“An investment in knowledge pays the best interest”

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
## Contents & Offices

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Time to reboot our Democracy

There has been much recent noise about how many members there are in the Tory and Labour parties. Of a registered voting population of 47.5m the Tories count 149,800 as members whilst their younger upstarts have 552,000 (the SNP has 118,000 and the Lib Dems 102,000). This is not healthy for our democracy.

These members pay their annual subs to be able to attend their local party activities, to occasionally become involved in contributing to policy, to going to the annual conference, to select party activities, and to occasionally become healthy for our democracy.

These campaign organisations are out there locally, nationally and internationally and rarely a week goes by when they are not in the news. The issue for them online is that they may change a Government’s mind on a line in a Bill or even a Bill itself but they are still not embraced by our ruling elites.

In the UK though online campaigners continually muster 100,000 votes on a Parliamentary petition it is MPs who decide on which of these will be debated in the House of Commons. And these debates do not involve the general public. Sadly too, more and more MPs no longer answer campaign members emails despite the fact that they are constituents.

A modern Parliament with an ear to change could allow the public to come and debate these petitions with Ministers and for the motion to be voted by the general public live and online.

TfL hopes to use wi-fi data to help with routes and overcrowding

The world’s oldest underground railway system could be taking a big step into the future. During a four-week trial in 2016, Transport For London (TfL) collected data from passengers’ phones over wi-fi in order to track movement. Now TfL may be putting the scheme in place. The purpose of the scheme is that with this data TfL can help prevent overcrowding and give passengers more accurate and tailored travel routes.

With a better sense of where overcrowding is, TfL will be able to get trains to ease overcrowded stations and platforms. By having an insight into how people move through stations they can understand how overcrowding occurs in the first place. Additionally, if TfL have live information about which trains and platforms are the most crowded it can provide its passengers with information about routes suited to them. So if you want, for example, you could take a route during rush hour that is less crowded but takes slightly longer. The pilot scheme cost £100,000 and took 509 million pieces of data from 5.6 million mobile devices over 54 stations.

The data is completely depersonalised, therefore no one individual can be identified. Nevertheless privacy campaign group Big Brother Watch have expressed their concern. Chief executive Renate Samson said on their behalf that “analysing movements of people via their device may provide unique analytical benefit, but is still a process of tracking and monitoring as they go about their daily business.”

The concern is understandable but this manner of data collection will only get more ubiquitous with time. But as long as this kind of data collection is used to help customers rather than profit from them, it could be the right step into the future.

Community crowd-funding has had a £100,000 boost from Hammersmith & Fulham Council, and is already reaping success.

H&F Hive is open to communities wanting to raise funds for local events, make improvements to their environment or set up new services. As well as raising funds from local people or organisations, people can now bid for small grants from the council.

The council has moved two funding schemes onto the crowdfunding platform. Its Fast Track grant schemes previously needed a paper application. And a new fund, paid for by local developers through the national Community Infrastructure Levy, is also open to online bids through H&F Hive. This revolutionary new way of funding community-led events and schemes has already delivered its very first fruits – and we want more groups benefit in the same way.

A summer party in the park, organised by charity Shepherds Bush Families Project & Children’s Centre, was the first event to secure H&F Hive funding.

They created a page on H&F Hive selling their event to potential backers, and, because they made such a persuasive case, the cash came flooding in. They smashed through their target for £1,328 to make their summer party happen: with the cash being spread 50:50 between H&F Council finding, and community-based donations. The Shepherds Bush Families Project celebrates in Ravenscourt Park as the first H&F Council-funded project using Spacehive.

“This is a very modern way of making great things happen in the community,” said Cllr Sue Fennimore, H&F Council Deputy Leader, “and we want to see more and more charities and community groups benefit from the funding available.

“This is all about making it easy for people who want to make a positive change for their community. Local charities and community groups can use H&F Hive to tell people about their plans, and potentially unlock funding from both the council and other generous donors in the community.

“Doing innovative things online is one of the ways we have been able to cut costs and keep council tax bills the third lowest in the country. So everyone wins.” By appealing to local businesses who may want to help encourage community spirit, and to residents who can donate any amount, big or small, H&F Hive helps council grant funding go further than it ever could on its own.
Arrests down by over 30% at Notting Hill Carnival

The number of people arrested at Notting Hill Carnival dropped by more than 30% compared to last year according to figures released by Scotland Yard. It’s led to many saying the annual Bank Holiday street party was an overwhelming success, but that has been called into question by the Metropolitan Police Federation.

There were 313 arrests in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea over the two days, compared with 454 last year, but the lower figure may have resulted from police arresting 656 people prior to the event. Dawn raids were executed on those suspected of planning to cause trouble at Notting Hill Carnival.

Dave Musker, the Met’s gold commander for the bank holiday weekend, said: “I don’t really care what we arrest them for, I’ll be [as] lawfully audacious as I can to get them off the streets.”

Overall police numbers were much the same as last year, with about 15,000 shifts worked over the two days. This works out as about 6,000 to 7,000 officers on duty each day, while a total of 28 police officers received injuries across both days.

Despite the fall in the number of arrests, Ken Marsh, head of the Metropolitan Police Federation, which represents rank-and-file officers, condemned the Carnival. He said the true number of injured officers would be higher than the figure announced, claiming that his members had been attacked with “blood, bottles and dangerous liquid”.

A group of young people deemed to be at risk of getting caught up in crime and disorder during the carnival were removed from the area and invited to a watersports weekend at a cost of more than £1,000 each, according to The Guardian.

Surrey has most expensive pints in the UK

Londoners have something to cheer as the city has finally shrugged off the long-standing tag of having the most expensive beer in the country.

The Good Pub Guide, now in its 36th year, revealed that for the first time since records began Londoners are not paying the most for their pints, with Surrey coming out ahead.

The average price of a pint in London is now £4.20, which pales in comparison with Surrey where punters have to fork out £4.40 on average.

According to the guide, Herefordshire and Yorkshire have the cheapest pints at £3.31.

The difference in price for a pint of beer is now more than £1 across the country, with the average tipple costing £3.60; up by 13p on 2016.

However, drinkers in Surrey might not be crying into their beer if they are earning the median full time weekly wage of £669.70, as they can more easily absorb the £4.40 price of their pint.

The Good Pub Guide also reported the findings of an Oxford University study that people with a local pub near their home are significantly happier, more satisfied with their lives and have more friends.

If you fancy the world’s cheapest pint, head to Tajikistan where 563 millilitres of beer will set you back just 30 pence!

Greenland, conversely is the most expensive place on the planet to get a round in, with the average pint costing a staggering £7.19.

Kensington and Chelsea employees most likely to work beyond retirement age

People who live in one of the UK’s most wealthy boroughs are also some of the most likely to continue working past retirement age, new figures have revealed.

One in every four Kensington and Chelsea would-be pensioners are still stuck in the daily grind; one of the highest rates in the country, and more than twice as high as the national average.

Analysis of data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has revealed that approximately 5,400 people in the area over the age of 65 are still working, which works out as 23 per cent of all pension age people living in Kensington and Chelsea. In Westminster, around 6,100 people are still working, despite being older than the current national retirement age of 65; one of every five working age people, whilst in Hammersmith and Fulham comes in at fourth at 18 percent of its over 65s still working.

