever when the opponents have pre-empted, the key is to find a sensible resting spot, paying off to thin slams (also, suits don't rate to split well after a pre-empt, so a good slam on paper is often wrecked by bad splits).

Contract: 4♠, Opening Lead: ♥A

At the other table, the England West, Peter Crouch, led his singleton diamond at trick one. Declarer won in dummy and passed the queen of spades. West won the king, switched to a club to his partner Simon Cope's ace, was was soon scoring a diamond ruff and cashing the ace of hearts. One down.

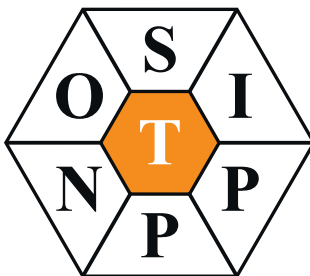
Despite this positive swing, however, the England team got off to a (very) slow start.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

## Brain Trainer

|        |     |      |       |                     |           |                     |                     |                     |                     |           |        |
|--------|-----|------|-------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|--------|
| EASY   | 16  | x 3  | + 6   | ÷ 6                 | SQUARE IT | - 18                | $\frac{2}{3}$ OF IT | + 8                 | ÷ 2                 | + 8       | ANSWER |
| MEDIUM | 51  | + 55 | x 2   | - 86                | x 3       | $\frac{5}{6}$ OF IT | - 79                | $\frac{1}{2}$ OF IT | + 78                | 50% OF IT | ANSWER |
| HARDER | 232 | x 6  | + 874 | $\frac{1}{2}$ OF IT | x 2       | - 696               | 50% OF IT           | - 889               | $\frac{1}{2}$ OF IT | x 4       | ANSWER |

## Polygon



From these letters, make words of three or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.

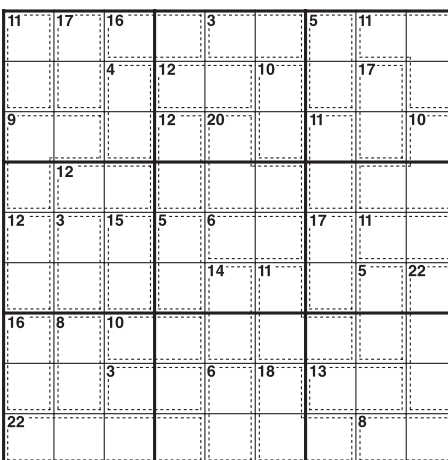
How you rate 17 words, average:

23, good; 27, very good; 32, excellent

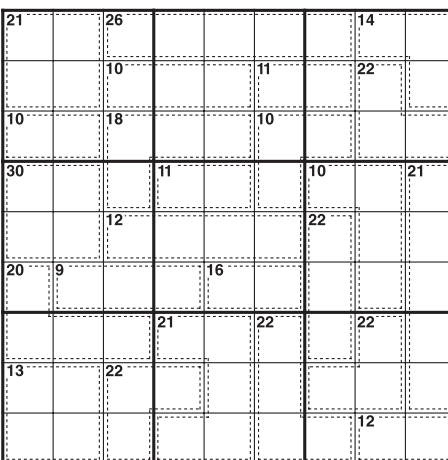
## Saturday's answers

anew, answer, answerable, aware, bawl, bawn, beware, braw, brawl, brawn, brew, bwana, ewer, lawn, nawab, newel, news, renew, renewal, salwar, sewer, slaw, slew, swab, swale, swan, swear, wale, wane, warble, ware, warn, weal, wean, weaner, wear, wearable, weasel, weber, ween, wels, wren

## Killer Gentle No 9824



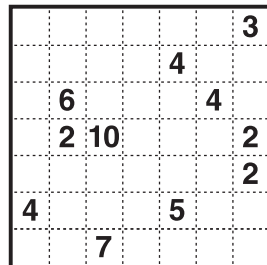
## Killer Tricky No 9825



As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

## Cell Blocks No 5276



Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

## Set Square No 3895

|      |      |      |
|------|------|------|
| x    | -    | = 2  |
| +    | +    | x    |
| -    | x    | = 24 |
| x    | +    | x    |
| -    | -    | = 1  |
| = 72 | = 15 | = 48 |

Please note, BODMAS does not apply

Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

## Solutions

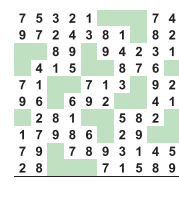
## Quick Cryptic 2852



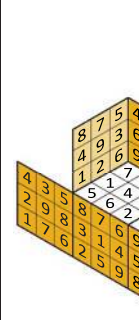
## Codeword 5392



## Kakuro 3890



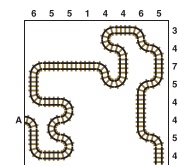
## Tredoku 1867



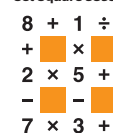
## Square Routes 300



## Train Tracks 2419



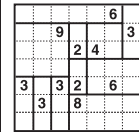
## Set Square 3893



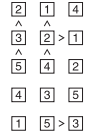
## Lexica 7821



## Cell Blocks 5275



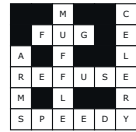
## Futoshiki 4931



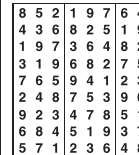
## KenKen 6384



## Lexica 7822



## Sudoku 15,446



## Today's solutions

## Concise Quintagram

- 1 Main  
2 Window  
3 Freeze  
4 Picture  
5 Framework

## Cryptic Quintagram

- 1 Dolly  
2 Feast  
3 Crewed  
4 Forward  
5 Elocution

## Suko 4294



## Brain Trainer

- Easy 333  
Medium 216  
Harder 4,324

## Word watch

Horriplation (b) The process that causes goose pimples (*Chambers*)  
Chaldron (a) An imperial unit of capacity (*Collins*)  
Quarent (c) A person who consults an astrologer (*OED*)

## Chess - Winning Move

- 1... Rh1+2 Kg3 sets up  
2... Rxb3+3 Kxb3 and now the queen and bishop get to work: 3... Qxg4+4 Kh2 Qg2 mate

## Quiz

- 1 Tea 2 Canterbury Cathedral  
3 Wars of the Roses 4 The Lord of the Rings 5 Vincent van Gogh 6 Soldier or soft soldier 7 Labour 8 George V 9 Bahrain 10 Ian Smith 11 Tyrone 12 The Longest Journey 13 Christabel, the author is Christabel Bielenberg (played by Liz Hurley), a niece of Lord Northcliffe who married a German lawyer 14 Ajax 15 Seamus Heaney

# MindGames

For extra  
puzzles  
See page 10

## Word watch

David Parfitt

### Horripilation

- a An anthology of odes  
b The process that causes goose pimples  
c Therapeutic massage of the scalp

### Chaldron

- a An imperial unit of capacity  
b A piece of armour for a horse's head  
c A greyish semi-precious form of quartz

### Querent

- a Continually complaining  
b A stone used for grinding grain  
c A person who consults an astrologer

Answers on page 15

## Sudoku Easy No 15,447

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

## Difficult No 15,448

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

## Fiendish No 15,449

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

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

## The Times Daily Quiz Olav Bjortomt

1 According to UKTIA, Britons consume around 100 million cups of which drink every day?

2 Which cathedral in Kent has the postcode CT1 2EH?

3 The 1461-68 siege of Harlech Castle was the longest siege of which conflict?

4 Ian McKellen is the only actor to receive an Oscar nomination for acting in which film trilogy?

5 Which Dutch artist painted six portraits of the postman Joseph Roulin between 1888 and 1889?

6 What molten mixture of lead and tin is used to join metals?



7 The Forde Report (2022) is the culmination of an independent inquiry into which political party's culture?

8 Which king was given a fatal dose of morphine and cocaine by his

physician, Lord Bertrand Dawson?

9 The King Fahd Causeway links Saudi Arabia and which island country?

10 Who was the first native-born prime

minister of the British colony of Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe)?

11 What is Northern Ireland's largest county by area?

12 Which 1907 novel by EM Forster is about the aspiring writer Rickie Elliot?

13 The 1968 memoir *The Past is Myself* inspired which 1988 BBC drama, set in Nazi Germany?

14 The youth academy of which Dutch football club is nicknamed "De Toekomst"?

15 Which Nobel prize-winning Irish poet is pictured?  
Answers on page 15

## Suko No 4294

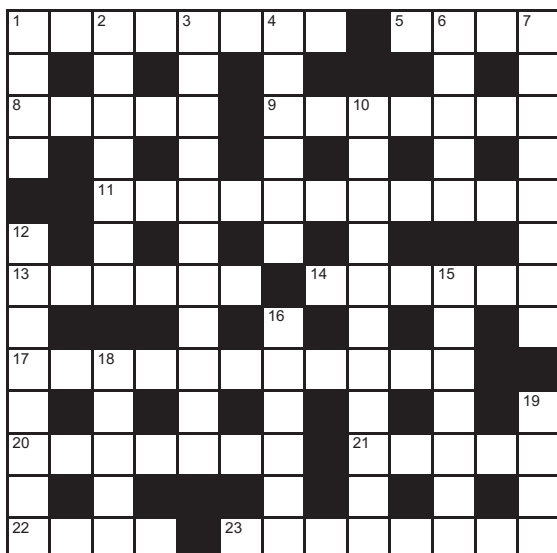
|  |    |  |    |  |
|--|----|--|----|--|
|  |    |  |    |  |
|  | 22 |  | 17 |  |
|  |    |  |    |  |
|  | 15 |  | 21 |  |
|  |    |  |    |  |

|    |    |    |
|----|----|----|
| 19 | 15 | 11 |
|----|----|----|

Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

For interactive puzzles visit [thetimes.com](http://thetimes.com)

## The Times Quick Cryptic No 2854 by Alex



### Across

- 1 Suspect vapour corrosion (8)
- 5 Fragment caught by joint (4)
- 8 Smarten up stable hand (5)
- 9 Scent anger (7)
- 11 Worldly former sovereign having break during test (11)
- 13 Bit of beer I eradicated for stranger (6)
- 14 Like group's property (6)
- 17 Curious need developed over time (2,3,6)
- 20 Puzzled birds in sack (7)
- 21 Start to peel every single fruit (5)
- 22 Peer is almost ahead of schedule (4)
- 23 Crazy act involving people with time (8)

### Down

- 1 Remove top of picture for sorcerer (4)
- 2 Gun with small nose (7)
- 3 Sorrel seems strangely savage (11)
- 4 Thinly slice second piece of offal (6)
- 6 Back one language (5)
- 7 Redesigned sleepers beyond compare (8)
- 10 Disaster as endless pot and ecstasy is introduced by jazz fan (11)
- 12 Trustworthy about having exposure to risk (8)
- 15 Refined film about strange angel (7)
- 16 Partial to posh, European dish (6)
- 18 Mostly modest object (5)
- 19 That woman had rudimentary dwelling (4)

Friday's solution on page 15

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

# TheGame

THE  TIMES

THETIMES.COM/SPORT

MONDAY DECEMBER 9 2024

Marc Cucurella changed his boots, after Spurs twice capitalised on slips from the Chelsea defender to take a 2-0 lead, below. He later shared an image of his old pair in the bin, right, after his side had claimed a 4-3 win



## CHELSEA FILL THEIR BOOTS

... after Cucurella bins his and Spurs throw away another lead

PAGES 2-3





# Pretenders to contenders – Chelsea expose the limitations of Angeball



## TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

Solanke 5, Kulusevski 11, Son 90+6

3

## CHELSEA

Sancho 17, Palmer (pens) 61, 84, Fernández 73

4

## James Gheerbrant

At Tottenham Hotspur Stadium

It started with Marc Cucurella slipping over, twice, to gift Tottenham two goals. An hour later, it felt like Chelsea's attackers were falling over themselves to score. This was a wild whirlwind of a match, and at the end of it, Chelsea were second in the Premier League. Tottenham had thrown away a two-goal lead and were sunk in gloom, and Cucurella had gone from slapstick stooge to moonlighting No10, via an impromptu change of footwear. How long before Tottenham contemplate a reboot of their own?

They scored a late consolation, but this was a game that, from the most auspicious of beginnings, became a humbling defeat. Unfortunately that very quality — the amplitude between their best football and their worst, the precipitous speed at which attack can give way to duress — feels like it is becoming the defining one of Ange Postecoglou's tenure. His is a football of transitions, and right now this is a team where everything feels unstable and ephemeral, where the windfall of a 4-0 win at Manchester City can be frittered away in barely a fortnight.

"Every time we're on a solid footing something has come along," Postecoglou lamented after the match, in a press conference where he was commendably calm and process-minded, but also seemed a little worn down. And in fairness to him, not everything that befell Tottenham here was on him. Cristian Romero, returning after a month out with a toe injury, twanged a groin and went off after 15 minutes, and after Chelsea's equaliser, Yves Bissouma and Pape Matar Sarr conceded needless penalties with poor challenges.

As for Chelsea, they are the division's leading scorers by four goals (albeit having played a game more than Liverpool), and at times here their attack was thrillingly good, with Cole Palmer's supremely impudent influence as ever their central nexus, but also decorated by excellent performances from Jadon Sancho and Enzo Fernández, neither of whose journeys in the Premier League has been straightforward, but who are beginning to play their best football under Enzo Maresca.

Can Chelsea challenge for the title? Their XI here, with an average age of barely 23, contained nine players under the age of 25 and none older than 27. There is no precedent for such a young team winning the league. On the other hand, they are now four points off Liverpool, they don't have a frontline European competition to reckon with and their next seven Premier League games are against the teams who are 9th, 15th, 10th, 18th, 17th, 8th and 19th.



Fernández scores the third Chelsea goal to complete his side's fightback, main, before Palmer, with his second penalty, rounds off the scoring for the visiting side with his audacious Panenka from the spot, top left. For Spurs, it all seemed a far cry from when, left, Solanke opened the scoring during a bright start that brought them two early goals

It was a match played on fast-forward from the start. After five minutes, Levi Colwill played an innocuous sideways pass just inside his own half to Cucurella, who lost his footing on the wet surface. Brennan Johnson seized on his mistake, burst down the right-hand side and delivered a near-post cross for Dominic Solanke. The striker was behind Colwill, but with a lovely bit of movement, arrived goal-side of him at the perfect moment to sweep the ball into the net.

Six minutes later, Cucurella received a pass in the left-back zone and suffered

another calamitous slip. Pedro Porro fed Dejan Kulusevski, who weaved his way across the box then sneaked a low shot past Robert Sánchez at his left-hand post. Cucurella promptly flounced over to the sideline, flung his boots away in disgust, and sheepishly reshod himself while subjecting the Chelsea kitman to the sort of withering "you expect me to walk in these?" look which must have briefly transported the poor man from this wintry touchline to some infernal backstage corridor at Paris Fashion Week.

Tottenham could have made it three

shortly after, when Destiny Udogie drove wide from the left edge of the six-yard box. Romero then exited looking distraught, and his replacement, Radu Dragusin, almost immediately found himself being run past by Sancho en route to a brilliant individual goal. This was Sancho at his absolute best, surging off the left touchline before unleashing a crisp low shot, which beat the dive of Fraser Forster and pinged off the inside of the post.

The tempo was frenetic, the action whip-lashing from end to end, the defensive lines high and haphazard.



CATHERINE IVILL/GETTY IMAGES

# 'Our resources are limited: it's holding us back'

Peter Rutzler

Enzo Maresca believes title challengers Arsenal, Manchester City and Liverpool "will not slip like Marc Cucurella" as he continued to play down Chelsea's title hopes despite a statement victory over Tottenham Hotspur.

Chelsea moved two points clear of third-placed Arsenal, and four points shy of leaders Liverpool after recovering from two goals down to win 4-3 at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

Cucurella, the Spain left back, slipped twice in the opening stages of the match, and both errors led directly to Tottenham goals. The first slip, in the fifth minute, allowed Brennan Johnson to escape down the right-hand side and cross for Dominic Solanke to score, while the second, seven minutes later, ceded possession to Dejan Kulusevski who doubled Tottenham's lead after a mazy run on the edge of the box.

"Arsenal, City and Liverpool probably don't slide... like Marc Cucurella did!", Maresca, the head coach, told Sky Sports. "To be serious, we are not ready, we are far from these teams. We focus on the day-by-day and trying to improve the team."

Cucurella, who was forced to change boots straight after the second slip, posted a photograph on Instagram with the offending footwear in a bin after the match. "Marc [Cucurella] said to me after the game that he tried to bring emotion into the game," Maresca said. "It was probably too much."