Across the country, around 1.2 million people are still working over the age of retirement, but that only works out at 10 per cent of the total.

City Hall to buy land for affordable homes and negotiate new deal for renters

On September 6th London mayor Sadiq Khan laid out his plan to earmark £250m for City Hall to use for buying and preparing land for new and affordable housing. The plans claim that the funds will be used alongside the £3.15bn affordable housing budget announced last year in the Autumn Statement. The money made from selling this land to housebuilders will be recycled to buy further land for new affordable homes as Khan works to start the building of 90,000 new affordable homes by 2021.

In addition, Khan announced plans to bring London’s private across and landlords together to develop plans for a new ‘London model’ of renting, providing better rights and more security for renters. Khan has expressed his intention to call on the government to provide a comprehensive and urgent package of funding and powers.

“From £250m to kick-start my plans to secure more land for new and affordable homes, to a new model and fairer deal for millions of private renters, I want to help all Londoners facing the housing crisis,” Khan said.

“I will use my powers and resources to their fullest extent, but government needs to play its part too by giving London the powers and resources we need to see an even greater step-change in the number of homes being built.”

The plans are currently undergoing a three-month consultation.

New TfL app enables passengers to top up their Oyster card ‘on the go’

Oyster card users can now check their pay as you go balance and top up their card with just a few quick taps of their smartphone after Transport for London (TfL) launched its new app on September 7th.

The new app, which was designed by TfL and developed by Cubic Transportation Systems, is free to download via the Apple App Store and Google Play Store and enables customers to use their smartphone to quickly add pay-as-you-go credit or Travelcards to their Oyster card. These can then be added after 30 minutes by simply touching the Oyster card on the yellow card reader at any Tube or rail station, tram stop or River Bus pier as part of a journey.

Later this year, customers will also be able to collect their top up by touching their Oyster card on the yellow card reader on any of London’s buses. The app also enables customers to view the last eight weeks of their journey history, check how much pay as you go credit they have on their Oyster card and provides, for the first time, a ‘low balance’ alert direct to their phone to help ensure they have enough pay as you go credit before they travel. Additional functionality will be added, including the ability to apply for refunds for incomplete journeys.

Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan said: “London continues to lead the way using new technology to improve our transport network...as we continue to build a world-class, affordable transport network across our city, we will make sure we utilise the very latest technology to improve the experience for every passenger.”
Catalonian parliament approves independence referendum

The Catalan parliament has approved the independence referendum scheduled for 1st October. Spain’s northeastern region of Catalonia is the country’s wealthiest and is governed by the separatist Junts pel Si coalition and the left-wing CUP party. Spain’s Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy disapproves of the referendum and has called for it to be nullified by the constitutional court.

This is not Catalonia’s first independence referendum. In November 2014, the region voted in favour despite the Spanish constitutional court declaring it unofficial. The Catalan leader at the time, Artur Mas, was barred from office for criminal disobedience as result of the referendum, which saw 80% of those polled voting in favour of independence. Yet this vote was skewed as many who were against independence did not vote since it was not deemed official by Madrid. Out of the 5.4 million eligible voters, 2 million voted.

The Catalan government has said, however, that a “Yes” vote this October would be followed by a declaration of independence within 48 hours, no matter how small the margin or the turn out.

The Spanish government has called it a “constitutional and democratic atrocity”.

EU court rejects migration quota challenge by Hungary and Slovakia

The European Court of Justice has rejected a challenge made by Hungary and Slovakia regarding the compulsory fixed-quota scheme.

Since 2014, Europe has seen 1.7 million migrants seeking asylum. Most are from countries such as Syria. It is the worst migrant crisis since World War Two. European leaders have agreed to spread 160,000 migrants over two years among member states. Yet only 28,000 people have been relocated so far.

The scheme was designed to help ease the pressure on border countries like Greece and Italy. Hungary was asked to take 1,294 asylum seekers and Slovakia 802. Hungary has not accepted a single asylum seeker under the scheme while Slovakia has accepted only about a dozen. Between January and July of this year, however, Hungary did accept 444 asylum applications but they were not part of the scheme.

EU Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos said if these countries did not respect the quotas they would “take the last step in the infringement procedure, taking Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to the European Court of Justice”.

Dutch children may be allowed three or more legal parents

The Netherlands was the first country to legalise gay marriage in 2001. Today, it would almost seem presumptuous to assume that a child’s parents were necessarily in keeping with the traditional nuclear family. The Netherlands are now looking to allow meervoudig ouderschap, or “multiple parentage”. There was a government commission in December 2016 recommending that children be allowed up to four legal parents over two households. The law would help not just gay couples with a third parent but also those who are parents as a result of remarriages or other relationships.

While it looked popular initially the Netherlands is suffering from a four-party coalition. A government, with as many parents as the commission was proposing, have left the issue to be negotiated since the March election.

Switzerland prepared to be North Korea mediator

Swiss President Doris Leuthard has said that Switzerland is prepared to act as a mediator to help solve the tensions between the US and North Korea.

Swiss troops already have a presence at the demarcation between the North Korea and South Korea. Switzerland has a history of neutrality and diplomacy; it has previously represented US interests in the past in Iran and Cuba.

This comes in the middle of rising tensions in the Korean peninsula after North Korea has persistently ignored UN sanctions and tested ballistic missiles and a hydrogen bomb.

“I think it really is time for dialogue,” said Leuthard. “We are ready to offer our role for good services as a mediator. I think in the upcoming weeks a lot will depend on how the U.S. and China can have an influence in this crisis.

“ That’s why I think Switzerland and Sweden can have a role behind the curtain.”

French fashion brands tackle body image issue with super skinny ban

Brands such as Christian Dior and Gucci are banning super-skinny from their catwalks and advertisements. The ban also includes the hiring of models under 16 years old for clothes meant for adults.

The ban will prevent designers from using French size 32 models (size XXS, US size zero, UK size four). Female models will have to be size 34 (UK size 34) or over and male models will have to be size 44 (UK size 34) or over.

In May, it was required by law that models should present a doctor’s certificate to prove that they are healthy enough to work. In October a law will come into effect that requires magazines to label photos that have been altered or touched up.
The recovery from Hurricane Harvey will take years

The US fourth largest city, Houston, Texas, is still in the process of recovering from the catastrophic flooding from Hurricane Harvey that struck at the end of August. The recovery process will continue long after the floodwater recedes, which will expose the full extent of the damage to the homes, land and people of the city.

It was the first hurricane of category 3 or above to hit the US since 2005's Katrina. It hit Corpus Christi and made its way up to Houston on 24th August. 27 trillion gallons (122 trillion litres) fell over Texas and Louisiana, according to WeatherBell. That is 1 million gallons of water for every person who lives in the state of Texas. It broke the US record for rain from a single tropical storm. (For contrast, Katrina had a rainfall of 6.5 trillion gallons.) At its worst, 50 inches (127cm) of rain were recorded. 1 million have been displaced and 200,000 homes have been destroyed, according to Reuters. At least 50 have died.

State officials were wary of preemptive evacuations. Storms such as these are unpredictable. Many still remember the 100 or more people that died in evacuation efforts when Hurricane Rita was on course to hit Houston in 2005, less than a month after Katrina. The hurricane did not hit the city. Harvey did not look dangerous until it quickly gathered strength just before reaching land. Texas Governor Greg Abbott estimates that recovery and reconstruction cost will be as high as $180 billion.

Houston is a city poorly equipped to deal with flooding. It is a flat city with little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage. Concrete was laid over huge areas of coastal prairie that would have little drainage.

The devastation caused by Hurricane Irma, with Jose and Katia close behind, across the Caribbean and Florida has yet to be fully estimated but the route to recovery will be equally long and challenging.

Kurdish independence referendum to be held in Northern Iraq

On the 25th September there will a referendum on Kurdish independence in Northern Iraq. The Kurds are the biggest ethnic group without their own state. There are 30 million Kurds in Northern Iraq, South East Turkey, North West Iran and Northern Syria. Since the 1800s Kurds have been seeking independence. The only place that Kurds have something resembling autonomy is in Iraq's oil region, Kirkuk. The Shi'ite-Arab-led government in Iraq do not approve of the vote.

Kurds are mostly a Sunni, non-Arab group of people and they are a minority in their countries. They make up 10% of the Syrian population, their largest minority, yet are denied rights such as their own political party. The first President of Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, outlawed the use of the words “Kurd” and “Kurdistan”. Iraq's 6 million Kurds have suffered the most brutal repression. Saddam Hussein carried out a genocidal campaign that killed 182,000. Now Iraq is home to the Kurdish Regional Government. They have an army and parliament but there is still friction with the Iraqi government. For example, in 2014 Baghdad withheld budget payments so the KRG began selling crude oil independently.

The Kurdish economy is struggling. This is largely to do with Baghdad's withheld budget payments as well as their significant efforts fighting against ISIS. The referendum is opportunity for the KRG to draw attention to their discontent. It is possible that the referendum will serve to strengthen KRG members in the upcoming November elections. Regardless, the referendum is a way to legitimise their claim on the territory. The KRG have said they are in no rush but they want to show something to Baghdad. Unfortunately, the referendum could only serve to make tensions and frictions worse.

Japanese nervous as North Korea sends missile and tests H-bomb

Despite all the warnings from the US, the UN and the international community, North Korea seems to be getting audacious in its missile tests. Pyongyang have tested intercontinental ballistic missiles that could reach the US mainland. They have threatened to strike the US territory of Guam. Then, on the 29th August, they fired a missile over Japan and into the North Pacific Ocean.

With the consensus among experts that North Korea has developed a warhead small enough to fit on a missile, it is not a surprise that South Korea and Japan are getting nervous. 12 towns in Japan have carried out missile drills. Debate across Japan is turning to whether the country needs to change its pacifist constitution. President Abe has been a supporter of boosting Japan’s military power to the level of other countries.

Pyongyang has sent missiles over Japan before, in 1998, 2009, 2012 and 2016. These were in the guise of satellite launches, sent on upward trajectories. The tests of 2017, however, are different in that they are demonstrating an unsettling level of progress in the development of their missiles. Additionally, the missile of 29th August was fired in the manner it would be if it were attempting to strike, indicating that their tests are moving closer to actual strikes.

Pyongyang hopes to damage the relationship between Japan and the US. It may be working. The Japanese are seemingly more concerned about the unpredictability of Trump than of Kim. Trump’s easily-bruised temperament and “America First” attitude mean that it is hard for Japan to trust him.

On Sunday 3rd September, North Korea claimed they had successfully tested a hydrogen bomb. It is thought to have a power range of at least 50 kilot tonnes (3 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945) and potentially as much as 120 kilot tonnes. Warnings and threats from the US are clearly having little effect. Some world leaders, such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, are calling for harsher sanctions while others, such as Chinese President Xi Jinping, are emphasising the urgency of negotiations. Meanwhile, Japan is preparing the evacuation of Japanese citizens in South Korea and South Korea is carrying out naval drills.

FARC to unveil political party

The former rebel group handed in more than 8,000 weapons to the United Nations during its demobilisation. FARC leader Rodrigo Londoño, also known as Timochenko, said the conference would lead to the creation of a new exclusively political organisation with a different name, yet to be decided.

Under its 2016 peace deal with the government to end its part in a war that has killed more than 220,000 people, the majority of fighters in the group were granted amnesty and allowed to participate in politics.

The peace accord, rejected by less than 1% margin in a previous referendum before being modified and enacted, awards FARC's party ten automatic seats in Congress through 2026, but the group may campaign for others. "From this event on, we will transform into a new, exclusively political group that will carry out its activity by legal means,” said Timochenko.

Colombia's government and FARC have tried to make peace previously, but their efforts sadly ended in violent tragedy. The peace process in the 1980s was particularly traumatic, so much so that courts in Colombia declared that a "political genocide" had been committed against the FARC's last formally organised party, Unión Patriotica (UP).
Making all the right noises:
An interview with Jonathan Milton, headmaster of the Westminster Abbey Choir School
By Emma Trehane

Westminster Abbey is undoubtedly one of London’s most popular landmarks, and its choir renowned as one of the greatest of its kind across the globe. Few will be aware that in the midst of the Abbey, tucked away in the grounds of the former monastery of Westminster at Dean’s Yard is the Westminster Abbey Choir School, home to the young choristers who are a fundamental part of this famous Abbey choir and educated to become world-class singers and musicians.

Anybody who has watched a royal, state or national event played out on television is likely to have spotted this band of ruffled and robed little brothers singing alongside their adult peers in the Abbey pews. One of the most recent and more memorable televised events was the marriage of Prince William to Kate Middleton. There is no doubt that on taking up a place in the Abbey, each of the choristers becomes the beneficiary of an exceptional history and classical musical tradition that dates back to the medieval period.

On a recent visit to the school, headmaster Jonathan Milton, remarked that “we are now the only choir school in the country that is just choristers” demonstrating how unique this small school of only 30 boys actually is on a nationwide scale. In fact, there are only three other schools of this kind outside of the UK, including New York, Catalonia in Spain and South Africa. The Westminster Abbey Choir School is a boarding prep for boys aged 8-13. The day begins with singing practice in the Abbey and ends with Evensong (except Wednesdays). Music is at the centre of the boys’ education and besides learning to read music and respond vocally, all boys also receive vocal training, are taught to play the piano and given lessons in playing orchestral instruments of their choice. In addition, they learn orchestral ensemble theory and aural classes, rounding off this unique musical education. “If the boys are interested in other activities, they are also offered the chance to serve in the Abbey, get involved with the Organists and possibly take up learning the organ too” says Milton. The school is designed to offer the boys the highest standard of musical education through its carefully crafted, yet flexible curriculum.

As well as music, the boys have lessons in subjects such as English language and literature, Maths, Science, History, Art and Drama, receiving the same education one would expect of any child studying from Yr 4 - Yr 8. There is a good range of physical activities on offer too, including kayaking and swimming, cricket, and a particular favourite with the boys, football!