Cole Palmer (with two penalties), Enzo Fernández, and Jadon Sancho were all on the scoresheet for Chelsea, while Kulusevski, Solanke and Son Heung-min replied for Tottenham.

The Chelsea defender Levi Colwill reiterated the party line that if his side were title contenders, they would not have conceded those three goals but Maresca, who has repeatedly played down Chelsea's chances because of the relative inexperience of his group, admitted that supporters can begin to dream of success.

"After the game, my message to the players was to be focused day by day, in our session, the next game on Thursday and then Sunday," he said. "The main focus has to be to enjoy the day off [on Monday] and when we come back, 100 per cent, train well, go for the game."

"The fans can dream because from the outside, it is quite clear and inside, the reality is we are not ready. But the important thing is we improve day by day."

Only the bottom three have lost more games than Postecoglou's side

Palmer's two spot-kicks took him one clear of Yaya Touré's record for scoring consecutive penalties in the Premier League. His tally now stands at 12.

Maresca admitted after the match that he has never seen Palmer practise a penalty, but despite that, his composure from 12 yards does not surprise him.

"Cole belongs to the kind of players, who are not normal players, they are top players," he said. "Top players do things that normal players, or us, cannot do. It's because he's top. We can expect this from him."

Palmer now has 50 goal involvements (33 goals, 17 assists) in 48 Premier League games for Chelsea, a figure that only Erling Haaland for Manchester City (39), Andy Cole for Newcastle (43), and Mohamed Salah (46) for Liverpool have reached in shorter time.

Asked whether he felt Palmer, 22, was the best player in the Premier League, Maresca said: "For us, for sure. But in the Premier League, there are top players, top talents. Cole belongs to those players."

For Ange Postecoglou, this was another bruising afternoon in more ways than one.

There were surprise returns for defenders Cristian Romero and Micky van de Ven after injury, however both defenders limped off during the game. Van de Ven felt a tightness in his hamstring late on, while Romero suffered a "new injury" to his quadricep, according to Postecoglou.

Tottenham have now only won one of their past seven games and sit 11th — 11 points behind Chelsea. The Australian head coach lamented how injuries have limited Tottenham's ability to find consistency, but vowed to turn the season around.

"I don't sense anyone is feeling sorry for themselves," Postecoglou said. "It's a tough moment because there are all these tools you can use as a manager to turn things around and our limited resources from a playing perspective don't allow us to do that. It's not for a lack of effort, the players are out there because we can't rotate. That diminishes performances because we can't give them a rest."

"It's something we have to tackle head on. There's plenty for us to play for between now and January. I sense within this squad there's a conviction about what we're doing, if we keep doing that we will turn our season around."



Tottenham had a chance to restore their two-goal lead when Son Heung-min played a give-and-go with Solanke, cut inside Colwill and brushed a high curling shot just over the bar. Forster made an excellent double save, repelling Palmer's crisp shot, then blocking Pedro Neto's follow-up with his foot.

Moises Caicedo was lucky not to be sent off for a reckless lunge on Sarr, who moments later rattled the crossbar with a header from Son's corner. Then a short transition ended with Son squaring for an off-balance Solanke, who forced the ball towards goal but without enough power to beat Sánchez. The deluge of chances continued: Palmer had ample time to slide a pass for the run of Nicolas Jackson, who was thwarted by a brilliant sliding block from Dragusin.

Just before half-time, Kulusevski was also lucky not to be sent off, for a flailing elbow that caught Roméo Lavia on the side of the head. The Chelsea midfielder did not reappear for the second half, replaced by Malo Gusto. Sancho, having a super game, played a pin-sharp give-and-go with Cucurella and drew a fine save from Forster.

Chelsea were now the team whose forward surges carried greater threat and cohesion, and with an hour gone, they duly equalised. Sancho threaded a lovely pass to Caicedo, who was spectacularly cleaned out by Bissouma. Palmer rifled the spot kick past Forster.

Tottenham could have retaken the lead. Solanke played a round-the-corner pass on halfway, Sarr, who was off-

## How they stand

|                | P  | W  | D | L  | F  | A  | GD  | Pts |
|----------------|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| Liverpool      | 14 | 11 | 2 | 1  | 29 | 11 | 18  | 35  |
| Chelsea        | 15 | 9  | 4 | 2  | 35 | 18 | 17  | 31  |
| Arsenal        | 15 | 8  | 5 | 2  | 29 | 15 | 14  | 29  |
| Man City       | 15 | 8  | 3 | 4  | 27 | 21 | 6   | 27  |
| Nottm Forest   | 15 | 7  | 4 | 4  | 19 | 18 | 1   | 25  |
| Aston Villa    | 15 | 7  | 4 | 4  | 23 | 23 | 0   | 25  |
| Brighton       | 15 | 6  | 6 | 3  | 25 | 22 | 3   | 24  |
| Bournemouth    | 15 | 7  | 3 | 5  | 23 | 20 | 3   | 24  |
| Brentford      | 15 | 7  | 2 | 6  | 31 | 28 | 3   | 23  |
| Fulham         | 15 | 6  | 5 | 4  | 22 | 20 | 2   | 23  |
| Tottenham      | 15 | 6  | 2 | 7  | 31 | 19 | 12  | 20  |
| Newcastle      | 15 | 5  | 5 | 5  | 19 | 21 | -2  | 20  |
| Man United     | 15 | 5  | 4 | 6  | 19 | 18 | 1   | 19  |
| West Ham       | 14 | 4  | 3 | 7  | 18 | 27 | -9  | 15  |
| Everton        | 14 | 3  | 5 | 6  | 14 | 21 | -7  | 14  |
| Leicester      | 15 | 3  | 5 | 7  | 21 | 30 | -9  | 14  |
| Crystal Palace | 15 | 2  | 7 | 6  | 14 | 20 | -6  | 13  |
| Ipswich        | 15 | 1  | 6 | 8  | 14 | 27 | -13 | 9   |
| Wolves         | 14 | 2  | 3 | 9  | 22 | 36 | -14 | 9   |
| Southampton    | 15 | 1  | 2 | 12 | 11 | 31 | -20 | 5   |

## RATINGS

**Tottenham (4-3-3):** F Forster 6 — P Porro 6, C Romero 6 (R Dragusin 15min, 6), M van de Ven 6 (A Gray 79), D Udogle 6 — Y Bissouma 5 (L Bergvall 79), P Sarr 5, D Kulusevski 6 (J Maddison 79) — B Johnson 6 (T Werner 53, 6), D Solanke 6, Heung-min Son 5.  
**Booked** Sarr, Bissouma.  
**Chelsea (4-2-3-1):** R Sánchez 6 — M Caicedo 5, B Badiashile 6, L Colwill 7, M Cucurella 7 (R Veiga 91) — R Lavia 6 (M Gusto 46, 6), E Fernández 8 — P Neto 7 (N Madueke 86), C Palmer 8 (J Félix 91), J Sancho 8 — N Jackson 7 (C Nkunku 76).  
**Booked** Lavia, Neto, Sánchez.  
**Referee** A Taylor.  
**Attendance** 61,184.

# Arteta frustrated after bogey team stall title charge

**FULHAM** 1  
Jiménez 11

**ARSENAL** 1  
Saliba 52

Alyson Rudd

Craven Cottage



Just as happened last December, Fulham's resilience interrupted Arsenal's push to challenge for the title. Mikel Arteta's team rescued a point as they attempted to close the gap on Liverpool, but Fulham are becoming something of a bogey team for their London rivals.

Those who think of Fulham as a team playing pretty enough football while lacking heft should take stock. This was a soggy battle and one in which the home side, who took four points off Arsenal last season, kept high levels of concentration and determination.

"We deserved to win from the beginning to the end," Arteta said, but sometimes you have to take into account that the opposition are simply too well-organised and far from intimidated. There was a classy effortlessness to how Fulham opened the scoring, even if they had only two shots in the game.

Arsenal enjoyed more possession and made far more attacking forays. They somewhat inevitably equalised from a corner after going behind to an exquisite Raúl Jiménez strike, but they lacked conviction when it mattered.

This was the sort of afternoon where the north London club was supposed to ally crisp passing with gutsiness and, to an extent, that is what was witnessed, but they were simply quite good in both departments instead of excelling. At no juncture, even allowing for a late Bukayo Saka goal being ruled out by VAR for offside, did Arteta's team grab this derby by the scruff of the neck and make their array of attacking talent too hot to handle.

Every award of an Arsenal set piece was greeted with a near reverential hush, such has been their dominance at corner kicks, and the first Declan Rice corner was met by William Saliba, who perhaps could have done better with his header. When Saka took the second, the home fans jeered as the massed ranks of blue shirts ran in from the far side of the penalty area, and Sander Berge headed away at the near post.

Rarely in the history of football has one team's fame at set pieces been so universally acknowledged and treated as a



Saliba equalised in the second half — scoring Arsenal's 23rd goal from a corner since the start of last season — after Jiménez, below, gave Fulham an early lead

pantomime by the opposition supporters while greedily anticipated by their own. It is like watching a sport within a sport and it was not being wise after the event to understand that if Arsenal were to make inroads it would most likely be through a corner.

Fulham absorbed the early pressure and then took the lead with a beautifully slick goal that began with Jiménez cushioning a long clearance from Bernd Leno, and then turning to run onto Kenny Tete's finely judged through ball to calmly slot beyond David Raya. It was the Mexican's sixth goal of the season, and he is a prime example of how Marco Silva works wonders with players who are drifting and need a fresh start.

Arsenal wore a makeshift look in defence. Injuries to Oleksandr Zinchenko, Gabriel and Riccardo Calafiori meant Thomas Partey had to fill in at right back, and Arteta was forced to field his ninth different back four of the campaign. The upshot was that the home team could afford to be fearless, and Jakub Kiwior's shepherding of Jiménez as he ran towards goal must have been too quirky for Arteta's liking.

Joachim Andersen was missing from the Fulham back line, but the presence of Issa Diop was actually a boon given his aerial dominance against a team used to dominating in the box.

There was the potential for an intriguing battle between Norwegian team-mates Berge and Martin Odegaard, but their paths rarely crossed, with it instead falling to

Sasa Lukic to try to disrupt the Arsenal captain's orchestration. It was the afternoon for Emile Smith Rowe to demonstrate to his former club that leaving Arsenal for more game time had proven beneficial. The 24-year-old failed to control a first-half long pass while in a highly promising position and in general appeared slightly overwhelmed by the occasion. It was not a surprise to see him substituted on the hour mark.

At the start of the first half, Arsenal made their fifth corner of the contest count, with Saliba prodding in past Leno after Kai Havertz had steamed in to meet the floating ball. It was their 23rd goal from a corner since the start of last season, and Arteta's team were invigorated by it. Their attacks were slightly spikier and Leandro Trossard forced a low save with a clever strike.

Fulham remained dangerous on the counter, however, and Raya needed to be at his most alert to keep out Andreas Pereira's low effort. Off went Odegaard, and on came Ethan Nwaneri, 17, one of the league's most exciting young talents.

Arsenal thought they had scored a late winning goal after Saka converted Gabriel Martinelli's cross, but Martinelli was marginally offside in the build-up after a long VAR check.

When asked about Fulham's resilience, Arteta banged his fists on the table. It had been a frustrating afternoon. "We really wanted it," the Arsenal manager said of the chance to profit from Liverpool's match being postponed. "We have good momentum and it was a really crucial moment for us to go for it. We certainly did. We certainly tried and we were so close to doing it. Unfortunately, we didn't manage to achieve it."

## RATINGS

**Fulham (4-2-3-1):** B Leno 7 — K Tete 7, C Bassey 7, I Diop 8, A Robinson 7 — S Berge 8, S Lukic 8 (J Cuenca 90+2min) — A Iwobi 7, E Smith Rowe 6 (A Pereira 60, 7), A Traoré 6 (H Wilson 60, 7) — R Jiménez 8 (R Muniz 80)  
**Booked** Lukic, Bassey, Jiménez, Robinson.  
**Arsenal (4-3-3):** D Raya 7 — T Partey 6, W Saliba 7, J Kiwior 7, J Timber 7 — M Odegaard 7 (E Nwaneri 79), Jorginho 7 (M Merino 74), D Rice 8 — B Saka 8, K Havertz 7 (G Jesus 73), L Trossard 7 (G Martinelli 60, 7) **Booked** Martinelli, Rice.  
**Referee** C Kavanagh. **Attendance** 26,954.



Clockwise from top left: Lamptey fired Brighton ahead before Minteh doubled

## Vardy helps Van

**LEICESTER CITY** 2

Vardy 86, De Cordova-Reid 90+1

**BRIGHTON** 2

Lamptey 37, Minteh 79

Neil Squires

King Power Stadium

Extracting more from a game than looks possible — or is deserved — is a useful knack for a manager. Four points from two games for Ruud van Nistelrooy, in which his Leicester City team were largely outplayed in both cases, represents a huge bonus.

After the 3-0 midweek victory over West Ham United, in which the scoreline was a lot more impressive than the performance, Leicester looked gone for all money when Yankuba Minteh put Brighton & Hove Albion 2-0 up with 11 minutes left at the King Power Stadium.

However, a fightback inspired by the Premier League's Benjamin Button, Jamie Vardy, rescued a point for Van Nistelrooy's new team. Vardy, 38 next month, scored the first and set up Bobby De Cordova-Reid for the equal-

iser in stoppage time.

If Van Nistelrooy's charges had no real right to share the points then the determination to fight to the finish was clear for all to see. A never-say-die strand running through a team can take them a long way and the Dutchman was heartened by what he saw.

"Coming back from a 2-0 difference in goals is a great show of character," Van Nistelrooy said. "The focus was on performing and playing the way we want to play and buying into that and giving absolutely everything physically and mentally to achieve it."

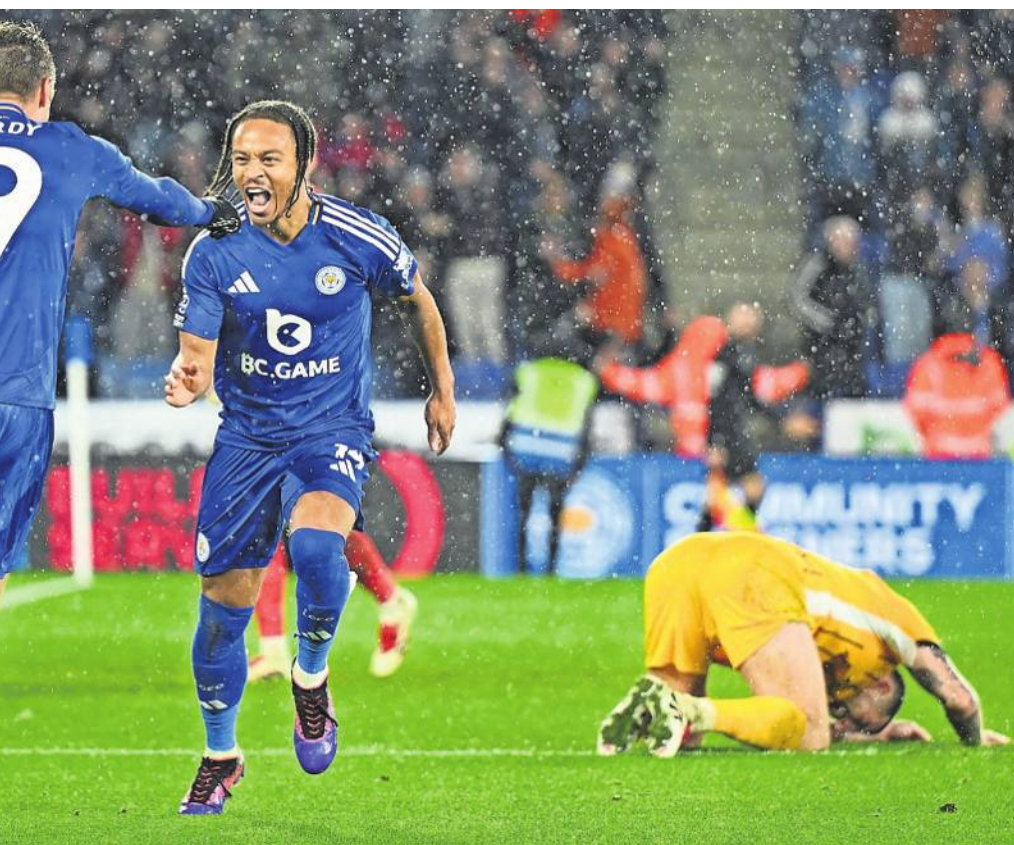
"That spirit I enjoyed. I have to say I enjoyed the second half of this team. I felt the performance in the second half permitted us to score two goals. We put them under pressure and won the duels in their half."