It could be argued that a school as small as this is in danger of creating a isolated environment. This is not the case. The boys have continual interaction with people of all ages both within the Abbey and outside. Most important is the daily interaction the boys have with their adult peers who are all top class, professional level London singers. Consequently, the “boys pick up on this professional ethos” Milton claims, and “this sort of interaction raises the boys’ game to the highest standard. For example, it is not unusual for them to take part in three hour recording sessions demonstrating the kind of concentration levels that can be achieved. The boys’ experience outside of the classroom ranges from travelling to other schools in the UK to offer workshops to other boys of their age, to performing in concerts worldwide.

If the boys work hard they have the opportunity to leave at 13 and join some of the country’s leading independent schools such as Eton, Marlborough and Winchester. What is rare here is that the selection process for the Westminster Abbey Choir School is open to boys from any class or background. All that a hopeful young choir boy need do is “turn up to the next Chorister Experience Day and see if they have a singing talent that can be cultivated” says Milton. While there is a modest fee to pay for parents from a more wealthy background, those who are less financially fortunate can receive support if there is a talent there to be nurtured. The Westminster Abbey Choir School is the “obvious avenue for any church choir boy to pursue” Milton strongly believes, so whatever a boy’s background there is an equal opportunity for all and the possibility of a unique musical education and bright future ahead.

The next Chorister Experience Day is 7th October 2017

If you are interested in finding out more about the opportunities of choristership or about the Abbey Choir School, please telephone the school for more information or to make an appointment to visit.

Email: Thérèse Gordon-Duffy, therese.gordon-duffy@westminster-abbey.org Admissions Officer & Assistant to the Headmaster.
T: 020 7654 4918
It’s not the statues

The trouble with lazy sculptors is they never carve a niche for themselves.

Even the more diligent ones tend to get forgotten, hiding their works in plain sight to be treated, mostly, as just more irritating street furniture to bump into when you’re looking at your phone. London is stuffed full of a statues but we rarely see them. It’s only thanks to a publicity hungry rolling art exhibition that any of us are aware that there is an empty fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square. But how many of us could actually picture or name any of the other three plinth occupiers?

I’m an admirer of gargoyles and other horrors that peek out from buildings but I walked past Oriel College in Oxford for three years and never noticed Cecil Rhodes lurking there until it was pointed out by the #RhodesMustFall campaign. Does this old public art really still glorify the shitty deeds of past war criminals and genocidal millionaires, if their simulacrum are so easily, like daytime telly programmes, mistaken for décor? Or is it time to recognise that as memes change so should our statues?

At the moment the fourth plinth features David Shrigley’s Really Good: a relatively thin hand with a massive thumbs up, the de facto photo–op hand gesture favoured by Trump. With a title that sounds as if it sprang straight from his little rose bud lips, every time I see the sculpture it makes me a little nauseous. I can’t wait for it to be pulled down and as a career iconoclast I feel I should enthusiastically support the pulling down of statues, the literal definition of iconoclasm. And yet… not only are ISIL doing a nice line in iconoclasm in places like Palmyra, I can’t help feeling that these statue topplers are missing a point.

“How about Thomas Jefferson?” Trump asked a press conference in what he believed would be a reductio ad absurdum “What do you think of Thomas Jefferson? You like him? OK good. Are we going to take down his statue? Because he was a major slave owner. Are we going to take down his statue? But it’s not so far from inconceivable as his speech post-it writers thought. Thomas Jefferson, founding father and author of America’s Declaration of Independence, was also a sound Palladian architect. He was so proud of the University he helped design, he had the trees knocked down between his Monticello estate, on a hill several miles away, and the university buildings so he could admire his handiwork from his terrace. Indeed, so becoming is the University of Virginia that, along with Monticello, it has been designated UNESCO’s first and only collegiate World Heritage Site. The actual builders, and tree clearers, were, of course, slaves and the city that grew around the university is Charlottesville.

Near the centre of Charlottesville is a park created to house the equestrian statue of Confederate General Lee. For decades this was a perch for pigeons but, after “Black Lives Matter” was daubed on the statue in protest to the statue’s glorification of Confederate values, which included slavery, its removal was approved by the Charlottesville council. Suddenly the statue took on new relevance as a static flashpoint for the focus of the Ku Klux Klan, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, White Supremacists, AntiFa and Unite the Right which, holding protests and counter protests, last month ended in fatalities.

Unlike Lee, Jefferson didn’t actively fight for the right to enslave so perhaps his statues may stand a little longer. The Lee statue, like many Confederate statuary, was erected in the early 20th century perhaps less to glorify but more to give some healing credence to local families caught in the war that tore America in two; that pitted brother against brother. The war was not entirely about slave owning which was always a privileged business. The vast majority of Confederate soldiers, who actually fought and died, would have never owned a slave, but they believed they should have a right to, and thus the natural superiority of their own race.

So, now, much of the debate is whether we should respect the statues for having a different point of view or if, in a changing world, our public art should reflect it. Of course it would be ridiculous to get rid of everything that offends us. Libraries are full of nasty works remembering nasty people. But then you have to seek those out if you are so minded. Statues in public areas do take more of a burden. Even if I really wouldn’t want to live in a world where Hitler was forgotten, would I welcome a statue of him? He already seems to be in a video installation in an endless loop on the History Channel and one of the most disturbing things I have experienced in an art gallery was approaching from the back the apparent angelic figure of a boy, in a corner on his knees praying, only to peak around to the front to discover it was Adolf Hitler (by Maurizio Cattelan). So the question is whether statues simply remember or do they glorify? And if they cannot help but glorify should we even keep our war memorials?

The Kiss sculptor Rodin faced this problem with his work The Burghers of Calais. The statue was commissioned to commemorate the ordinary men of Calais who had martyred themselves by volunteering as hostages to Edward III to stop his siege of the city. Rodin was intent on not glorifying these men. He wanted viewers to understand how ordinary they were, not heroes.

So Rodin not only cast his group life size he realised that it wasn’t the statue which would elevate these men, it was the pedestal. He demanded that they have no pedestal so people could walk amongst the group of men as equals. The Calaisians wouldn’t dream of this and promptly stuck it on a pedestal and, further, sold a cast to the English which proudly sits outside parliament... on a pedestal.

Maybe Rodin was right. It’s not the statues. Perhaps the statues are, on the whole, just a physical memory of what was important, or financed, in another time. They are memories of distant propaganda, or as we now call it, Fake News. What, we should really be concentrating on, what actually should be falling, is their pedestal.

An open letter from Peter Burden to his MP, Philip Dunne, Conservative Member for Ludlow and Minister of State for Health.

Dear Philip,

First, may I congratulate you on retaining your seat in Ludlow last June, once again with a substantially increased majority.

However, having actively supported and canvassed for you in the elections of 2010 and 2015, I could not do so on this occasion. My conscience would not allow me to come out for Mrs May’s proposed hard Brexit or, indeed, any other sort of Brexit.

In 2015 David Cameron was right to respond to the challenge that had been thrown down by the populist Nigel Farage by giving the UK electorate a manifesto pledge that a referendum over Europe would be held. That was a sensible thing to do, to clear the air, and to counter the xenophobic rhetoric of Farage and his UKIP supporters. Cameron’s mistake was to structure the referendum as if it were simply a by-election for a single MP, a first past the post, multi-choice election. By doing this, he allowed a minority of the electorate to bring about an absolutely fundamental change in the British Constitution. A referendum is not a parliamentary election, and there is no historic basis for treating it as such.

A major constitutional change should be brought about only if at least half, if not two thirds, of the whole electorate (not just a majority of those who turned out) have demanded it.

In last year’s Referendum, the turnout meant that the proportion of the electorate that demanded our departure from the EU was just 38%. As a result, under Cameron’s structuring of the plebiscite this vocal but ill-informed minority of voters has forced politicians on all sides to declare that the will of the people must be respected; the will...
of the 38%, not of the 62% who did not demand it.

Now, as we lurch erratically and incompetently towards an attempt to agree terms in complying with this deeply flawed ‘mandate’, it is becoming increasingly clear that leaving the Customs Union, and denying the free movement of other EU citizens is going to have disastrous consequences in almost every aspect of the nation’s existence. Added to this is the distressing irony that the immigration from non-EU countries, which is probably what prompted the fears of many ‘leave’ voters, will not be affected in the slightest by the UK leaving the EU.

And yet, there seems to be an extraordinary, inexplicable conspiracy of silence among members of the Government (and until recently, even among the Labour Opposition) who do not have the courage to declare that the only way to deflect the catastrophic consequences for our national finances, available workforce and relationships with the rest of our neighbouring nations is to reverse what is becoming ever more clearly an entirely misguided course of action which will bring not a single identifiable benefit.

Mrs May’s debacle following the hubris of her calling for more support, clearly demonstrates that she badly miscalculated by ignoring the 62% who didn’t ask for Brexit and didn’t register their disapproval of the aggressive negotiating stance she and David Davies had taken in trying to face-down EU negotiators; like Just William confronting Mr and Mrs Brown, with hands on hips and catapult poking out of trouser pocket, stubbornly unaware of the crucial truth, which many Brexeters find hard to palate, that while Europe certainly doesn’t want us to go, we need Europe more than it needs us. This weak negotiating stance is made even weaker by its clear lack of rational purpose, relying as it does on the specious grounds of its entrepreneurs, scientific innovators and its unique position in global financial markets. However the ability to maintain our pre-eminence in these fields will be damaged beyond repair by the throttling of access to our most important and nearest markets and this could be what finally kills off what remains of Britain’s post-imperial world influence.

In this context, it is essential that you and the many other like-minded members of Parliament across the parties have the courage to stand up and declare that giving in to the 38% of the population who, as a result of gross ignorance of the consequences and a host of dishonest claims and promises made by those promoting Brexit, voted for this change will do almost incalculable damage to our country.

It is a fact, especially given Labour’s recently announced more rational stance on Europe that former Conservative voters will have to consider the possibility that remaining in Europe with a Corbyn government (which wouldn’t last forever) is far more preferable than a Conservative government choosing life outside Europe; which may well last forever, or at least, for a catastrophically destructive period of time.

First time I hear a naughty word, was when I was a child.
I heard it from the chickens, me granny she went wild.

Me granny says, ‘Now, Johnny, the chickens they don’t curse.’
‘Be gore,’ says I to Granny, ‘twas the chickens said it first.

Chorus
Fock fock fock fock, fock fock, fock off
Fock fock fock fock, fock fock, fock off
Now this is chicken talk
Fock fock fock fock, fock fock, fock off
That is what they say
When the chickens they do lay.
Fock fock fock fock, fock fock, fock off
Fock fock fock fock, fock fock, fock off

Then up the yard came Granny and let an awful shout.
She says to me ‘Now Johnnie, shut that f’en chicken’s mouth.’
I ran the chicken up the yard, across and all around
And yet that bleddy chicken wouldn’t stop that f’en sound.

Then granny started cursing, but the chicken said it first.
The more that granny shouted, the more the chicken cursed.
Granny said, ‘I never seen the like in all my life.
I never had a chicken that caused so much strife.’

So let’s all sing along.
Let’s sing the chicken song.
Fock fock fock fock, fock fock, fock off
Fock fock fock fock, fock fock, fock off
Quack quack quack quack, went the duck.
But the chicken still said fock.
Fock fock fock fock, fock fock, fock off
Fock fock fock fock, fock fock, fock off...
Lord (Joseph) Lister
Portland Place
By Sir Thomas Brock R A

In the middle of the road at the top of Portland Place is a memorial to the great surgeon and innovator Joseph Lister, known as ‘the father of antiseptic surgery’. He radically changed surgery in the middle of the nineteenth century, with his use of carbolic acid (now known as phenol) as an antiseptic to clean wounds and sterilise surgical instruments. He used Louis Pasteur’s experiments in microbiology to further his advances in disinfectants, after observing that fields irrigated with sewage waste and then treated with carbolic acid, had no ill-effects on livestock that later grazed on them. He attended University College, initially studying botany, in which he gained a BA, and then registered as a medical student, graduating with honours as Bachelor of Medicine. At the alarmingly young age of 26, he entered the Royal College of Surgeons, followed by a stint at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, working as assistant to the pioneering Scottish surgeon, James Syme, who became his mentor, friend and eventually father-in-law, when he married his daughter Agnes, who, in turn became Lister’s laboratory assistant for the rest of her life. He then became Professor of Surgery at the University of Glasgow; a city that commemorated him with a statue in Kelvingrove Park. He returned to London, and became President of the Royal Society in 1895. He was created, firstly, a Baronet in 1883, and then raised to the peerage by Queen Victoria in 1897. He was instrumental in instructing surgeons who performed an appendectomy on Edward VII, two days before his coronation in 1902. He was made a Privy Councillor and was one of the original members of the Order of Merit; an honour bestowed on him by the King himself, who later said ‘I know that if it had not been for you and your work, I wouldn’t be sitting here today.’

The memorial comprises a large bronze portrait bust atop a tapering stone pedestal, with two figures at the base; one a shapely female representing Humanity, and a young boy, clutching some unidentified objects. On each side of the plinth are a shield and a scroll with a wreath on it. Plans for the monument were delayed by the First World War, and Thomas Brock did not receive the commission until 1922. This was to be his last work. He died in August of the same year and the allegorical figures were finished by his assistant F Arnold Wright in accordance with his designs and unveiled by the President of the Royal College of Surgeons on 13 March 1924. Brock’s most famous work is probably the Victoria Memorial on the Mall outside Buckingham Palace, an enormous undertaking, but he first came to prominence when he completed the statue of the Prince Consort for the Albert Memorial when the original designer John Foley, whom he supervised, suddenly died. He was also responsible for the statue of Henry Irving alongside the National Portrait Gallery in the Charing Cross Road. He was offered the chair of sculpture at the British School in Rome, and, two years later, he was re-elected as President of the Royal Society of British Sculptors, a position he held until 1920. He is all but forgotten for his works around London and Leeds, and this is reflected in the title of a book written by his son Frederick, ‘The Forgotten Sculptor of the Victoria Memorial.’

Don Grant

Blue Plaque: Sir Alexander Fleming
FRSE, FRS, FRCS (Eng).
1881-1955

Sir Alexander Fleming was honoured with a Blue Plaque at 20 A Dawers Street, Chelsea, SW3 5AT. It was erected by the Greater London Council in 2010.

He was a Scottish biologist, pharmacologist and botanist who made his name by discovering penicillin from the mould, *penicillium notatum*, in 1928. He was a Nobel prizewinner in 1945 sharing the honour with Howard Florey and Ernst Boris Chain who led the team synthesising penicillin. There was a race for production as its use in war injuries counted greatly towards victory.