Leicester remain too careless in possession but the energy they showed in squeezing a point from what appeared to be a lost cause reflected well on them.

Brighton were left kicking themselves, though, over how they failed to close out a game they largely controlled. "I think when you are 2-0 up, you control the whole game, you don't give away too many shots for the opponent and then things happen in the last



MIKE EGERTON/PA; MICHAEL REGAN/CARL REGINE/GETTY IMAGES; JAMES HOLYOAK/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK



their lead, but Vardy slotted past Verbruggen and then turned provider for De Cordova-Reid to earn Leicester a point

## Nistelrooy get lucky again

ten minutes you should be disappointed," Fabian Hürzeler, the Brighton head coach, said. "In the end we got punished for two easy mistakes.

"It has happened now several times in the season so the words 'learning from it' are difficult to use.

"We need to find the right game management in this period of time to take away the three points. It's our responsibility.

"We need to be much more mature, we need to be much more clear how we solve things in the last five or six minutes. Then these things won't happen. "In the end defence wins the championship. If you want to achieve something you have to get a clean sheet and we weren't able to do this today.

"That's not the responsibility of the defenders. Everyone has to do everything to keep the clean sheet and that's what we missed today."

Had Brighton made more of their first-half chances it would not have been an issue. João Pedro and Kaoru Mitoma were both guilty of spurning good opportunities before Tariq Lamptey gave the visiting team the lead in spectacular fashion in the 37th minute.

When an overhit cross from Pervis Estupiñán found Lamptey out on the

right, the danger was not immediately apparent — but he cut inside on to his left foot and past a half-hearted Jordan Ayew before unleashing a beautiful curling shot beyond Mads Hermansen and into the far corner.

Leicester finally came to life in the last couple of minutes of the half. The Brighton goalkeeper, Bart Verbruggen, was able to claw away James Justin's header after Victor Kristiansen had picked him out at the far post. Then Lewis Dunk slid in to intervene as Vardy prepared to pounce.

They maintained their improvement after the interval without creating a great deal only to succumb to a sucker punch on the break from Minteh after he had turned Kristiansen this way and that, before finishing left-footed.

However, Leicester — who lost Wilfred Ndidi seven minutes into the second half to a hamstring injury — grabbed a lifeline in the 87th minute, with Vardy slotting home a deflected shot by De Cordova-Reid.

And as the game ticked over into stoppage time, De Cordova-Reid came good with the equaliser, teed up coolly by Vardy, who eschewed the chance of glory himself with the goal beckoning. Van Nistelrooy was asked afterwards

whether he would have gone for goal in the same position. "Would I have passed it? I don't know, I'd have to look back at the goal," the former Manchester United and Real Madrid striker said with a smile.

The draw pushed Van Nistelrooy's unbeaten run to 21 matches as manager — at the end of his time at PSV Eindhoven, four games in interim charge at United and now Leicester. He has the magic touch, it seems.

What is that they say about a lucky manager being better than a good one? If Van Nistelrooy turns out to be both then Leicester really have hit the jackpot.

**RATINGS**  
**Leicester City (4-2-3-1):** M Hermansen 7 — J Justin 7, C Coady 7, J Vestergaard 6 (W Faes 81min), V Kristiansen 6 — W Ndidi 7 (O Skipp 52, 6), B Soumaré 7, J Ayew 4 (S Mavididi 62, 7) — K McAteer 5 (B De Cordova-Reid 62, 6), B El Khannouss 5 (P Daka 79) — J Vardy 6.  
**Booked** Soumaré.  
**Brighton (4-2-3-1):** B Verbruggen 8 — T Lamptey 9, L Dunk 8, J Van Hecke 7, P Estupiñán 8 — C Baleba 6 (M Wieffer 46, 7), Y Ayari 7 (M O'Riley 71, 6) — G Rutter 8, João Pedro 6 (Y Minteh 71, 6), K Mitoma 7 (Igor Julio 89) — E Ferguson 7 (D Welbeck 71, 6). **Booked** C Baleba, M Wieffer.  
**Referee** S Attwell. **Attendance** 31,647.

## McKenna: We can't feel sorry for ourselves

**IPSWICH TOWN**

Chaplin 21

**1**

**BOURNEMOUTH**

Unal 87, Ouattara 90+5

**2**

**Ivan Speck**

Portman Road

Two late Bournemouth goals denied Ipswich Town a first Premier League home victory of the season and severely dented their prospects of avoiding an immediate return to the Sky Bet Championship.

Enes Unal and Dango Ouattara struck twice in eight minutes, the winner coming five minutes into added time, just when it seemed that Ipswich might record a first Premier League win at Portman Road since April 2002.

In the process Andoni Iraola's side made it three wins in the space of eight days to highlight their own progress this season as they moved to within a point of the European qualification places.

Kieran McKenna, the Ipswich manager, remained optimistic afterwards that his collection of largely untested players at this level could still acquire the necessary ringcraft to see out games, but that learning process surely has to be accelerated.

In the space of nine days, Ipswich have now lost away to Nottingham Forest and at home to Crystal Palace and Bournemouth. In 18th, they find themselves four points adrift of safety with only one win — away to Tottenham Hotspur — from 15 games in their first season back in the top flight for 22 years.

"It's a disappointing week, but is the margin of us taking even two, five or seven points from the three games this week that huge? I don't think it is," McKenna said. "Of course it's a devastated dressing room today, but there were so many good things in the performance. But it's no time to feel sorry for ourselves. It's not luck, it's things that we can do better, plus a really high level of opponent."

The truth was that Bournemouth wasted chances to cancel out Conor Chaplin's 21st-minute goal long before Unal bundled in Ouattara's cross with three minutes of normal time remaining. Iraola, the Bournemouth head coach, was also able to call upon substitutes with experience and guile. Philip Billing and David Brooks, both off the bench, combined with the cross and shot that the Ipswich goalkeeper, Arijanet Muric, could only push into the path of the waiting Ouattara for the winning goal.

Had it not been for an extraordinary performance of courage, character and commitment from the Ipswich central defender Cameron Burgess, one of the players who has accompanied McKenna on the Ipswich journey from League One to the Premier League, the Bournemouth comeback might have been completed earlier.

Burgess stuck out a leg to block a Justin Kluivert shot in the first half, cleared the Ipswich area with numerous headers and superbly blocked an Antoine Semenyo pass four minutes before the visiting team finally did equalise.



Unal began Bournemouth's late fightback with the equalising goal

And Burgess was unfortunate not to find his name on the scoresheet too, after he headed home a corner with the score at 1-0 only for the goal to be disallowed for a Liam Delap tug on the Bournemouth goalkeeper, Kepa Arrizabalaga.

The home side scored first in an open game that belied the swirling wind around Portman Road. Chaplin confidently struck a low shot into the corner after a pull-back from, inevitably, Burgess.

At the other end, Marcus Tavernier's shot rebounded to safety off the inside of a post, while the away team wasted three other opportunities in the opening ten minutes of the second half. The best fell to Evanilson, who rounded Muric but then seemed unsure of what to do next and dallied too long.

Sammie Szmodics drove a shot straight at Arrizabalaga in Ipswich's only clear-cut chance after the interval.

What made Bournemouth's persistence even more praiseworthy was that they had two days fewer than their opponents to prepare for this fixture after Thursday night's win over Tottenham, which followed victory away to Wolverhampton Wanderers last Saturday. It is a sequence that has lifted Bournemouth into eighth place, although Iraola claimed not to know that.

"I think that we shouldn't look at the standings right now," the Spaniard said. "It's very early in the season. I don't know where we are but I know that we have 24 points, which I value because 24 points is a good amount for the games that we have played."

"If you are a supporter, you can take a picture of the standings just in case, but I won't look too much."

"Let's hope that we can continue playing the same way. It's easy for me to say that, but difficult to do."

**RATINGS**

**Ipswich Town (4-2-3-1):** A Muric 6 — B Johnson 7, D O'Shea 7, C Burgess 9, L Davis 8 — S Morsy 6, J Taylor 6 (J Cajuste 90+1min) — O Hutchinson 6 (W Burns 90+2), C Chaplin 7, S Szmodics 6 (J Clarke 80) — I Delap 7 (A Al-Hamadi 81). **Booked** Szmodics, Delap.  
**Bournemouth (4-2-3-1):** K Arrizabalaga 7 — A Smith 6 (E Unal 63, 7), I Zabarnyi 6, D Huijsen 7, M Kerkez 7 — R Christie 8 (J Hill 86), L Cook 7 — M Tavernier 7 (D Brooks 74), J Kluivert 5 (D Ouattara 63, 7), A Semenyo 6 — Evanilson 6 (P Billing 74). **Booked** Brooks.

**Referee** M Sailsbury.  
**Attendance** 29,180

## LAST SEASON



## SATURDAY



Guimarães, left, finishes off Brentford in May but Gordon, right, is despondent as the tables are turned

## Southampton's obsession with possession is doomed to fail

ASTON VILLA

Durán 24

1

SOUTHAMPTON

0

Charlotte Duncker

### Who was the standout performer?

Had it not been for the performance of Nathan Wood, Aston Villa could have won by more with the defender putting in crucial late blocks to stop Unai Emery's side doubling the deficit. It was an assured performance just three days after making his Premier League debut against Chelsea, with Russell Martin saying post match he will be a good acquisition for the club in the future.

The 22-year-old arrived in the summer and hasn't been given the opportunity to prove himself until the last couple of games. A standout on another disappointing afternoon for Southampton.

### Which moment made me gasp?

Jhon Durán took his opportunity on his first Premier League start with Villa's winning goal. He showed good strength to push past the Southampton defenders and it was a calm and composed finish to chip past Joe Lumley to give Villa the lead.

It was a moment of excitement in a game that was overall lacking in quality as both sides battled against the elements.

### What was the key takeaway?

The more games that go by, the more Southampton look like going straight back down. The way they're playing is not sustainable if they want to stay in the league. Martin's description of his side's performance was "madness" and it's pretty accurate.

What is the point in playing possession based, build-up football if they aren't going to have any threat in the final third? They never looked like scoring and didn't manage a shot on target despite having 53 per cent of the ball. Their expected goals was 0.33 and Martin seemed at a loss as to how to encourage confidence in a front line who have managed just 11 goals in 15 games.

Their unforced errors contributing towards goals are also shooting them in the foot, meaning their playing style will only lead to one result. There is still a long way to go in the season, but with the level of players and the style they're insistent on trying to play, it seems inconceivable they will be able to stay up.



Durán, Villa's top scorer this season with nine goals, made the difference

# Glory to gory in six months, Howe's losing games (and fans)

BRENTFORD

Mbeumo 8, Wissa 28, Collins 56, Schade 90

4

NEWCASTLE UNITED

Isak 11, Barnes 32

2

Martin Hardy

"It must be love, love love," the away fans had sung with gusto, in the sunshine in a corner of the Gtech Community Stadium. Six months later, in those same seats, the storm-lashed Newcastle United supporters were feeling anything but love for their struggling team.

Newcastle beat Brentford 4-2 on that balmy May day but, this time, the scoreline was reversed. From singing Madness songs and ditties about returning to European football, a week later Manchester United's surprise FA Cup final victory meant that Newcastle would not get another crack at Europe after all. Little else has gone right since for Eddie Howe and his team.

It feels like a storm has been brewing and, on Saturday, it was Storm Darragh that battered the Newcastle fans on their way to west London, where they watched their players get blown away by Brentford. Rain, wind, train delays and

cancellations, all to see their Jekyll and Hyde side get beaten. When Howe led his players to his club's fans this time, they had seen enough madness from his defenders and were already heading off for the 300-mile challenge of getting home. From glory to gory in six months. Moods are changing, there is unease and Howe, aware of fragility, offered a timely apology.

"I'm really sorry for what we have delivered," the head coach said. "You want to give them all the opposite emotions of what they are feeling."

Bruno Guimarães, who was made captain this season but has struggled for consistent top form since, called the second half "a mess".

"We lost control, we lost our way," he said. "We became a mess on the pitch. Our season, being honest, has been very, very disappointing."

That is fairly eye-opening given that Guimarães is of long-term interest to a Manchester City side who desperately need a combative, controlling midfielder who can quickly adapt to the Premier League — and Newcastle urgently need a healthy transfer fee to navigate the Premier League's Profitability and Sustainability Rules (PSR) while trying to invest in a squad that, at times, looks out on its feet.

Newcastle feel more like the

Newcastle of old once again; plenty of issues, fan unease and unhappiness.

Is the glass half-full or half-empty? Or fullish, having drawn with Liverpool? Or, perhaps emptyish, having picked up just two points from a possible 12 and conceded ten goals in those four games? There was an element of surrender late on from the team on Saturday — they conceded the third and fourth goals in the second half without suggestion of a reply — and that sat uncomfortably with the amount of effort and personal risk the fans had made to get to Brentford. Beating 50mph winds and cancelled trains to get to the stadium should have earned more than they received. It was a bad day to have a bad day, and no one knew that better than Howe.

"We have to do better, I have to do better," he said. "It's a collective thing. There is a very good team in there. We haven't delivered it, nowhere near enough for my liking, and everyone's liking."

How has it come to this, after so much goodwill, so much unity and Champions League qualification in the 2022-23 season? Tighter rules on Associated Party Transactions (introduced by the Premier League after Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund bought the club in November 2021) and harsher penalties for PSR

were shots right across Newcastle's bows and made the club reluctant to spend big on transfers. To that end, Howe must wrestle with an ageing squad, two transfer windows with no significant additions, and the fallout from spending so much (too much?) so quickly in the glory days post-takeover. January may be another quiet month without sales.

Howe turned to Kieran Trippier, Callum Wilson and Miguel Almirón in the closing stages of the latest defeat and none of them looked fit.

He said the physical statistics from the draw with Liverpool were "through the roof" when Newcastle were electric, but it meant the closing stages of the Brentford loss — which makes it ten points from the past 11 league games — were a struggle because he still does not, three years down the line, have a squad capable of playing intense football twice in four days. Howe will work hard, as he always has, to find solutions, but there appears to be the first sign of a restlessness among supporters as a result of this bad run, and that can make life incredibly difficult for a Newcastle manager.

Leicester City at home on Saturday and a Carabao Cup quarter-final with Brentford next Wednesday, both at St James' Park, are suddenly huge games. Must-wins? Just about.

# Carsley: My dossier for Tuchel? It's top secret

England's interim head coach tells **Hamzah Khalique-Loonat** about Greece gamble, anthem row and plans for future

**A**way from the cameras and spotlight, Lee Carsley is a much more relaxed figure, but never more so than when he is leading England's Under-21 team — his side. With his talented tyros he is a cerebral and provocative tactician, sometimes fielding teams composed almost entirely of attacking midfielders. Yet when he attempted to do likewise with the senior England team, the play backfired and they fell to a disappointing 2-1 home defeat by Greece at Wembley in October.

Carsley has no regrets about the call, which was believed at the time to have cost him the full-time job, though the FA maintains its decision to appoint Thomas Tuchel was finalised two days before that game.

"It's always easier to decide not to do something after the event," Carsley says of opting to play Jude Bellingham, Bukayo Saka, Cole Palmer, Phil Foden and Anthony Gordon in the same XI for the Nations League game.

"I think it was the right thing to do. I probably underestimated Greece at home. The occasion, the emotion that went along with the game [Greek football was mourning their defender George Baldock, who was found dead the night before the match].

"In hindsight, we could have gone with a more conventional way of playing but I thought it was important to try something different. I don't regret doing that. The important thing was that we saw the

stuff, we learnt from it and responded really well after." Carsley won all five of his other games in temporary charge and led England back to the Nations League top tier.

Carsley is no stranger to bold decisions. His European Under-21 Championship winners last year had seven midfielders in the XI and no recognised striker, but the tactical masterstroke was using Gordon as a false nine — he went on to be named player of the tournament.

Though he has managed his final game for the senior team, Carsley still, technically, remains in charge of the side until January 1, when Tuchel takes the helm.

Over the past month, Carsley, 50, has continued to attend matches and fulfilled the more mundane responsibilities of leading the seniors as he prepares a handover document for the incoming head coach.

Much has been made of this dossier Carsley is compiling. "It's top secret!" he says with a wink. The handover will look like a school report card with notes on what roles suit certain players, what they do well, and areas for improvement.

Whether Tuchel studies it meticulously or uses it as a rough guide is at his discretion, but the idea is seemingly to avoid any missteps, such as playing players out of position. For example, Trent Alexander-Arnold produced some of his most compelling work in an England jersey under Carsley, winning three man-of-the-match awards in four games, by playing at right (and occasionally left) back, but not in central midfield where he featured during the Euros under Gareth Southgate.