Another plaque, erector unknown, can be seen on the right hand side of St. Mary’s Hospital in Praed Street. Sir Alexander Fleming made his dramatic discovery in this hospital. The laboratory is now a Museum bearing his name.

Sir Alexander Fleming was born near Darvel in Ayrshire, Scotland. He attended Loudon Moor School, Darvel School and Kilmarnock Academy before coming to London and attending Regents Street Polytechnic. After four years in a shipping office, where, doubtless, he was bored, he enrolled at St. Mary’s Medical School. London University. He chose it because he was impressed by the water polo team’s sportmanship! His study was made possible by the legacy of an uncle. He did consider being a surgeon, but was called to research. His life was devoted to medicine and research and he qualified with distinction in 1906.

Sir Almuth Wright was pioneering vaccine therapy and Sir Alexander Fleming began his research at St Mary’s supervised by this great man. He added MB and BS and a gold medal to his qualifications in 1908. He remained a lecturer at St Mary’s until 1914. After service in the Medical Corps in World War I, after being mentioned in despatches, he returned to his much loved alma mater in 1918. He became a Professor in 1928, a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1943, knighted in 1944 and Professor of Bacteriology for London University in 1948.

Sir Alexander Fleming developed a great interest in the natural bacterial action of the blood and in antiseptics. He worked on substances that would not be toxic to human tissue. Early on he discovered Lysozyme, a bacteriological substance. This was all new knowledge, hence very exciting because of the potential benefits to mankind. He invented sensitivity titration methods which he used in his penicillin research.

During research on an influenza virus, he noticed a mould, that had accidentally developed on a *staphylococcus* culture plate and the mould had created an area around itself that was bacteria free! A dramatic breakthrough; he named the substance penicillin.

Sir Alexander Fleming won many awards and became a Fellow of the College of Surgeons, the College of Physicians and President of the Society of Microbiology. He published many papers.

He was a lone researcher, as they often are, but he was generous sharing his knowledge in publications. A reserved man with a marked competitive streak, he married twice. Firstly, Sarah Marion McElroy of Killala, Ireland, they had one son who became a GP. Secondly, Dr Amalia Koutsouri Yourekli, a colleague at St. Marys.

Behind a marble plaque, sourced from the same quarry as the Parthenon marble, adorns with a thistle and the *Fleur de Lys* of St. Mary’s, in St Paul’s Cathedral lie the ashes of Sir Alexander Fleming.

This dedicated Researcher saved many lives and every bull ring has a monument to his memory, as his discoveries saved many *toreros* from suffering death caused by gangrene.

Marian Maitland.
A resplendent walk along Regent’s Canal...
from Little Venice to Camden Lock
By Owen Fulda

In a city of flux, London’s waterways provide a sense of uniquely meandering tranquility to its often overworked inhabitants. Those of us lucky enough to work or live near a canal will not need reminding of their shimmering charms, and sitting in quiet contemplation while a bevy of swans glides serenely past is an often overlooked facet of city dwelling.

There are now over 2,200 miles of navigable waterways in the UK, with one of the most charismatic stretches being the 3.5 miles which connects bustling Camden to the peaceful Little Venice at Paddington. Designed and built by John Nash, Regent’s Canal was completed and opened in 1820, linking the River Thames at Limehouse to the Grand Union Canal junction at Paddington.

This walk itself is a section of the Jubilee Greenway; 37 miles of continuous paths linking 2012 Olympic and Paralympic venues with parks, waterways and other attractions. Obviously one can begin at either end of the walk, but we began west and headed north-east. Beginning just behind Sheldon Square at the exit of the Hammersmith and City / Circle Lines, walk up the stairs and voila, you’re at the start of the Canal Walk, also known as Paddington Basin.

The poet Robert Browning’s residence overlooked this part of the canal and it was he who gave it the name ‘Pool of Little Venice’. Cross the road and follow the blue footbridge crossing back over the canal onto the towpath opposite the Waterside Café and signposted to Camden and Regent’s Park. Follow the towpath under Warwick Avenue Bridge and you will come across the pretty towpath under Warwick Avenue Bridge or ‘Blow up Bridge’. Here, in 1874, a barge carrying gunpowder exploded and destroyed the bridge.

This is one of the most prestigious and residential moorings of Blomfield Road. As you turn left down Princess Road past a Victorian market, you've arrived at Camden Lock Market. Cross the pedestrian bridge and past the Pirate Castle, a water sports centre. Continue down Gloucester Avenue. Turn left under the railway bridge and past the Pirate Castle, a water sports centre. Cross the pedestrian bridge and you've arrived at Camden Lock Market.

Fortunately the sight of a rusty shopping trolley clogging up canal locks is now rare, although some of the Capital’s waterways could certainly do with sprucing up. Volunteering with the British Waterways in 2012) is a rewarding and socially enriching use of one’s time. From their #PlasticPatrol to adopting a canal, there are various ways to help.

Primrose Hill is certainly worth climbing on a clear day if you have the energy. The views from its summit are breathtaking. Back to the tow path and we pass London Zoo with dozens of brightly-feathered birds in aviaries on the opposite side to us. If you need a beverage you could drop into Queens, a legendary Victorian pub. To the left of the pub look for 122 Regent’s Park Road. Friedrich Engels lived here for 24 years and was often visited by his friend Karl Marx.

Carry on down Fitzroy Road past No. 23, once home to W.B. Yeats. Take a right into Chalcot Road and then hang left down Princess Road past a Victorian boarding school. Turn right and rejoin the Canal down steps across Gloucester Avenue. Turn left under the railway bridge and past the Pirate Castle, a water sports centre. Cross the pedestrian bridge and you’ve arrived at Camden Lock Market.

For more information visit canalrivertrust.org.uk/volunteer.

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Venus, Goddess of Love
(I don’t think so!)
By Scott Beadle FRAS

Where I am in El Valle de Lecrin in Andalucía around 0700hrs in the morning came the most beautiful light from the east, incredibly bright and because I’m in a sort of barranca my first glimpse looked like car headlights through the trees. But instead of it crashing down on me it steadily rose until it was quite clear it was Venus! A bit embarrassing for an astronomer, but I don’t look at it often, it’s quite featureless in my telescopes here, and most others for that matter, but at a magnitude of -4.1 it was really dazzling.

Nonetheless it is interesting and quite unique. It is the nearest planet to Earth. The brightest “star” in the sky. The body whose size best matches our planet’s. It has the most reflective clouds, making it the shiniest planet from our perspective, a property known as albedo (the measure of how much light that hits a surface is reflected without being absorbed). It boasts the hottest surface and highest ground pressure in the solar system. And, not least, it’s the slowest spinning object in the known universe.

Venus barely rotates at all. It needs 243 Earth days to make a complete turn, and just to be contrarian, it does it backwards so that the Sun rises in the west and sets in the east. It all unfolds so lethargically that, even at the equator someone could walk faster than the planet spins.

This makes Venus’ year shorter than its day. Or at least its day measured the usual way, against the stars. The time from one sunrise to the next on Venus is 116.75 Earth days. This is interesting because five of these solar days exactly equals Venus’ synodic period; the time from when its first an evening star in our sky to its next evening star appearance.

This cycle indicates that a peculiar gravitational lock-up exists between Venus and Earth.

Nightfall on Venus is nothing to celebrate. Its surface temperature of 460°C doesn’t budge when the Sun sets. The thick carbon dioxide atmosphere creates a ground level pressure of 90 times greater than ours, or some 45 times greater than a pressure cooker. This combination could cook a pot roast in a single second.

Lightning matches our own rate of about 100 planet wide flashes a second. But there, don’t expect it to be accompanied by rain, well not like ours anyway.

Something weird condenses out of those 100-kilometre-thick clouds, but before we get to that there are other strange things going on. There seem to be very few craters, not really a surprise as it would be difficult for meteoroids to penetrate such a thick, dense atmosphere.

There are some large ones, geologically fresh, it looks like the surface had a makeover about 500 million years ago when the Earth was having its “Cambrian explosion” and the first appearance of multicellular life. Earth’s surface constantly remakes itself, not much of our surface survives more than 100 million years. On Venus, everything seems to stay the same until the entire surface is replaced in one go. Meanwhile, hovering high above the dense, scorching carbon dioxide air, the lightning, and the possible liquid lead deposits, float clouds of concentrated sulphuric acid. These brilliant tiny droplets, which would dissolve you, are responsible for reflecting the sunlight so strongly.

And therein lies the answer to the disconnect between its beautiful appearance to the naked eye and its consequent appeal to the ancients and our knowledge today of its reality.

The Maya were not alone in their Venus like obsession and fashioned calendars to track its 19.5-month cycle from evening to morning star and back again. Ancient Greeks and Romans called it the Goddess of Love.

It is in some ways our sister planet, but Goddess of Love, is a bit of a stretch for the imagination, if Love means being crushed and then dissolved!
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Great Expectations

Anniversary is staying in the Victorian Age this month as Max Feldman looks forward to Great Expectations

Charles Dickens is one of the most famed writers in the English language (controversial opinion I know) and as a result he has a tendency to hang ominously over schoolchildren’s head like a literary Sword of Damocles, ready to scythe down viciously by the mercurial whim of a literature teacher. Titles like A Tale Of Two Cities, Oliver Twist and this month’s focus Great Expectations can seem impossibly dense fortifications to crack, impregnable castles bristling with archaic words and sentence constructions, plots that tangle like a cat’s cradle and characters with names like Mr Pumblechook. However as with so many things, once given some time, Dickens’ novels reveal themselves as embarrassments of literary riches, less of an assault course than a highway. If anything, the central issue, (at least according to George Orwell), is that the man didn’t know where to stop: sentences, subplots and character developments extend eccentrically outwards, verging on collapsing into parody. “His imagination overpowers everything,” sniffed Orwell “like a kind of weed.”

Orwell’s concerns fall rather flat when confronted by Great Expectations, which (for Dickens) is a lean pared down novel that powers after it’s plot and themes like a police bloodhound. It earns the silver medal as Dickens second favourite of his own novels (David Copperfield claims the envied position of his “favourite child” as he put it). Initially published serially in his weekly magazine All Year Round from December 1860 to August 1861, Dickens had recently finished off a series of massively popular (and notably lucrative) reading tours but was beset with personal problems that saw him separate from Catherine Dickens, his wife of twenty two years, due to an affair with the eighteen year old actress Ellen Lawless Ternan (who was not in fact a Wild West character, middle name notwithstanding), Dickens himself was forty five at the time. Elements of this affair, which was kept secret from the public even up to his death, managed to trickle through into the novel itself, with the introduction of the 1984 Penguin English Library edition suggesting that the reluctance with which Ellen Ternan became his mistress is reflected in the icy teasing of Estella.

Dickens first conceived of the relationship between Pip and Magwitch as the core of the novel, with the other plotlines such as Mrs Havershams only arriving later. Pleased with what he called the “very fine, new and grotesque idea” at the core of his prospective novel, Dickens was itching to get writing. At the time his literary magazine (All Year Round) was suffering from swiftly falling sales which led Dickens to “pitch in” with Great Expectations. This immediately saw sales skyrocket along with positive responses from critics such as The Times’s praise “Great Expectations is not, indeed, [Dickens’s] best work, but it is to be ranked among his happiest”.

The public lapped it up. Robert L. Patten estimates that All the Year Round sold 100,000 copies of Great Expectations each week, and Muir, the largest circulating library, which purchased about 1,400 copies, stated that at least 30 people read each copy.

Great Expectations is in some ways a perfect fusion of Dickens early and late styles and any who have been put off making a start on the author would find plenty of worse places to start.

Booking It: Have Kindles peaked?
By Max Feldman

When the Amazon Kindle first arrived on the literary scene a decade ago, it was heralded as the future of reading and, as a result, was despised by purists. The grim fate of the CD had made its mark and fans of the physicality of books were afraid that they would be brutality swept aside by the uncaring march of progress. Readers drew battle-lines that look absurd in the modern day; people would refuse to even look at a Kindle, or would sell their book collections and frequently act like the future and so hit the cultural

ubiquity of any new flashy gadget, books themselves weren’t offering much by way of quality competition. Prior to the Kindle’s release several book companies had developed a rather nasty tendency towards making books on the cheap: pages would turn yellow and curl in direct sunlight, with a tendency to glue rather than sew that left many tum of the millennium books liable to begin a corpse like decomposition almost immediately. As a result the market couldn’t have been riper for a seismic shift.

However in the harsh light of 2017, things haven’t turned out quite how the doomsoayers or the proseylitisers had predicted. Instead figures recently released by the Publishing Association show that sales of consumer ebooks have dropped by 17%, while sales of physical books are up 8%. Whilst consumer spending on books was up £89m across the board last year, compared with 2015. Clearly a pendulum has begun to swing towards making books on the cheap: compared with its then price tag of £195. Beyond the fact that Kindles felt five hours even with its then price tag of £195. Beyond the fact that Kindles felt five hours even with its then price tag of £195. Beyond the fact that Kindles felt five hours even with its then price tag of £195. Beyond the fact that Kindles felt five hours even with its then price tag of £195. Beyond the fact that Kindles felt five hours even with its then price tag of £195. Beyond the fact that Kindles felt five hours even with its then price tag of £195.
SEPTEMBER is upon us, and for those returning to work after the summer break some good old fashioned satire may be in order. In the past few months we have seen the poetry page host writers from the nineteenth and seventeenth centuries so it seemed appropriate for an eighteenth century poet to be given an airing.

The enlightenment era of the eighteenth century (1715-1789) was a reaction to the former Restoration age where superstition, licentiousness and decadence ruled the day, from the court of King Charles II to the English fields and fenlands. Additionally, there was a move to counter traditional systems of power and faith through the exploration of new scientific, economic, philosophical and literary ideas. At the heart of this movement was the creation of new public sphere of communication where more debate and discussion could take place in accessible urban spaces. London and Edinburgh were particularly popular for the young growing middle classes looking to absorb these new enlightened ideas. The print culture in particular exploded at this time and London's Grub Street (popularised in Alexander Pope's (1688-1744) poem Dunciad and famous for hack writers and ruthless publishers) originated along with the coffee houses in which writers, scholars, publishers and poets went for creative inspiration and to partake in heated discussion about ethics and morality.