"I thought it was important that we always try to play to the players' strengths," Carsley says of his decision to give Alexander-Arnold and Rico Lewis roles where they inverted into midfield. "You've seen us do that in



Jones, left, scored on his senior England debut in the 3-0 win over Greece last month after being called up by Carsley

the past, trying not to ever ask players to do something they're not capable of. We're trying to get the best out of them. Anything that we did in terms of adjusting tactically was based around what the players could do and their capabilities. I thought they all did really well."

Carsley insists he was not surprised with the quality of the senior players, having worked with many previously at under-21 level, and that the task "is now to keep pushing those that have done so well in the past and the experienced ones".

It is something that England's leading lights are understood to be working on: after training, the forwards often have 15 or so minutes of shooting drills, where Harry Kane "never misses". Bukayo Saka and Declan Rice, meanwhile, are internally regarded as players who drive the standard of sessions up.

Despite the criticism he encountered after losing to Greece — one budding England manager in a

service station Starbucks tried to tell him how to play with a false nine — Carsley is glad he took the job.

"God yeah," he says. "You always think in the back of your mind whether you're capable of making that step up. I think we showed that — not only to myself but to the rest of the staff."

The most severe criticism, though, came from Carsley's decision not to sing the national anthem, which sparked a media frenzy.

"I didn't really expect it, to be honest," he says. "Everyone's entitled to their opinion and I took that totally on board. I definitely didn't mean any disrespect or to upset anyone but it was just a personal thing."

One of the successes in his tenure was the promotion and integration of under-21 players into the senior ranks. Gordon was a peripheral figure at this summer's Euros, but now he, Morgan Gibbs-White, Lewis, Curtis Jones and Noni Madueke look well placed for the 2026 squad, while Tino

Livramento, Lewis Hall and Angel Gomes are in the conversation.

Carsley's only regret is that Harvey Elliott and Jacob Ramsey were injured — both, he believed, would have fitted in at senior level. Others, such as Ethan Nwaneri, 17, and Tyler Dibling, 18, are on the path towards under-21 call-ups.

Carsley is planning the under-21 side's defence of their European Championship title next summer in Slovakia. He previously intimated that he would stay in that role until the next major tournament for the seniors, the 2026 World Cup.

At Euro 2024 and the Qatar World Cup, Carsley and his staff supported the seniors by scouting England's opponents and feeding back to Southgate. Whether he will perform a similar role for Tuchel is not clear. "That's not been decided [yet], how we'd support the team [in 2026]," he says. "We usually talk about that during the qualification campaign and see how that goes."

## No timeframe on Antonio return after serious car crash

The West Ham United forward Michail Antonio has undergone surgery on a lower limb fracture after a serious car crash on Saturday.

The 34-year-old was taken to a central London hospital after the crash, with his club saying he was "conscious and communicating" and in a stable condition. The Jamaica striker, who has been at West Ham since 2015, has played every league game this season. "Everyone at the club wishes Michail a speedy recovery and wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the football family at large for the overwhelming

support shown since yesterday's news," West Ham said in a statement. The club also extended a "heartfelt thank you to the emergency services and first responders who attended to Michail in the immediate aftermath of the incident, and the medical team who continue to aid him in his recovery".

Antonio's team face Wolverhampton Wanderers tonight in a match which has been dubbed "El Sackico", with both head coaches — West Ham's Julen Lopetegui and Gary O'Neil of Wolves — coming under pressure after poor starts to the season.

Lopetegui, who has only four wins from his first 14 Premier League games, believes Niclas Füllkrug's return from injury can turn their season around.

The Germany striker, who arrived from Borussia Dortmund for £27 million in the summer, returned to the squad for the 3-1 defeat away to

Leicester City last Tuesday after three months out with an achilles problem, and came off the bench to score the consolation, his first goal for the club.

"Niclas is a very important player for us," Lopetegui said. "He scored one goal, which is always good for a striker, in the few minutes that he had. I am sure that he's going to help us to be a better team."

O'Neil believes people need to be realistic about his club's situation after claiming his three summer signings aren't ready to be first-team regulars. The 41-year-old said Pedro Lima, 18, the

£8.5million right back, Rodrigo Gomes, 21, the £12.7million winger, and Carlos Forbs, 20, the on-loan Ajax wide player, were signed as back-ups.

"We are a young group in terms of Premier League experience," O'Neil said. "This club is trying to be completely self-sufficient for the foreseeable future."

"In the summer, maybe we missed a couple of signings, but it happens. Sometimes there needs to be a realism attached to the situation and some of the boys, what we signed them for and when they're going to be ready."

**West Ham United v Wolverhampton**

Tonight, 8pm, Sky Sports Main/PL

## TheGame

# Stain on judgment of Sir Jim

**Martin Samuel says sporting director's exit after five months is embarrassing for United's new regime**



It will have been as Sir Jim Ratcliffe surveyed the wreckage of what was supposed to be a reborn, rejuvenated Manchester United that the decision was made. Maybe as he looked at Rúben Amorim on the touchline, and contemplated the new man's future.

What is the point of having one of the brightest young head coaches in Europe if what he is working with is unfit for purpose? And how is that change to be made, in our wonderful world of profit and sustainability, if what the club has to sell to finance this rebuild is good only for scrap?

Then Ratcliffe's mind would have turned to the decisions of the summer, and the men who made them: the supposed experts Ineos had wheedled out of rival clubs. Top of that list: Dan Ashworth.

So United made a decision that is both crazy because of its suddenness, but also evidence-based. Little that has happened on Ashworth's watch, beside the arrival of Amorim — for which the chief executive Omar Berrada appears to take credit — has improved the club. The continued faith in Erik ten Hag, the latest tranche of signings; Ashworth was the sporting director, and United's sporting direction has been resolutely downwards since he stepped through the door five months ago.

Too soon? Of course it's too soon. But it's hard to have much sympathy for a man whose ambition has led him to reject every club that showed faith in him the moment he spied something bigger and better on the horizon. Brighton & Hove Albion wouldn't have done this after only five months, nor would Newcastle United. But Ashworth didn't want Brighton or Newcastle. He wanted United and is now free to enjoy and reflect on the choice he made.

The takeaway here is only in part about the ruthlessness of the new owners, or Ratcliffe's capacity to be as impulsive and brutal as Roman Abramovich at Chelsea, minus the considerable investment in the days when that was allowed. United are a club in trouble, a club that need to generate vast amounts of money to finance a restructured future, but whose shelves are bare.

They have lost £300million over three years, and must sell to buy. Yet what do United have to sell? What did Ten Hag buy that is now of value, or has appreciated? Ashworth cannot be blamed for recruits such as Antony or Casemiro, but he was pictured beside those such as Matthijs De Ligt, and it was reported he personally convinced Joshua Kimmich to join. Most damagingly, along with Berrada and before he officially started work, he was part of the decision to retain Ten Hag when every scrap of evidence besides 90 minutes at Wembley in May screamed change.

Amorim has improved United in terms of team shape, and just recognising what the manager is trying to achieve during games makes him a step up on Ten Hag, whose strategies had little on their side bar mystery. But the league results — P4, W1, D1, L2 — suggest he does not have the personnel to



Ashworth lasted only five months

productively play his style of football.

And the way the regulations are now structured, Manchester United cannot behave like Manchester United anymore. Like all clubs they have to pretend to be impoverished, unable to invest, tied only to what can be generated. And that's not much. Look at United's squad. Where's the money? Where's the beef? They are in a worse position than Arsenal when Mikel Arteta took over. He had some very costly individuals, underperforming, earning big money with scant resale value — Mesut Özil, Nicolas Pépé, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, Henrikh Mkhitaryan. Yet Arsenal were still a top-half club. They finished eighth and won the FA Cup in Arteta's first season. Bukayo Saka was in the team; William Saliba and Gabriel Martinelli had arrived the previous summer; Gabriel and Thomas Partey were signed in Arteta's first year.

After 15 games, United are 13th. Another year out of the Champions League would have a savage impact on their commercial operation; dramatic cuts are being made across all departments. And, like Arsenal in 2019-20, they have little with which to go to market. The first summer after Arteta arrived generated little more than £23million, with £20million of that taking goalkeeper Emiliano Martínez to Aston Villa, which was arguably a mistake.

Last summer, United's biggest sale was a meagre £25million for Scott McTominay, a player who had made a positive contribution time and again, often as an impact substitute. He is now performing very creditably for Napoli. McTominay was probably worth more than his fee, but playing for United no longer adds value. Aaron Wan-Bissaka is a better full back than the £15million West Ham United paid, too.

Being in this floundering United team is actually taking noughts off. It is a bleak future. Like Arsenal when Arteta arrived, United are mainly in the business of just shedding wages. The best and most valuable individuals — Kobbie Mainoo, Alejandro Garnacho, Amad Diallo, now Amorim has shown what to do with him — are the ones they cannot afford to sell. The rest cannot be shifted for anything like their original cost.

Ashworth was meant to change this. He arrived with a reputation for smart recruitment and decision-making — although the due diligence issue around Sandro Tonali, banned for gambling offences soon after his arrival at Newcastle, raised eyebrows — yet the first big call at United came from the comfort zone. It was far from Ashworth's alone, but keeping Ten Hag having spent several weeks publicly considering replacements was disastrous.

Ratcliffe's initial instincts were right.

It was his call that Ten Hag's last full Premier League season was inadequate. Yet the politburo that sits so ostentatiously in judgment now Ineos has taken over allowed themselves to be swayed by the FA Cup final win over Manchester City, and the positive reaction of the supporters.

It was a good performance by United on the day — although City had put a lot into that fourth straight title win, and were nowhere near their usual level — but it shouldn't have trumped 44 matches in the Premier League and Champions League, many unimpressive. It was an easy call to give Ten Hag a contract extension, but it came at a price. Another raft of signings that do not seem up to either representing the club, or enriching it. And this latest exploding cigar moment happened, if not on Ashworth's watch, certainly at a time when he was more than adjacent to the process, having been placed on gardening leave after his exit from Newcastle before officially taking up his new role.

So is it harsh? Of course it's harsh. The man got five months to carry out a reset that may take five years — Arteta, as admired as he is at Arsenal, is still stuck on that sole FA Cup five years into the job — and he no doubt found a club that is nothing like the United of popular imagination. It scrimps, it saves, it sets sail in one direction, changes course for another. Ashworth's removal is described as by mutual consent, as all dismissals are these days, but it's probably true that he was as sick of them as they were of him.

Yet this is also a sign of a sea change in English football, with sporting directors no more secure than managers when results disappoint. It used to be the safest of jobs — the manager had ten matches, the sporting director ten years. He could hide behind all the fruit the academy would be bearing by then and, if it wasn't, the promise would be long forgotten.

But then sporting directors hit the stratosphere. Michael Edwards got as much credit for Liverpool's success as Jürgen Klopp; Michael Emenalo was the one constant at Chelsea in a spin cycle of managers; it was presumed that because Txiki Begiristain was leaving Manchester City, Pep Guardiola would follow, so important was he to the regime. But, as Spider-Man says: "With great power comes great responsibility." And as Ashworth's spidey-sense only identified a fresh round of underwhelming players and a dud manager, it was on him.

Not that this makes the process any less perplexing. We can all see the evidence of United's season but a sporting director's role is so much more than the here and now. How unimpressive must Ashworth have been in the wider realm of technical development for Ratcliffe to have turned so quickly; or were the other members of the politburo, such as Berrada, fearful for their own positions, alighting on a convenient scapegoat?

Either way, it is hugely embarrassing for United. Ineos came in promising cool, steely-eyed marginal gains, investment and razor-sharp focus on sporting success, and has instead conducted a bonfire of the typing pool to cover its own mishaps. This is the biggest yet, an appalling look for the club at a time when ticket prices are rising and the lowest-earners are falling victim to an efficiency drive. As for Ashworth, he spent as much time on gardening leave waiting to join Manchester United, as he did at the club. Embarrassing for him, but for them, too. And still no nearer to solving anything at all.

and the  
defensive  
woe  
continues on  
pitch



## MANCHESTER UNITED

Hojlund 18, Fernandes 61

2

## NOTTINGHAM FOREST

Milenkovic 2, Gibbs-White 47, Wood 54

3

## Paul Hirst

Old Trafford

As Matthijs de Ligt emerged from the Manchester United box with the ball at his feet, he could probably hear Rúben Amorim shouting at Amad Diallo roughly 30 metres to his right.

Amorim was telling Diallo to stand on the touchline, to get chalk on his boots just like Diogo Dalot, the left wingback, was doing on the other side of the field.

The idea was to stretch the pitch and create more space for those inside to receive the ball. Nottingham Forest chose to sit back rather than press the Netherlands defender, but both wingbacks could have been found with a lofted pass over an attacker.

The options were there for De Ligt to move the ball forward, but instead

he turned to his left and nudged the ball to Lisandro Martínez, who was five yards away.

Martínez was not confident enough to try to locate either wingback or play a pass through the middle, so he passed the ball back to De Ligt, who played it five yards to his right to Leny Yoro, the other of the three central defenders.

Those who braved Storm Darragh to come to Old Trafford were being rewarded with an exhibition in passing along the back line, like many of them experienced during the Louis van Gaal era.

Some 229 of the 522 passes that United completed in their 3-2 defeat by Forest were made by their three starting centre backs, plus Harry Maguire and Noussair Mazraoui, the substitute central defenders.

No players passed to each other more than United's centre backs. The top four pass combinations in the starting XI were: Martínez to De Ligt (26 times), De Ligt to Martínez (24), De Ligt to Yoro (18) and Yoro to De Ligt (15).

Amorim's Sporting Lisbon team moved the ball vertically and at pace.

# - and Ashworth

CONOR MOLLOY/PROSPORTS/SHUTTERSTOCK



What we saw on Saturday was exactly the opposite.

In some ways the Sporting comparison is unfair. Defenders have far more time to bring the ball out from the back in Portugal but there is no doubt that United's inability, at present, to pass through the opposition's first line of defence is proving to be a big issue that Amorim will need to spend countless hours trying to rectify.

United, in fairness, were never really that good at building from the back under Amorim's predecessor Erik ten Hag. Those United fans who watched their team beat Brighton & Hove Albion in the FA Cup semi-final a couple of seasons ago returned from Wembley with a neck ache after watching David de Gea pump the ball long so much. Even under De Gea's successor, the ball-playing specialist André Onana, building from the back did not happen naturally last season largely because the defenders in front of him were not confident enough with the ball at their feet.

That remains the case now. One attempt from De Ligt to find Dalot on Saturday ended up in the crowd.

## 92 Forest won back-to-back league matches against United for the first time since 1992

Maguire is skilful and talented enough to pass the ball well on his day and so can Martinez and Jonny Evans. We are told too that one of Yoro's strengths is his passing.

At the moment, however, none of them really have the confidence to play the ball forward, which is probably why Amorim has been playing Mazraoui, an attacking full back, at centre back. The head coach knows that he must make his defenders comfortable and confident on the ball if he is to be successful.

There needs to be more movement in front of the defence, too. The midfielders need to find space and bring each other into play, as was the case with United's first goal after Bruno Fernandes dropped deep and found Manuel Ugarte, who played a cutting pass into Alejandro Garnacho before Rasmus Hojlund scored.

Hojlund dropped deep and

Fernandes did a couple of times too on the half-turn. Forest made this incredibly difficult because they were so compact and well organised out of possession, which comes because of countless hours working with Nuno Espirito Santo, a coach renowned for defensive solidity.

As he only started work at United last month, Amorim's players are learning a new system and style of play on the job — they have little time together on the training ground — so teething problems are inevitable and may last a while.

"They are trying to reach a perfect solution," Amorim said when asked about the build-up play from his centre backs against Forest. "They need time to train. We are in the beginning; it's just two weeks [together] and the focus is: don't lose the ball in sloppy passes. They are trying that. "They are trying to do everything perfect but sometimes against low blocks you have to take a risk and we are on this path. I know that they have to have more confidence, not just to carry the ball [but] also play it through the lines. We did it in the first goal."

# Does deflated Pep have the energy to spark City revival?

**CRYSTAL PALACE** 2  
Muñoz 4, Lacroix 56

**MANCHESTER CITY** 2  
Haaland 30, Lewis 68

Tom Allnutt

Pep Guardiola's biggest burst of energy came as the final whistle blew and he marched out onto the pitch.

In his press conference after Manchester City dropped more points, Guardiola denied his target in that moment was the referee Rob Jones, whose red card for Rico Lewis in the 84th minute meant his team's search for a winner had fizzled out.

But the City manager's reaction was worth noting, if only because he otherwise spent the majority of this match at Selhurst Park standing still in his technical area, with his hands deep in the pockets of his long, black coat.

He stood and watched as City left with only a point, making it one win from their past nine games in all competitions.

In his final months at Barcelona, Guardiola said he worked out he had spent 11 days of his life talking to the media during his four years in charge. It was meant as a joke but the fact he had done the maths suggested what everyone already knew: he was exhausted and had long decided it was enough. The "little wars", as he called them, inside and outside, had worn him down. The politics, the feuds and, frankly, José Mourinho had all taken their toll. Guardiola was smiling less, he said, and biting back more. "I feel like I'm empty and I need to refill myself," he said. "I need to recover the excitement and passion."

How many days has Guardiola spent talking to the media in his eight years at City? Double the years, so double the time would make 22 days, and probably more.

And what about the matches? At Barcelona, Guardiola said he watched videos in the dark for hours on end in the build-up to games, as he tried to spy weaknesses in opponents. Palace was Guardiola's 810th match as a manager and 319th in the Premier League. That's a lot of hours in the dark.

After the draw against Palace, his answers to journalists were brief. Are the players tired? "What?" he said. "Tired?" "No". Were you on the pitch because you were unhappy about the red card? "Sometimes I go to the pitch and sometimes I go direct to the

After one win in nine games for his City side, Guardiola is showing the strain on the touchline

locker room." He was deflated too. If not tiredness, why didn't City win? "We had the last 15 minutes, 10 men against 11," he said. "Seven [of the] potential starting 11 are injured. And the physicality of Palace is there."

Those injuries have certainly been punishing for Guardiola, who again played with Ilkay Gündogan and Bernardo Silva in central midfield in the absence of both Rodri and Mateo Kovacic. Matheus Nunes and Savinho started on the wings, with Phil Foden absent through illness and Oscar Bobb also out injured. John Stones, Nathan Aké and Manuel Akanji were all missing from the defence meaning the jaded Kyle Walker again played at right back, with Lewis on the left. Walker, 34, played Daniel Muñoz onside for Crystal Palace's first goal and then lost Maxence Lacroix at a corner for their second.

Erling Haaland scored for the first time in four Premier League games, Kevin de Bruyne showed glimpses of his brilliant best and Lewis curled in a wonderful second, before being sent off for a second yellow card with six minutes left. But City are not out of the woods yet.

"You know the solution, give me my players back, and we will do it. But it's not possible right now," Guardiola said.

"The reality is we have few players to rotate in this type of period. When we arrived in the last stages for the Treble season it was because everybody was there and everybody was involved. It's life, sometimes it happens, you have to accept it, and this is the challenge."

Guardiola talked about key players — although not Rodri — returning in "three weeks to one month" but City can no longer afford to wait. They travel to Turin to play Juventus in the Champions League on Wednesday, sitting 17th in the 36-team table, before playing at home to Manchester United next Sunday and away at Aston Villa the week after. Liverpool are eight points clear of them now with a game in hand, a gap that may already be too wide to close.

And yet even as players return in the coming weeks, the key to any recovery will surely be Guardiola, whose new two-year contract indicates he is willing to rebuild, if only he can find the energy and spark to do it.

He added: "What I said to the players is, 'Don't feel sorry, please, accept the challenge, it will be more difficult, but that's what it is, and maybe at the end, we'll have more satisfaction in the way we are going to behave with these problems than maybe in other seasons that we won the title'."

"All the teams want the players fit, and sometimes unfortunately, it could not happen. Either way we're going to try."



# Klopp

stepping into

# Red Bull's

winter of

# discontent



GUNTHER IBV/GETTY IMAGES

IAN HAWKEY  
ON EUROPE



**Global head of football facing tough decisions when he takes overall charge of faltering sides in energy-drink stable**

Jürgen Klopp appeared as grim gravedigger of the Bundesliga on Saturday, the latest caricatured take on what is a regular theme. Shortly before kick-off at Holstein Kiel's 2-0 home defeat by RB Leipzig, a long banner was unrolled behind one of the goals, featuring the faces of Klopp and three other pantomime villains from German football's corporate class. They wore stovepipe hats, as if dressed for work in a Victorian cemetery.

Next to Klopp's face had been sketched a cartoon tombstone, bearing, in Gothic font, an epitaph to "Fair Competition". The creatives of Kiel also gave the display a sinister 3D moment, muscly arms reaching down from the grandstand to hold a 3ft-wide, red-metal crosshair in front of Klopp's face, as if he were the target of a giant gunsight. The ballboys immediately in front of all this looked up, intrigued.

Holstein Kiel quickly condemned the crosshair gesture as "unacceptable". Marco Rose, whose job as Leipzig head coach has accustomed him to eye-catching, angry protests against the ownership structure of his Red Bull-controlled club at most away stadiums, said the best posture would be to ignore it. "The smart thing to do is not give these idiots a platform," he said.

Scant prospect of that as the start date, January 1, for Red Bull's famous new head of global football approaches and the moment nears for Klopp to put a sharper definition around what that role entails. One, unwanted aspect is being the punchbag for a large body of fans with no palate at all for the energy drink company's football recipe, one

easily interpreted as extracting clubs from their community roots, turning them into factories for resaleable talent and, so it is perceived in Germany, slyly slipping through loopholes in the rules designed to give supporters a guaranteed voice in how Bundesliga clubs are run.

Klopp will have to weather all that scorn week in, week out, for at least his first six months at Red Bull. Less clear is how far he, as Red Bull's new rainmaker, will directly influence the hiring and firing of managers at the various clubs within its multinational network. Rose would be curious to know. His position at Leipzig looks less vulnerable than it did a week ago, the win at Kiel ending a sequence that had yielded one league point from a possible 12, but he still prepares for tomorrow's visit by Aston Villa burdened by the most spectacular record of underachievement so far in this season's Champions League. Leipzig have played five, lost five, and are kept off the very bottom of the 36-team table only by the poor goal differences of Slovan Bratislava and Young Boys of Berne.

It is hard to imagine Leipzig's Euro woes not flickering across Klopp's range-finder when, in 23 days' time, he officially surveys the state of the Red Bull empire and starts filling in the diary for his first month at the helm. It contains some potentially awkward reunions. Where to go on January 22? A fact-finding trip to Leipzig, where the highest-profile club in the Red Bull paddock have a high-stakes Champions League meeting with Portugal's Sporting Lisbon? If, and only if, Leipzig have turned their fortunes around against Villa, they might still have a shout of progress in the competition. Perhaps they'd benefit from exposure to some of Klopp's motivational magic.

Rose, 48, knows all about that quality. He spent six seasons as a player with Klopp as his head coach at Mainz. But there's now a scenario where Rose finds himself out of a job within six weeks of coinciding with Klopp, 57, on the Red Bull payroll.

On Champions League matchday seven, Klopp may well be double-booked. There's potentially another old friend in need that night. Salzburg, the original Red Bull club,



**Klopp was the target, quite literally, of home fans' scorn in Kiel days before he takes up his role at Red Bull. Top, Salzburg, coached by Lijnders, until May Klopp's assistant at Anfield, and seen in action against LASK, have lost their way in the Austrian league**

are at the Bernabeu on the fourth Wednesday of January. And they're almost certainly going to need a result there to stay alive in the competition. Salzburg have lost four of their opening five games. That's a poor return for a club who, in spite of regularly selling on their best young players each summer — often to Leipzig — have only once in the past decade gone into a spring without being in Europe.

Salzburg, a stepping stone in the careers of Erling Haaland and Sadio Mané among many others, are also falling short of the expected standard domestically. Since they came under the Red Bull umbrella, 19 years ago, they have never finished lower than second in Austria's top division. They won it ten years on the trot until 2023-24. Almost halfway through this season, they sit fifth.

It has been a tough autumn for the Salzburg head coach Pepijn Lijnders, who until last May was

Klopp's assistant at Liverpool. His energy and shared success in that role recommended him to the Austrian branch of Red Bull football — some of the same people who in 23 days' time will be appraising the strengths and weaknesses of recruitment strategy with Klopp.

Looking beyond Europe, the incoming global head of football finds himself obliged to ask if there might be a global glitch in the Red Bull system. Besides Leipzig's Champions League crisis and Salzburg's slump, there are pressing problems in São Paulo, where Red Bull Bragantino went into last night's final round of Brasileiro Serie A fixtures battling to clamber out of the relegation zone. It's quite the fall for a club who, within two years of their 2019 Red Bull takeover, had risen so sharply that they made the final of the Copa Sudamericana, the continent's equivalent of the Europa League.

Urgent memo to any troubleshooter at Red Bull: get over to Brazil to monitor Bragantino's January transfer window. There will be disgruntled players seeking indications that the next season will be better than this one, would-be newcomers in need of persuasion this is the right club to join. More urgent: find out why other Brazilian clubs under relatively new foreign ownership are scouting and generally succeeding better than Red Bull, who patented the idea of big global reach.

The weekend at least provided Klopp with a more nuanced bulletin from planet Red Bull. Sandro Schwarz, who played alongside Klopp at Mainz in the late 1990s and was managed by him at the same club in the early 2000s, was on the touchline as head coach of New York Red Bulls for the club's first appearance in an MLS Cup final for 16 years. They lost 2-1 to LA Galaxy but Schwarz had overachieved in taking his team so far.

His silver medal looks just about the shiniest item likely to be delivered to Red Bull Football's HQ during what is shaping up as an unfriendly first winter of the Klopp era.



# United win – but lose their big advocate

WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE

## Kit Shepard

Dan Ashworth's departure from Manchester United could have particularly troubling consequences for their women's team. The 53-year-old was considered a strong supporter of the side despite concerns over the club's commitment to women's football under Sir Jim Ratcliffe.

Ashworth, who has left his role as United's sporting director after only five months, has a commendable history in the women's game. While at Newcastle United, he integrated the women's team into the club, and oversaw facility improvements during his time at Brighton & Hove Albion. He also developed England's women's teams as the FA technical director.

The United head coach, Marc Skinner, spoke glowingly in September about Ashworth's "genuine love" and "burning ambition" for women's football. Ashworth's record offered solace amid worries that Ratcliffe, who purchased a 27.7 per cent stake in United in February, is apathetic towards the club's women's team, a view reinforced by an interview he gave this weekend.

"There's only so much that you can do and our focus has been on the men's team," Ratcliffe told the *United We Stand* fanzine. "If not, you get spread too thinly. We need to sort out the main issue, the men's team. The women's team is an opportunity."

"Women's football is growing really quickly in popularity and size. We need to participate in that. The girls wear a Manchester United badge on their shirt and they're representing the club."

United hammered Liverpool 4-0 yesterday and are outside the Champions League places on goal difference.

## Russo embodies Arsenal's upturn

Arsenal's revival under Renée Slegers goes on. Yesterday's 4-0 home win over Aston Villa moved them into the top three and made it seven wins from eight games for the interim head coach.

Alessia Russo is among those flourishing under Slegers. The England striker scored once in nine games under Jonas Eidevall this season, but has seven in eight since Slegers took over after Eidevall's resignation. Russo showed her versatile finishing prowess, opening the scoring with a deft header and then rifling home the fourth.

## Chelsea finally show vulnerability

Played 13, won 13 for Sonia Bompastor as the Chelsea head coach, but their latest victory was one of their most uncomfortable. Brighton's effective press forced mistakes for both their goals at Kingsmeadow and while Chelsea ultimately won 4-2, the London club's main rivals will have noted the errors.

Hannah Hampton displayed her best and worst. Her sloppy pass led to Brighton's second goal, but she also made a string of brilliant saves, including a one-on-one denial of Kiko Seike at 3-2.

## More streaming woes

The WSL's commitment to streaming all non-televised games on YouTube is laudable, but the broadcasts had an air of amateurism yesterday. The Arsenal-Villa stream had no scoreboard for the first ten minutes, and no commentary for the first 37. The pictures dropped out for eight minutes of Manchester City's 4-0 win over Leicester City. Over at Kingsmeadow, raindrops on the solitary camera repeatedly obscured the view. Almost every game will be televised from next season, but the league cannot wait until then to improve the streams. These issues risk belittling the product broadcasts are attempting to promote.



Fellows, inset, earned another draw for West Brom after his effort struck Hamer and looped over the goalkeeper Cooper

## Wilder hails league leaders' 'best result'

SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP

### WEST BROM

Heggen 24, Fellows 62

2

### SHEFFIELD UNITED

O'Hare 35, Campbell 37

2

### James Shield

The Hawthorns

At the end of a game which reminded those watching that attack is often the best form of defence in Championship football, the Sheffield United manager Chris Wilder gathered his players into a huddle and issued an emotive post-match debrief before ushering them towards the dressing room.

The exact words he uttered will remain a closely guarded secret. But it later transpired, after a hard-fought draw against Carlos Corberán's West Bromwich Albion, that they were a

reminder about the importance of context and togetherness.

"I'm delighted," Wilder said, after his team moved a point clear of second-placed Leeds United at the top. "We had so many youngsters out there, so that was our best result of the season. We had six lads on the pitch at one stage under [the age of] 22. They're learning on the job. I'm actually chuffed to bits."

For once, a draw will not have felt like a missed opportunity for West Brom given that this one — their tenth of an 11-match unbeaten run — came against the division's best team. That it came about in slightly fortuitous circumstances — Tom Fellows's equaliser, after Callum O'Hare and Tyrese Campbell had replied to Torbjorn Heggen's opener, taking a wicked deflection off United's Gustavo Hamer — did little to dampen Corberán's enthusiasm for his team's performance.

"We were excellent to begin with," the West Brom head coach said. "Only a lapse in concentration cost us."

With their two first-choice centre halves, Anel Ahmedhodzic and Harry Souttar, ruled out through suspension, United inevitably looked vulnerable at the back. Midway through the opening period, Heggen exposed the flaws in their reorganised lines of communication when he headed Alex Mowatt's corner past Michael Cooper from the edge of the six-yard box.

It was only the fourth time the visiting team had conceded in eight league outings and Wilder's men responded in emphatic fashion when Harrison Burrows's cross left Heggen and Kyle Bartley in a pickle, allowing O'Hare to prod home. Two minutes later, Campbell pounced for the sixth time this season. Once again, Burrows was the provider.

Campbell, whose late father Kevin played for West Brom, then departed with an injury. Soon after, the home side were back on level terms. Fellows cut inside from the right and his shot struck Hamer, leaving Cooper wrong-footed as the ball spiralled into the far corner.

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# Only the fish and chips missing at 'Doc' reunion

**TONY CASCARINO BACK AT MILLWALL WITH HIS OLD TEAM-MATES**



Saturday afternoon at the Den was a great tribute to a true legend of Millwall, John Docherty. The man who built the team that earned promotion to the top flight for the first time, and oversaw the greatest

period in the club's history, was remembered brilliantly.

Former players from that team of the late 1980s showed up — my old strike partner Teddy Sheringham was there, still in good shape, and Danis

Salman, Nicky Coleman and Steve Wood, among many others, were also in attendance.

Of all the clubs I played for, my closest connection was with Millwall, and most of the group meet up every now and then. We might not see each other for five or ten years but as soon as we get together it's like yesterday, like I'm back in the dressing room.

My biggest feeling was that I had to be there. It's so easy to get caught up in other commitments but I had to go, whatever I did it had to be a tribute to John, or "The Doc" as we called him.

On arrival, I met his daughter and grandson. It was nice to meet his

family as he had always made our team feel like one. All of the players in attendance signed a shirt from the promotion season in his memory.

We reminisced as players on our time at the club — like when we were on a poor run of form and The Doc had us training on Sundays at the stadium after a game as punishment for losing.

Some of the best memories were from the away trips and on the bus coming home. The Doc would always stop off to get some drinks, fish and chips or whatever the lads wanted. Our goalkeeper, Brian Horne, was never allowed any, he put on weight a bit too easily so the tea lady would



Millwall old boys on the pitch before kick-off, from left: George Lawrence, Phil Coleman, Terry Hurlock, Alan Dowson, David Thompson, Sean Sparham, Frank McLintock, Teddy Sheringham, Brian Horne,

## CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND-UP

IAN WHITTELL

Frank Lampard got one over his old school friend Neil Harris but refused to get carried away after the first victory of his Coventry City reign.

Ephron Mason-Clark scored the only goal at The Den as Millwall, without three key players, made it four games without victory.

Lampard, in his second game in charge after a draw at home to Cardiff City last weekend, said he was "overwhelmed" by the backing of the away fans but urged caution.

"Listen, it's one win and it's a small step for us. But you have got to enjoy it when you win and try to build on it," he said.

"It's still very early and I don't want to shout from the rooftops after one win but you definitely get a feeling

from the players that when you speak they want to listen and take it on board."

Harris, a former team-mate of Lampard's in their teenage years, had a colourful response to the criticism that came from sections of his support. "You miss Romain [Esse], you miss Japhet [Tanganga] and you miss Jake Cooper. Three players that probably get in anybody's Championship team," he said.

"So just a reminder to people, the thickos, that when you take the three best players out of the team, that this is Millwall Football Club."

Leeds United maintained their push for automatic promotion with a 2-0 win over Derby County, thanks to unexpected goalscorers. Defenders

Joe Rodon and Max Wöber, with their first goals for the club, both scored to take Leeds one point behind leaders Sheffield United. For the Wales central defender Rodon, it was a first goal in nearly 200 games in English football. "Hopefully, that's the first of many," he said. "It's been very frustrating and to finally score today makes it a great day overall, to be back in the top two."

"I love this team and, of course, I love this club so to score my first goal is huge for me."

Sunderland also benefited from the first goals of a career — in this case the 18-year-old winger Tommy Watson, who scored both in a 2-1 win over Stoke City. The teenager demonstrated he is yet another impressive youngster to emerge through the club's academy.

"This has been my dream, to be honest," Watson said. "I couldn't have really pictured it any better after



Tommy Watson's two goals gave Sunderland their first win in six

today. I like to think I took my opportunity well, but I'm just focusing on my game-by-game and looking to stay in that team."

With the new Hull City head coach Rubén Sellés watching from the stands, Blackburn Rovers ensured his club remain bottom of the table with a 1-0 win, courtesy of Sean McLoughlin's first-half own goal.

The three points maintained Rovers' push for a play-off place, with the full back Callum Brittain providing the cross which McLoughlin turned into his own goal, meaning Blackburn reached the interval in front despite not having had a shot on target.

"You always know, as a player, that when a new manager comes in and he's in the stands, you want to impress, so we knew we were going to be under pressure."

"We wanted to ride that pressure and scored at the perfect time."

## TheGame

put a salad to the side for him. The Doc would always get one extra fish and chips to leave on the front seat, next to Horne to set him up. When Horne would eventually cave in, The Doc would go: "Look at him! He's already had a salad and now he's eating the chips as well."

One of the funniest things about playing at the Old Den was seeing The Doc's head emerge through a puff of smoke before he started shouting at you from the touchline, and it was always the Hamlet cigars. If you were ever in trouble with The Doc he'd make you get him a pack of Hamlet, five cigars if you were causing a bit of trouble and ten if you



Docherty, who died this month, led Millwall into the old first division

were really out of order — that was our fines system.

Everyone I played with in that team had something to prove and we showed we were good enough to play in the first division. The promotion was among the proudest achievements of my career. The Doc was massive on bringing in players who fitted together as a group and who would buy into being a Millwall player, and if you did that you were one of his boys.

Sheringham breezed in last, to comments of: "You could be out there still playing today." The Doc loved him, he liked the way he carried himself and his confidence. He also

loved handing him sweets after he'd scored in training. Teddy might say I'm not being totally fair, but The Doc definitely spoiled him. Still he was a team player, we all were and that's what made our group special.

On Saturday we walked on to the pitch to brilliant applause from both sets of fans. All of the players pointed to the screen, where a picture of The Doc in his Millwall tracksuit was displayed as if to say: "This man is why we are here."

As we walked back in all you could hear was "No one likes us, we don't care", and Millwall fans have had a go at me for my thoughts on the song, but on a day honouring The Doc I

felt, "Well, a lot of people did like you." It was so refreshing to feel so much love from a group of fans that sing about nobody liking them.

Some conversations really hit you, like hearing how many of my former team-mates have been ill with cancer, have undergone transplant procedures or had strokes. It was a massive shock to me, but everyone was so laid-back about it.

It was just a really lovely day — despite Millwall losing 1-0 to Coventry — seeing everyone reunited and giving a little bit back to someone who gave us all so much. It was The Doc's day and everyone who showed up made it a fantastic occasion.

BRIAN TONKS/MILLWALL FC



Tony Cascarino, Danis Salman, Steve Anthrobus, Steve Wood, Michael Marks, Alan McLeary, Darren Morgan, Nicky Coleman, Jimmy Carter, Brian King, Peter Melville, Wesley Reid, Les Briley

## Hunt hopes Reading can continue to defy odds

LEAGUE ONE

Ian Whittell

Noel Hunt guided beleaguered Reading to a draw away to League One leaders Wycombe Wanderers in his first game in permanent charge.

Harvey Knibbs's equaliser secured a 1-1 draw as Wycombe dropped home points for the first time since losing to Birmingham City in their opening game at Adams Park in August. The

former Ireland international Hunt, appointed after Rubén Sellés left to become Hull City head coach on Friday, revealed he had spoken to his predecessor before accepting the post.

"We have to take it game by game and try and get to those 50 points as fast as we can. That hasn't changed from when Rubén was here and it won't change now," Hunt, 41, said.

"I got a phone call asking what was I thinking — I had a really good chat with Rubén and then went back and said, 'Yeah, I'm all in.'"

Despite Hunt's target of avoiding relegation, the win lifts Reading — who continue to be blighted by off-field issues and fans' opposition to the ownership — into the play-off positions. But Wycombe's failure to collect all three points looked all the more costly as every other team in the top five — Wrexham, Birmingham City, Huddersfield Town and Stockport County — won.

Birmingham's Jay Stansfield continued his impressive form, scoring

twice in the 2-1 win away to Barnsley. It takes him to nine for the season, although the Birmingham manager Chris Davies singled out his strike partner, the 35-year-old Lukas Jutkiewicz, who came on as a half-time substitute.

"If there was one player who changed the game, obviously Jay got the goals, it was Jukey because he changed the dimension of our attack," Davies said of the veteran. "He is a lesson to every single footballer out of a squad or out of a team, that is how you behave. When you get your chance, you take it, so full credit to him."

On a day when stormy weather impacted every game, the Huddersfield Town manager Michael Duff was particularly impressed by his team's efforts in winning 2-1 away to Mansfield Town.

"These are days that no-one remembers, but it's three points the same as in August when you're in short sleeves and sunglasses, rolling it around all over the place," he said. "Three points is three points."

## Walsall win for fan, 100

LEAGUE TWO

The Walsall head coach Mat Sadler dedicated his side's victory against Port Vale to one special, long-serving fan.

The 1-0 win at Vale Park took Walsall above Darren Moore's team to the top of the table and continued a nine-game unbeaten run in the league.

"Jack Huskisson is a well-known supporter and he turns 100 later this month," Sadler said. "He's unwell at the moment, we got wind of that, so it's fitting to dedicate this win to him because there are none more passionate or more lifelong than him."

"To have 2,800 supporters come to this game in horrendous conditions means a hell of a lot. It was one of those 'proper' moments, to score the winning goal and celebrate in front of them."

The veteran Jamille Matt scored the

only goal for Walsall on a day when his team's closest promotion rivals, Doncaster Rovers and Crewe Alexandra, were both held to home draws.

Doncaster needed a second-half equaliser from Luke Molyneux to earn a 2-2 draw against Cheltenham Town, meaning Grant McCann's team have now dropped 14 points from 30 available at home this season.

"I'm relieved, frustrated, disappointed, angry — all the words you can imagine," McCann said. "We were nowhere near where we can be and this is probably one of the worst performances of the season."

Crewe could only draw 1-1 with Bradford City, despite the visiting side playing with ten men for 40 minutes. Two minutes after taking Bradford level, Alex Pattison was sent off for kicking the ball at an opponent while he lay on the ground.

TheGame

PREMIER LEAGUE

|   |       |              |       |
|---|-------|--------------|-------|
| Aston Villa   | (1) 1 | Southampton  | (0) 0 |
| Durán 24  |       |              |       |
| Brentford   | (2) 4 | Newcastle    | (2) 2 |
| Mbemuo 8<br>Wissa 28<br>Collins 56<br>Schade 90           |       |              |       |
| Isak 11<br>Barnes 32<br>17,078                            |       |              |       |
| Crystal Palace  | (1) 2 | Man City     | (1) 2 |
| Muñoz 4<br>Lacroix 56<br>25,142                           |       |              |       |
| Sent off: Lewis (Manchester City) 84                      |       |              |       |
| Everton   | P     | Liverpool    | P     |
|   |       |              |       |
| Fulham  | (1) 1 | Arsenal      | (0) 1 |
| Jiménez 11<br>26,954                                      |       |              |       |
| Ipswich   | (1) 1 | Bournemouth  | (0) 2 |
| Chaplin 21<br>29,180                                      |       |              |       |
| Leicester   | (0) 2 | Brighton     | (1) 2 |
| Vardy 86<br>De Cordova-Reid 90+1                          |       |              |       |
| Lamptey 37<br>Minteh 79<br>31,647                         |       |              |       |
| Man United  | (1) 2 | Nottm Forest | (1) 3 |
| Hojlund 18<br>Fernandes 61<br>73,778                      |       |              |       |
| Milenkovic 2<br>Gibbs-White 47<br>Wood 54                 |       |              |       |
| Tottenham   | (2) 3 | Chelsea      | (1) 4 |
| Solanke 5<br>Kulusevski 11<br>Son 90+6<br>61,184          |       |              |       |
| Sancho 17<br>Palmer 61, 84<br>(both pens)<br>Fernández 73 |       |              |       |

|                        | P  | HOME |   |   |    |    | AWAY |   |   |    |    | GD  | Pts |
|------------------------|----|------|---|---|----|----|------|---|---|----|----|-----|-----|
|                        |    | W    | D | L | F  | A  | W    | D | L | F  | A  |     |     |
| ▶ 1 Liverpool          | 14 | 6    | 0 | 1 | 13 | 3  | 5    | 2 | 0 | 16 | 8  | 18  | 35  |
| ▶ 2 Chelsea            | 15 | 3    | 3 | 1 | 12 | 8  | 6    | 1 | 1 | 23 | 10 | 17  | 31  |
| ▶ 3 Arsenal            | 15 | 5    | 2 | 0 | 17 | 6  | 3    | 3 | 2 | 12 | 9  | 14  | 29  |
| ▶ 4 Manchester City    | 15 | 5    | 1 | 1 | 15 | 10 | 3    | 2 | 3 | 12 | 11 | 6   | 27  |
| ▶ 5 Nottingham Forest  | 15 | 3    | 2 | 2 | 8  | 6  | 4    | 2 | 2 | 11 | 12 | 1   | 25  |
| ▶ 6 Aston Villa        | 15 | 4    | 3 | 1 | 13 | 9  | 3    | 1 | 3 | 10 | 14 | 0   | 25  |
| ▼ 7 Brighton           | 15 | 3    | 4 | 0 | 12 | 9  | 3    | 2 | 3 | 13 | 13 | 3   | 24  |
| ▶ 8 Bournemouth        | 15 | 4    | 1 | 2 | 10 | 6  | 3    | 2 | 3 | 13 | 14 | 3   | 24  |
| ▶ 9 Brentford          | 15 | 7    | 1 | 0 | 26 | 14 | 0    | 1 | 6 | 5  | 14 | 3   | 23  |
| ▼ 10 Fulham            | 15 | 4    | 2 | 2 | 14 | 13 | 2    | 3 | 2 | 8  | 7  | 2   | 23  |
| ▼ 11 Tottenham         | 15 | 4    | 1 | 3 | 20 | 11 | 2    | 1 | 4 | 11 | 8  | 12  | 20  |
| ▶ 12 Newcastle         | 15 | 3    | 2 | 2 | 8  | 8  | 2    | 3 | 3 | 11 | 13 | -2  | 20  |
| ▶ 13 Manchester United | 15 | 4    | 1 | 3 | 13 | 11 | 1    | 3 | 3 | 6  | 7  | 1   | 19  |
| ▶ 14 West Ham          | 14 | 2    | 1 | 4 | 10 | 15 | 2    | 2 | 3 | 8  | 12 | -9  | 15  |
| ▶ 15 Everton           | 14 | 2    | 3 | 2 | 9  | 8  | 1    | 2 | 4 | 5  | 13 | -7  | 14  |
| ▶ 16 Leicester         | 15 | 2    | 3 | 3 | 11 | 12 | 1    | 2 | 4 | 10 | 18 | -9  | 14  |
| ▶ 17 Crystal Palace    | 15 | 1    | 4 | 3 | 6  | 10 | 1    | 3 | 3 | 8  | 10 | -6  | 13  |
| ▶ 18 Ipswich           | 15 | 0    | 4 | 4 | 6  | 12 | 1    | 2 | 4 | 8  | 15 | -13 | 9   |
| ▶ 19 Wolverhampton     | 14 | 1    | 1 | 5 | 11 | 18 | 1    | 2 | 4 | 11 | 18 | -14 | 9   |
| ▶ 20 Southampton       | 15 | 1    | 1 | 5 | 7  | 16 | 0    | 1 | 7 | 4  | 15 | -20 | 5   |

TOP SCORERS

- 13 Haaland (Manchester City), right  
13 Salah (Liverpool)  
11 Palmer (Chelsea)  
10 Wood (Nottingham Forest)  
9 Mbemuo (Brentford)  
9 Wissa (Brentford)  
8 Jackson (Chelsea)  
7 Matheus Cunha (Wolverhampton)  
7 Watkins (Aston Villa)  
6 Delap (Ipswich)  
6 Isak (Newcastle)  
\* four others have scored 6 goals



SKY BET CHAMPIONSHIP

|                                   |       |               |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| Cardiff                           | P     | Watford       | P     |
|                                   |       |               |       |
| Hull                              | (0) 0 | Blackburn     | (1) 1 |
| 20,544<br>McLoughlin 20 (og)      |       |               |       |
| Leeds                             | (2) 2 | Derby         | (0) 0 |
| Rodon 39<br>Wöber 44              |       |               |       |
| Luton                             | (1) 1 | Swansea       | (0) 1 |
| Adebayo 17<br>11,264              |       |               |       |
| Millwall                          | (0) 0 | Coventry      | (0) 1 |
| 15,460<br>Mason-Clark 63          |       |               |       |
| Plymouth                          | P     | Oxford Utd    | P     |
|                                   |       |               |       |
| Portsmouth                        | (1) 3 | Bristol City  | (0) 0 |
| Bishop 20<br>Murphy 62<br>Lang 71 |       |               |       |
| QPR                               | (2) 3 | Norwich       | (0) 0 |
| Dunne 22<br>Kolli 45+4, 49        |       |               |       |
| Sheffield Wed                     | (0) 1 | Preston       | (1) 1 |
| Smith 76<br>23,927                |       |               |       |
| Sunderland                        | (1) 2 | Stoke         | (1) 1 |
| Watson 7, 86<br>39,311            |       |               |       |
| West Brom                         | (1) 2 | Sheffield Utd | (2) 2 |
| Heggen 24<br>Fellows 62           |       |               |       |
| O'Hare 35<br>Campbell 37          |       |               |       |

|                         | P  | HOME |   |   |    |    | AWAY |   |   |    |    | GD  | Pts |
|-------------------------|----|------|---|---|----|----|------|---|---|----|----|-----|-----|
|                         |    | W    | D | L | F  | A  | W    | D | L | F  | A  |     |     |
| ▶ 1 Sheffield United*   | 19 | 8    | 1 | 0 | 14 | 2  | 4    | 4 | 2 | 13 | 9  | 16  | 39  |
| ▶ 2 Leeds               | 19 | 8    | 1 | 1 | 22 | 5  | 3    | 4 | 2 | 11 | 8  | 20  | 38  |
| ▼ 3 Burnley             | 19 | 5    | 4 | 0 | 13 | 3  | 5    | 3 | 2 | 11 | 4  | 17  | 37  |
| ▶ 4 Sunderland          | 19 | 6    | 3 | 0 | 16 | 5  | 4    | 3 | 3 | 12 | 9  | 14  | 36  |
| ▶ 5 Middlesbrough       | 19 | 5    | 2 | 3 | 15 | 11 | 4    | 2 | 3 | 18 | 11 | 11  | 31  |
| ▶ 6 Blackburn           | 18 | 6    | 1 | 2 | 13 | 7  | 3    | 3 | 3 | 9  | 10 | 5   | 31  |
| ▼ 7 Watford             | 18 | 7    | 2 | 0 | 13 | 4  | 2    | 1 | 6 | 13 | 20 | 2   | 30  |
| ▼ 8 West Brom           | 19 | 2    | 6 | 1 | 6  | 5  | 4    | 5 | 1 | 15 | 9  | 7   | 29  |
| ▼ 9 Sheffield Wednesday | 19 | 3    | 4 | 3 | 14 | 15 | 4    | 1 | 4 | 9  | 13 | -5  | 26  |
| ▼ 10 Norwich            | 19 | 4    | 4 | 1 | 25 | 13 | 2    | 3 | 5 | 10 | 17 | 5   | 25  |
| ▼ 11 Millwall           | 18 | 5    | 2 | 3 | 13 | 8  | 1    | 5 | 2 | 7  | 8  | 4   | 25  |
| ▼ 12 Bristol City       | 19 | 3    | 4 | 2 | 13 | 9  | 3    | 3 | 4 | 11 | 15 | 0   | 25  |
| ▶ 13 Swansea            | 19 | 3    | 4 | 2 | 12 | 9  | 3    | 2 | 5 | 7  | 9  | 1   | 24  |
| ▶ 14 Coventry           | 19 | 3    | 2 | 4 | 16 | 15 | 2    | 4 | 4 | 9  | 12 | -2  | 21  |
| ▼ 15 Stoke              | 19 | 3    | 4 | 3 | 15 | 13 | 2    | 2 | 5 | 5  | 11 | -4  | 21  |
| ▼ 16 Derby              | 19 | 4    | 2 | 3 | 13 | 9  | 1    | 3 | 6 | 9  | 17 | -4  | 20  |
| ▶ 17 Preston            | 19 | 3    | 5 | 2 | 10 | 9  | 0    | 5 | 4 | 8  | 17 | -8  | 19  |
| ▶ 18 Luton Town         | 19 | 4    | 3 | 3 | 14 | 13 | 1    | 1 | 7 | 7  | 21 | -13 | 19  |
| ▶ 19 Oxford United      | 18 | 4    | 4 | 2 | 13 | 12 | 0    | 2 | 6 | 7  | 16 | -8  | 18  |
| ▶ 20 QPR                | 19 | 1    | 5 | 4 | 11 | 16 | 2    | 4 | 3 | 7  | 10 | -8  | 18  |
| ▶ 21 Cardiff            | 18 | 4    | 0 | 5 | 11 | 12 | 0    | 5 | 4 | 6  | 16 | -11 | 17  |
| ▼ 22 Plymouth           | 18 | 4    | 3 | 1 | 15 | 11 | 0    | 2 | 8 | 3  | 27 | -20 | 17  |
| ▶ 23 Portsmouth         | 17 | 2    | 3 | 3 | 9  | 10 | 1    | 4 | 4 | 12 | 20 | -9  | 16  |
| ▼ 24 Hull               | 19 | 1    | 4 | 5 | 8  | 12 | 2    | 2 | 5 | 9  | 15 | -10 | 15  |

TOP SCORERS

- 15 Sainz (Norwich), right  
10 Maja (West Bromwich)  
8 Conway (Middlesbrough)  
7 Bayo (Watford)  
7 Cannon (Stoke)  
7 Latte Lath (Middlesbrough)  
7 Piroe (Leeds)  
7 Wright (Coventry)  
6 Azaz (Middlesbrough)  
6 Brownhill (Burnley)  
6 Campbell (Sheffield Utd)  
6 Mehmeti (Bristol City)



SKY BET LEAGUE ONE

|  |       |               |       |
|--|-------|---------------|-------|
| Barnsley                                   | (0) 1 | Birmingham    | (0) 2 |
| Paik 58 (og)<br>15,367                     |       |               |       |
| Stansfeld 60, 79                           |       |               |       |
| Sent off: Phillips (Barnsley) 70           |       |               |       |
| Blackpool                                  | (P) P | Rotherham     | (P) P |
|  |       |               |       |
| Bristol Rovers                             | P     | Bolton        | P     |
|  |       |               |       |
| Burton Albion                              | (0) 0 | Wrexham       | (0) 1 |
| 3,644<br>Lee 65                            |       |               |       |
| Cambridge U                                | (2) 4 | Shrewsbury    | (0) 1 |
| Lavery 1, 30<br>Niundulu 46<br>Kachunga 53 |       |               |       |
| Marquis 70 (pen)<br>6,167                  |       |               |       |
| Crawley                                    | P     | Stevenage     | P     |
|  |       |               |       |
| Lincoln City                               | (0) 0 | Charlton      | (0) 0 |
| 8,307                                      |       |               |       |
| Mansfield                                  | (1) 1 | Huddersfield  | (2) 2 |
| Oshilaja 31<br>8,568                       |       |               |       |
| Wiles 8<br>Koroma 33                       |       |               |       |
| Stockport                                  | (0) 2 | Exeter        | (0) 0 |
| Crama 67 (og)<br>Barry 89 (pen)            |       |               |       |
| 9,192                                      |       |               |       |
| Wigan                                      | (0) 0 | Leyton Orient | (1) 2 |
| 8,306                                      |       |               |       |
| Sweeney 41<br>Jaiyesimi 90+2               |       |               |       |
| Wycombe                                    | (1) 1 | Reading       | (1) 1 |
| Lubala 18<br>7,651                         |       |               |       |
| Knibbs 30                                  |       |               |       |

|                        | P  | HOME |   |   |    |    | AWAY |   |   |    |    | GD  | Pts |
|------------------------|----|------|---|---|----|----|------|---|---|----|----|-----|-----|
|                        |    | W    | D | L | F  | A  | W    | D | L | F  | A  |     |     |
| ▶ 1 Wycombe            | 18 | 6    | 1 | 1 | 15 | 6  | 6    | 3 | 1 | 24 | 15 | 18  | 40  |
| ▶ 2 Wrexham            | 19 | 9    | 1 | 0 | 21 | 4  | 3    | 3 | 3 | 7  | 7  | 17  | 40  |
| ▶ 3 Birmingham         | 17 | 6    | 2 | 0 | 15 | 6  | 1    | 2 | 1 | 17 | 10 | 16  | 39  |
| ▶ 4 Huddersfield       | 18 | 7    | 0 | 2 | 14 | 8  | 4    | 2 | 3 | 14 | 8  | 12  | 35  |
| ▶ 5 Stockport County   | 19 | 6    | 2 | 2 | 18 | 11 | 3    | 4 | 2 | 13 | 8  | 12  | 33  |
| ▶ 6 Reading            | 18 | 7    | 0 | 1 | 17 | 4  | 2    | 4 | 4 | 13 | 21 | 5   | 31  |
| ▶ 7 Bolton             | 17 | 5    | 2 | 2 | 15 | 13 | 4    | 1 | 3 | 13 | 14 | 1   | 30  |
| ▶ 8 Barnsley           | 19 | 2    | 5 | 3 | 15 | 15 | 5    | 1 | 3 | 12 | 10 | 2   | 27  |
| ▶ 9 Lincoln City       | 19 | 4    | 2 | 3 | 14 | 12 | 3    | 4 | 3 | 10 | 11 | 1   | 27  |
| ▶ 10 Huddersfield Town | 17 | 3    | 3 | 3 | 12 | 11 | 4    | 0 | 4 | 10 | 11 | 0   | 24  |
| ▶ 11 Exeter City       | 18 | 4    | 2 | 3 | 9  | 8  | 3    | 1 | 5 | 7  | 11 | -3  | 24  |
| ▶ 12 Charlton          | 18 | 3    | 3 | 2 | 10 | 8  | 3    | 2 | 5 | 8  | 11 | -1  | 23  |
| ▶ 13 Blackpool         | 18 | 2    | 4 | 2 | 11 | 11 | 4    | 1 | 5 | 15 | 20 | -5  | 23  |
| ▶ 14 Stevenage         | 17 | 5    | 2 | 3 | 10 | 8  | 1    | 2 | 4 | 3  | 8  | -3  | 22  |
| ▶ 15 Peterborough      | 17 | 4    | 2 | 4 | 21 | 16 | 2    | 1 | 4 | 11 | 14 | 2   | 21  |
| ▶ 16 Leyton Orient     | 18 | 3    | 2 | 4 | 11 | 9  | 3    | 1 | 5 | 8  | 11 | -1  | 21  |
| ▶ 17 Bristol Rovers    | 18 | 4    | 2 | 3 | 9  | 11 | 2    | 1 | 6 | 8  | 15 | -9  | 21  |
| ▶ 18 Wigan             | 18 | 3    | 2 | 4 | 7  | 7  | 2    | 3 | 4 | 8  | 9  | -1  | 20  |
| ▶ 19 Rotherham         | 17 | 4    | 2 | 2 | 10 | 8  | 1    | 3 | 5 | 6  | 12 | -4  | 20  |
| ▶ 20 Crawley Town      | 18 | 3    | 2 | 4 | 12 | 16 | 2    | 2 | 5 | 5  | 12 | -11 | 19  |
| ▶ 21 Northampton       | 18 | 3    | 2 | 3 | 9  | 9  | 1    | 4 | 5 | 10 | 16 | -6  | 18  |
| ▶ 22 Cambridge United  | 18 | 3    | 3 | 3 | 13 | 11 | 1    | 1 | 7 | 5  | 18 | -11 | 16  |
| ▶ 23 Burton Albion     | 18 | 1    | 2 | 7 | 8  | 16 | 1    | 3 | 4 | 8  | 14 | -14 | 11  |
| ▶ 24 Shrewsbury        | 18 | 2    | 1 | 6 | 9  | 16 | 1    | 1 | 7 | 9  | 19 | -17 | 11  |

TOP SCORERS

- 14 Barry (Stockport), right  
10 Poku (Peterborough)  
9 Kone (Wycombe)  
9 Stansfeld (Birmingham)  
7 Charles (Bolton)  
7 Gregory (Mansfield)  
7 Joseph (Blackpool)  
7 May (Birmingham)  
7 Smith (Reading)  
6 Orsi (Burton Albion)  
6 Wiles (Huddersfield)  
6 Wootton (Stockport)



Results and fixtures



Back to back Colombian striker Jhon Durán secures Aston Villa's second league victory in a row as

SKY BET LEAGUE TWO

|   |       |                                      |       |
|---|-------|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Accrington                              | (1) 1 | Bromley                              | (1) 2 |
| Woods 9<br>1,816                        |       | Cheek 7<br>Oduyayo 63                |       |
| Barrow                                  | P     | MK Dons                              | P     |
|   |       |                                      |       |
| Chesterfield                            | (2) 3 | Tranmere                             | (0) 0 |
| Colclough 29<br>Dobra 44<br>Drummond 86 |       | 7,923                                |       |
| Crewle                                  | (0) 1 | Bradford City                        | (0) 1 |
| Bogle 47                                |       | Pattison 55                          |       |
| Sent off: Pattison                      |       | (Bradford City) 57                   |       |
| Doncaster                               | (2) 3 | Cheltenham                           | (1) 2 |
| Broadbent 55<br>Molyneux 75<br>6,259    |       | Bailey 15 (og)<br>Archer 56          |       |
| Gillingham                              | (0) 1 | Salford                              | (0) 0 |
| Clarke 48                               |       | 5,296                                |       |
| Harrogate                               | (0) 0 | AFC Wimbledon                        | (2) 3 |
| 2,506                                   |       | Kelly 12<br>O'Toole 23<br>Stevens 50 |       |
| Morecambe                               | (0) 0 | Grimsby                              | (2) 3 |
| 2,995                                   |       | Obikwu 25, 39<br>Rose 90+1           |       |
| Newport County                          | P     | Carlisle                             | P     |
|   |       |                                      |       |
| Notts County                            | P     | Colchester                           | P     |
|   |       |                                      |       |
| Port Vale                               | (0) 0 | Walsall                              | (0) 1 |
| 9,142                                   |       | Matt 51                              |       |
| Swindon                                 | (2) 3 | Fleetwood                            | (0) 1 |
| Smith 8, 28, 58<br>5,819                |       | Virtue 67                            |       |



NICK POTTS/PA

Unai Emery's side beat bottom club Southampton 1-0 to move into the Premier League's top six

FA TROPHY THIRD ROUND

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| <b>AFC Fylde</b> (1) 2                                | <b>Kidderminster</b> (2) 2 |
| Jolley 31   | Morgan-Smith 6             |
| Haughton 49   | Reynolds 11                |
| (aet; 2-2 after 90min; Kidderminster won 3-0 on pens) |                            |
| <b>Aldershot</b> (0) 3                                | <b>Wealdstone</b> (0) 1    |
| Barrett 50  | Cesay 55                   |
| Jones 68  |                            |
| Mullins 90  |                            |
| <b>Alfreton</b> (0) 0                                 | <b>Spennymoor</b> (0) 1    |
|   | Dolan 86                   |
| <b>Applia 80</b>                                      |                            |
| <b>Altrincham</b> (0) 0                               | <b>Macclesfield</b> (0) 0  |
| (aet; Altrincham won 4-2 on pens)                     |                            |
| <b>Barnet</b> (1) 2                                   | <b>Aveley</b> (0) 0        |
| Kabamba 32  |                            |
| Brunt 84  |                            |
| <b>Basford</b> (2) 2                                  | <b>Halifax</b> (0) 2       |
| Abdullah 25   | Cooke 49, 65               |
| Richards 40   |                            |
| (aet; 2-2 after 90min; Basford won 6-5 on pens)       |                            |
| <b>Boreham Wood</b> (0) 1                             | <b>Eastbourne</b> (0) 0    |
| Applia 80   |                            |
| <b>Boston Utd</b> (0) 1                               | <b>Alvechurch</b> (0) 0    |
| Marriott 78   |                            |
| <b>Braintree</b> (1) 1                                | <b>Forest Green</b> (0) 1  |
| Lisbie 33   | May 65                     |
| (aet; 1-1 after 90min; Forest Green won 5-3 on pens)  |                            |
| <b>Brentwood</b> (1) 3                                | <b>Southend Utd</b> (1) 5  |
| Ogunleye 11, 75                                       | Miley 20                   |
| Elsey 90+5  | Pepple 69                  |
|   | Aguiar 69                  |
|   | Walker 90+2                |
| <b>Chorley</b> (2) 3                                  | <b>Warrington R</b> (1) 2  |
| Carr 7  | Waring 17, 55              |
| Henley 33   |                            |
| Sampson 58  |                            |
| <b>Gainsborough</b> (1) 2                             | <b>Rushall</b> (0) 1       |
| Howe 12, 74   | Lalkovic 62                |

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b>Hampton &amp; R</b> (0) 3  | <b>Hashtag Utd</b> (0) 0  |
| Wall 51   |                           |
| Gray 78   |                           |
| Roberts 90+2  |                           |
| <b>Oxford City</b> (1) 2  | <b>Hadley</b> (0) 1       |
| McEachran 1   | Alfano 51 (pen)           |
| Andrews 81  |                           |
| <b>Sittingbourne</b> (4) 4  | <b>Enfield Town</b> (2) 2 |
| Sinal 5   | Hutchinson 9              |
| Boachie 26, 31  | Youngs 20                 |
| Tuck 35 (og)  |                           |
| <b>Slough</b> (1) 2   | <b>Maidenhead</b> (0) 1   |
| Spasov 35   | Ajose 52                  |
| Beeden 46   |                           |
| <b>Solihull Moors</b> (1) 1   | <b>Radcliffe</b> (1) 2    |
| Ryley 12  | Duxbury 42                |
|   | Navarro 90+2              |
| <b>Stockton</b> (0) 2   | <b>Oldham</b> (0) 0       |
| Nicholson 53  |                           |
| Swet 90+5   |                           |
| <b>Sutton Utd</b> (1) 3   | <b>Ebbsfleet</b> (0) 3    |
| Boateng 42  | Kane 47                   |
| Barbrook 74   | Cosgrave 54               |
| Odelusi 81 (pen)  | Harriott 64               |
| (aet; 3-3 after 90min; Sutton won 4-2 on pens)  |                           |
| <b>Worthing</b> (1) 1   | <b>Gosport</b> (0) 1      |
| Wassmer 24 (og)   | Wooden 90+4               |
| (aet; 1-1 after 90min; Gosport won 3-2 on pens)   |                           |
| <b>York</b> (1) 3   | <b>Darlington</b> (1) 1   |
| Aliboye 15  | Cornish 13                |
| Aguiar 69   |                           |
| Sinclair 73   |                           |
| <b>Postponed</b> Biggleswade Town v AFC Totton; Chertsey Town v Dagenham & Redbridge; Chesham Utd v Salisbury; Gateshead v Farsley Celtic; Hanwell Town v Eastleigh; Hartlepool v Tamworth; Woking v Havant & Waterlooville; Yeovil v Weymouth. |                           |

FA VASE THIRD ROUND

|   |   |
|---|---|
| AFC Whyteleafe 3  | Tadley Calveia 1  |
| Faversham 0   | Erith & Belvedere 1; March Town Utd 1 Takeley 0; Newark 1 Daventry 1 (Daventry win 11-10 on pens); Portishead 6 Okehampton Argyle 1; Roman Glass St George 2 Highworth 0; Rugby Borough 0 |
| Heanor 5; Walsham Le Willows 2  | Brantham 1; Wombwell 0 Hallam 4.  |
| <b>Postponed</b> AFC Stoneham v Brixham; Abbey Hulton v Droithwich Spa; Andover New Street v Clevedon; Atherton LRVv Ashton; Clay Cross v Melton Town; Crook v Carlisle City; Dereham v Harpenden; Downton v Fareham; Epsom & Ewell v Burnham; Hartbury Univ v Wells; London Lions v Great Yarmouth; Northampton ON Chenecks v Bourne; Redcar v North Shields; South Liverpool v Albion Sports; Spelthorne Sports v Egham; Tring v Fleet; Tunbridge Wells v Crawley Down Gatwick; West Didsbury & Chorlton v Silsden; Whitechurch Alport v Lincoln Utd; White Ensign v Thetford; Winsford v Sutton (Utd Birmingham); Whitstable v Jersey Blues. |   |

NATIONAL LEAGUE NORTH

|                          |                         |  |    |    |    |    |    |     |  |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|--|----|----|----|----|----|-----|--|
| Top half of the table    |                         |  |    |    |    |    |    |     |  |
| <b>Curzon Ashton</b>     | P                       | W  | D  | L  | F  | A  | GD | Pts |  |
| 11                       | 3                       | 4  | 25 | 11 | 14 | 36 |    |     |  |
| <b>Kings Lynn</b>        | 20                      | 11   | 3  | 6  | 26 | 19 | 7  | 36  |  |
| <b>Chorley</b>           | 20                      | 10   | 5  | 3  | 30 | 24 | 6  | 35  |  |
| <b>Scunthorpe</b>        | 20                      | 9  | 7  | 4  | 33 | 14 | 19 | 34  |  |
| <b>Kidderminster</b>     | 19                      | 10   | 4  | 5  | 27 | 16 | 11 | 34  |  |
| <b>Buxton</b>            | 20                      | 10   | 2  | 8  | 32 | 23 | 9  | 32  |  |
| <b>Chester</b>           | 19                      | 9  | 5  | 5  | 24 | 19 | 5  | 32  |  |
| <b>Hereford</b>          | 18                      | 8  | 6  | 4  | 28 | 17 | 11 | 30  |  |
| <b>Brackley</b>          | 17                      | 9  | 3  | 5  | 20 | 13 | 7  | 30  |  |
| <b>Alfreton</b>          | 18                      | 8  | 6  | 4  | 24 | 19 | 5  | 30  |  |
| <b>South Shields</b>     | 20                      | 9  | 2  | 9  | 30 | 32 | -2 | 29  |  |
| <b>Spennymoor</b>        | 20                      | 6  | 9  | 5  | 29 | 23 | 6  | 27  |  |
| <b>Kings Lynn Town 1</b> | Scarborough Athletic 0. | <b>Postponed</b> Neeham Market v Hereford. |    |    |    |    |    |     |  |

WILLIAM HILL SCOTTISH PREMIERSHIP

|                     |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |
|---------------------|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| <b>Celtic</b>       | P  | W  | D | L  | F  | A  | GD  | Pts |
| 15                  | 14 | 1  | 0 | 44 | 4  | 40 | 43  |     |
| <b>Aberdeen</b>     | 16 | 10 | 4 | 2  | 30 | 18 | 12  | 34  |
| <b>Rangers</b>      | 15 | 10 | 2 | 3  | 27 | 9  | 18  | 32  |
| <b>Dundee Utd</b>   | 15 | 6  | 6 | 3  | 22 | 15 | 7   | 24  |
| <b>Motherwell</b>   | 15 | 7  | 1 | 7  | 18 | 23 | -5  | 22  |
| <b>Dundee</b>       | 16 | 5  | 4 | 7  | 27 | 29 | -2  | 19  |
| <b>St Mirren</b>    | 16 | 5  | 3 | 8  | 19 | 26 | -7  | 18  |
| <b>Ross County</b>  | 16 | 3  | 6 | 7  | 12 | 30 | -18 | 15  |
| <b>St Johnstone</b> | 16 | 4  | 2 | 10 | 18 | 29 | -11 | 14  |
| <b>Kilmarnock</b>   | 16 | 3  | 5 | 8  | 17 | 34 | -17 | 14  |
| <b>Hearts</b>       | 16 | 3  | 4 | 9  | 18 | 25 | -7  | 16  |
| <b>Hibernian</b>    | 16 | 2  | 6 | 8  | 18 | 28 | -10 | 12  |

|                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Aberdeen</b> (O) 1            | <b>St Johnstone</b> (I) 1 |
| Clarkson 56                      | Kirk 25                   |
| 15,880                           |                           |
| <b>Celtic</b> (I) 3              | <b>Hibernian</b> (O) 0    |
| Engels 6                         |                           |
| Newell 54 (og)                   |                           |
| Furuhashi 84                     |                           |
| <b>Dundee Utd</b> (O) 1          | <b>Kilmarnock</b> (O) 1   |
| Dalby 79                         | Anderson 90+5 (pen)       |
| 8,402                            |                           |
| <b>Hearts</b> (2) 2              | <b>Dundee</b> (O) 0       |
| Shankland 21, 31                 | 18,737                    |
| <b>Ross County</b> (O) 0         | <b>Rangers</b> (2) 3      |
|                                  | Igamanne 6                |
|                                  | Daniilo 37                |
|                                  | Tavernier 86              |
| <b>St Mirren</b> (O) 0           | <b>Motherwell</b> (O) 1   |
| 6,111                            | Watt 90+4                 |
| Sent off: Gogic (St Mirren) 90+3 |                           |

WILLIAM HILL SCOTTISH CHAMPIONSHIP

| Falkirk  | P  | W  | D | L  | F  | A  | GD  | Pts |
|--|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| Livingston   | 16 | 12 | 2 | 2  | 31 | 9  | 22  | 38  |
| Ayr Utd  | 16 | 8  | 4 | 4  | 23 | 15 | 8   | 28  |
| Partick Thistle  | 15 | 7  | 5 | 3  | 18 | 9  | 9   | 26  |
| Queen's Park   | 16 | 7  | 4 | 5  | 18 | 16 | 2   | 25  |
| Dunfermline  | 16 | 4  | 3 | 9  | 14 | 18 | -4  | 15  |
| Hamilton   | 15 | 4  | 3 | 8  | 21 | 28 | -7  | 15  |
| Raith Rovers   | 15 | 4  | 3 | 8  | 13 | 21 | -8  | 15  |
| Morton   | 15 | 3  | 6 | 6  | 11 | 19 | -8  | 15  |
| Airdrieonians  | 15 | 1  | 2 | 12 | 6  | 29 | -23 | 5   |
| Dunfermline Athletic 3 Hamilton 0  |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |
| Academical 2, Falkirk 3 Raith Rovers 0;  |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |
| Greenock Morton 0 Livingston 0; Partick Thistle 1 Ayr Utd 0; Queen's Park 2 Airdrieonians 0. |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |

LEAGUE ONE

|   | P  | W | D | L | F  | A  | GD  | Pts |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|----|-----|-----|
| Stenhousemuir   | 16 | 8 | 3 | 5 | 24 | 15 | 9   | 27  |
| Alloa Athletic  | 16 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 21 | 14 | 7   | 25  |
| Arbroath  | 15 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 19 | 17 | 2   | 25  |
| Kelty Hearts  | 15 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 23 | 15 | 8   | 22  |
| Cove Rangers  | 16 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 24 | 23 | 1   | 21  |
| Montrose  | 16 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 16 | 15 | 1   | 20  |
| Queen of South  | 15 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 13 | 17 | -4  | 18  |
| Annan Athletic  | 16 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 11 | 27 | -16 | 15  |
| Inverness CT  | 15 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 15 | 14 | 1   | 7   |
| Dumbarton   | 16 | 3 | 7 | 6 | 21 | 30 | -9  | 1   |
| Annan Athletic 1 Cove Rangers 1;<br>Arbroath 2 Queen of the South 1;<br>Kelty Hearts 0 Alloa Athletic 2;<br>Montrose 2 Inverness Caledonian<br>Thistle 3; Stenhousemuir 4<br>Dumbarton 0. |    |   |   |   |    |    |     |     |

LEAGUE TWO

| East Fife  | P  | W | D | L | F  | A  | GD  | Pts |
|--|----|---|---|---|----|----|-----|-----|
| Elgin City   | 14 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 21 | 15 | 6   | 26  |
| Peterhead  | 14 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 21 | 16 | 5   | 24  |
| Edinburgh City   | 14 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 22 | 20 | 2   | 21  |
| Stirling Albion  | 15 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 17 | 24 | -7  | 19  |
| Bonnyrigg Rose   | 15 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 20 | 19 | 1   | 18  |
| The Spartans   | 13 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 15 | 13 | 2   | 16  |
| Clyde  | 14 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 16 | 22 | -6  | 15  |
| Stranraer  | 13 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 17 | -6  | 12  |
| Forfar Athletic  | 13 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 8  | 19 | -11 | 9   |
| Clyde 3 Peterhead 2; East Fife 2 Elgin City 1; Stirling Albion 0 Edinburgh City 3. |    |   |   |   |    |    |     |     |
| Postponed Bonnyrigg Rose v The Spartans.   |    |   |   |   |    |    |     |     |

WOMEN'S SUPER LEAGUE

|   | P | W | D | L | F  | A  | GD  | Pts |
|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|-----|-----|
| Chelsea   | 9 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 30 | 5  | 25  | 27  |
| Man City  | 9 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 20 | 6  | 14  | 22  |
| Arsenal   | 9 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 19 | 5  | 14  | 18  |
| Man Utd   | 9 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 15 | 3  | 12  | 18  |
| Brighton  | 9 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 16 | 15 | 1   | 16  |
| Tottenham   | 9 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 14 | 22 | -8  | 10  |
| Liverpool   | 9 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 9  | 16 | -7  | 9   |
| West Ham  | 9 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 16 | -5  | 8   |
| Aston Villa   | 9 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 9  | 17 | -8  | 6   |
| Everton   | 9 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 15 | 15 | 0   | 6   |
| Leicester   | 9 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 2  | 12 | -10 | 5   |
| Crystal Palace  | 9 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 8  | 25 | -17 | 5   |
| Arsenal 4 Aston Villa 0; Chelsea 4 Brighton 2; Manchester City 4 Leicester 0; Manchester Utd 4 Liverpool 0; Tottenham 2 Everton 1; West Ham 5 Crystal Palace 2. |   |   |   |   |    |    |     |     |

WOMEN'S FA CUP

**Third round**

Birmingham City 0 Durham 1; Brentford 1 Fulham 2; Charlton Athletic 4 Lewes 0; Cheltenham Town 2 Norwich City (aet); Chester-le-Street Town 1 Stoke City 2; Exeter City 3 Worthing 1 (aet); Liverpool Feds 0 Sheffield United 2; London Bees 6 Queens Park Rangers 3 (aet); London City Lionesses 4 Gwalia United; Newcastle United 2 Middlesbrough 0; Portsmouth 5 Luton Town 0; Rugby Borough 3 Manchester United 0; Southampton 0 Bristol City 3; Sunderland 4 Huddersfield Town 0; Wolverhampton 14 Shrewsbury Town 0; West Bromwich Albion 2 Cheadle Town 0.

**Postponed** Nottingham Forest v Burnley.

DUTCH EREDIVISIE

|   | P  | W  | D | L  | F  | A  | GD  | Pts |
|---|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| PSV   | 15 | 14 | 0 | 1  | 56 | 12 | 44  | 42  |
| Utrecht   | 15 | 11 | 2 | 2  | 29 | 20 | 9   | 35  |
| Ajax  | 15 | 10 | 3 | 2  | 32 | 16 | 16  | 33  |
| Feyenoord   | 15 | 9  | 5 | 1  | 35 | 16 | 19  | 32  |
| Twente  | 15 | 8  | 4 | 3  | 30 | 20 | 10  | 28  |
| AZ Alkmaar  | 15 | 8  | 2 | 5  | 28 | 16 | 12  | 26  |
| NAC Breda   | 15 | 7  | 1 | 7  | 17 | 23 | -6  | 22  |
| Go Ahead Eagles   | 15 | 6  | 3 | 6  | 25 | 23 | 2   | 21  |
| Fortuna Sittard   | 15 | 5  | 4 | 6  | 17 | 21 | -4  | 19  |
| Heerenveen  | 15 | 5  | 3 | 7  | 16 | 28 | -12 | 18  |
| NEC Nijmegen  | 15 | 5  | 1 | 9  | 21 | 19 | 2   | 16  |
| Willem II Tilburg   | 15 | 4  | 4 | 7  | 16 | 18 | -2  | 16  |
| Zwolle  | 15 | 4  | 4 | 7  | 15 | 24 | -9  | 16  |
| Groningen   | 15 | 4  | 4 | 7  | 14 | 24 | -10 | 16  |
| Heracles Almelo   | 15 | 3  | 5 | 7  | 16 | 28 | -12 | 14  |
| Sparta Rotterdam  | 15 | 2  | 5 | 8  | 13 | 23 | -10 | 11  |
| Waalwijk  | 15 | 1  | 3 | 11 | 15 | 37 | -22 | 6   |
| Almere City   | 15 | 1  | 3 | 11 | 7  | 34 | -27 | 6   |
| Almere City 1 Utrecht 3; AZ Alkmaar 2                           |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |
| Ajax 1; Go Ahead Eagles 5 NEC Nijmegen 0; Groningen 0 Zwolle 0; |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |
| Heracles Almelo 2 Fortuna Sittard 2;                            |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |
| Sparta Rotterdam 0 NAC Breda 2;                                 |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |
| Waalwijk 2 Feyenoord 3; Willem II Tilburg 1                     |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |
| Heerenveen 2.   |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |

FRENCH LIGUE 1

|  | P  | W  | D | L  | F  | A  | GD  | Pts |
|--|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| PSG  | 14 | 10 | 4 | 0  | 37 | 11 | 26  | 34  |
| Marseille                                    | 14 | 9  | 2 | 3  | 31 | 17 | 14  | 29  |
| Monaco                                       | 14 | 9  | 2 | 3  | 24 | 12 | 12  | 29  |
| Lille  | 14 | 7  | 5 | 2  | 24 | 14 | 10  | 26  |
| Lyon   | 14 | 7  | 4 | 3  | 26 | 17 | 9   | 25  |
| Nice   | 14 | 6  | 5 | 3  | 26 | 17 | 9   | 23  |
| Lens   | 14 | 6  | 5 | 3  | 17 | 12 | 5   | 23  |
| Auxerre                                      | 14 | 6  | 2 | 6  | 21 | 21 | 0   | 20  |
| Reims  | 14 | 5  | 4 | 5  | 20 | 18 | 2   | 19  |
| Toulouse                                     | 14 | 5  | 3 | 6  | 15 | 16 | -1  | 18  |
| Brest  | 14 | 5  | 1 | 8  | 20 | 26 | -6  | 16  |
| Rennes                                       | 14 | 4  | 2 | 8  | 18 | 20 | -2  | 14  |
| Nantes                                       | 14 | 3  | 5 | 6  | 16 | 20 | -4  | 14  |
| Strasbourg                                   | 14 | 3  | 5 | 6  | 22 | 27 | -5  | 13  |
| Angers                                       | 14 | 3  | 4 | 7  | 14 | 24 | -10 | 13  |
| St Etienne                                   | 14 | 4  | 1 | 9  | 11 | 32 | -21 | 13  |
| Le Havre                                     | 14 | 4  | 0 | 10 | 16 | 25 | -12 | 12  |
| Montpellier                                  | 14 | 3  | 3 | 8  | 13 | 23 | -8  | 8   |
| Lyon 0   0 Lyon 3; Lens 2 Montpellier 0      |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |
| Monaco 2 Toulouse 3; Nantes 1 Rennes 0;      |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |
| Nice 2 Le Havre 1; St Etienne 0 Marseille 2; |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |
| Strasbourg 0 Reims 0.                        |    |    |   |    |    |    |     |     |

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