Jonathan Swift (1667 – 1745) was a literary pioneer of this new period. He embraced the new era of reason, rationality and education through a satirical lens and claimed to see the world from a higher moral and ethical perspective. We can see some of these themes of ethics and morality being explored in Swift's A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed, a caricature of a Drury Lane prostitute, Corinna, preparing for bed. The subject of the poem, Corinna, is, in truth, no nymph or beauty, but is instead downtrodden and on the brink of decay.

The lesson herewithin is that she is immoral for selling her body for sex, and a victim of the immoral practices of others who pay for her pleasure. The moral message has added impact by Swift’s use of satirical language, rhyming and descriptive juxtapositions. For example, the image of a ‘lovely goddess’ and ‘bashful muses’ set against the reality that, as she prepares for bed Corinna

Corinna, pride of Drury-Lane
For whom no shepherd sighs in vain;
Never did Covent Garden boast
So bright a bated, strolling toast;
No drunken rake to pick her up,
No cellar where on tick to sup;
Returning at the midnight hour;
Four stories climbing to her bow’r;
Then, seated on a three-legged chair,
Takes off her artificial hair:
Now, picking out a crystal eye,
Takes off her artificial hair:
Then, seated on a three-legged chair,
Takes off her artificial hair:

Who sees, will spew; who smells, be poison’d.

Happy Cringeing!!!
Brexit unskilled workers proposal could disrupt economy

A Home Office document leaked to The Guardian says that after Brexit the UK will end free movement of labour and impose restrictions so that only highly-skilled EU workers are able to stay. Businesses around the country are warning of the disruptions this could cause.

The proposal is designed to deter low-skilled workers by limiting the amount of time they are allowed to work in the UK as well as providing tax incentives to companies that employ British workers. It includes a cap on the number of unskilled EU workers, a salary and skills threshold, and there would be new restrictions on bringing family members to the UK.

According to the British Hospitality Association, 75% of waiters, 25% of chefs and 37% of housekeepers in the UK are EU nationals. They claim it would take 10 years to train enough British workers to fill the empty space left by European workers.

The document had not been signed off by ministers, but it may give an idea of what their post-Brexit migration plans will be.

The cut to unskilled migration will have a considerable effect. Companies will need to prepare for the change in their work force and to train British employees. The economy will need to brace itself should this proposal or anything like it come into effect.

Growth stalls as both the UK service, construction and automobile industries feel the bite of economic uncertainty

Financial data provider Markit said Brexit uncertainty and higher import costs arising from the slump in the pound were behind the stumbling performance of the UK’s largest business sector last month.

In the first half of the year the services sector, which accounts for almost 80% of economic activity, kept the UK from slipping back into recession. But a decline in real wages growth after a spike in inflation and the reluctance of households to accumulate debt at the pace seen in the first half of 2017 appeared to have hit the demand for services.

Markit said its purchasing managers’ index (PMI) for the sector fell to 53.2 points in August from 53.8 the previous month (anything above 50 indicates expansion). Markit also released figures which pointed towards stagnating figures in the construction industry for August, with the survey showing that Britain’s commercial building sector is shrinking at its fastest pace since last June’s EU referendum. However the residential building industry bucked the trend with a strong performance that helped stabilise the figures. Without a strong rebound over the next few months, analysts said the UK could be heading for another quarter of 0.3% GDP growth and an annual figure that struggles to get above 1%.

In addition private car sales fell by 9.9% in August, compared with the same month last year, to leave the overall annual drop at 6.4%. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), said August was traditionally a month for low car sales before the September number plate change. The car industry body said the 76,000 sales still represented the third biggest August in 10 years. Howard Archer, chief economist at the EY Item Club, said car industry sales were declining from all time highs, but nevertheless August’s figures represented the fifth month of falling sales and pointed to “a clear loss of momentum in the sector”.

Jeremy Cook, chief economist at foreign exchange dealer WorldFirst, said that together with the PMIs for manufacturing and construction, “the services number indicates a quarterly UK GDP rate of 0.3%, and slowing all the time”.

He said: “Brexit uncertainty, higher costs and lower investment are slowing UK output to a chronic crawl. The summer months may have been warm but the recessionary risks for the UK economy are only increasing as we move into autumn.”

British exports reach unprecedented height due to weaker pound.

Britain’s manufacturers have been riding the wave of a weaker pound this summer, with exports lifting order books to a record high. The UK’s top manufacturing trade body says the sector is "making hay while the sun shines as exports go from strength to strength".

The pound has plummeted against the euro this year, dropping from €1.19 to €1.08 today. The currency has also disrupted for a time. Valero Energy and ExxonMobil have the largest refinery in the US, as well as independent companies in the region. Oil firms have sold stakes to smaller, UK companies in recent months. The UK’s North Sea gas and oil sector has lost 60,000 jobs since last year. There were 185,000 job losses between 2014 and the end of 2016. Some oil firms have sold stakes to smaller, independent companies in the region. Shell sold over half of its North Sea oil and gas fields. This may be a sign of further job losses to come. Oil & Gas UK said that the cuts were a result of nearly £6 billion of mergers and acquisitions. Yet activity remains slow. Only 14 exploration wells and 8 appraisal wells were drilled last year and only three new oilfields have been approved since 2016. Exploration activity is at its lowest level since the 1970s.

Venezuelan oil production at nearly three decade low

Venezuelan oil production is at a 27-year low. Although the country has the largest proven oil reserve in the world, the oil has been difficult to access. Bad infrastructure is preventing them from meeting their OPEC quota.

OPEC member countries are expected to comply with production quotas. At the beginning of 2017, Venezuela was exceeding its quota but now is struggling to reach the amount. In the first 6 months of the year the production dropped 4.98%. In June it was 3.14% below the allocated number.

Venezuela needs to get more oil out of the ground. It needs to power its own electricity grid and the economy, currently in tatters, depends on the selling of oil to stay afloat.

Royal Mail Fall

Royal Mail crashed out of the FTSE 100 in the latest quarterly reshuffle, receiving the axe after drifting 16 percent this year as falling mailing mail and persistent pension problems began to bite.

From a high of 615p four years ago, Royal Mail shares plummeted to 385.9p, not so far above the 330p float price set by Sir Vince Cable as business secretary. Analysts at Liberum Capital said “the risks of industrial action at Royal Mail are rising.”

We understand the union could propose a ballot for industrial action as early as tomorrow.”

Oil refineries shut down in wake of Hurricane Harvey

In the wake of Hurricane Harvey Texas’ oil refineries have shut down. Motiva, the largest refinery in the US, as well as Valero Energy and ExxonMobil have halted operations. The Colonial Pipeline, which distributes refined products, was also disrupted for a time.

Two major categories of oil markets: Crude oil and downstream refined markets. The latter is for gasoline, jet fuels, plastics. The refineries are out of action and there is nowhere for the crude to go. As a result the price of crude oil has dropped yet the prices of oil products like gasoline are rising.

Gasoline prices in the US are likely to spike and stay high for a while. The storage of gasoline before the hurricane was already high and the refineries were operating at full capacity. The longer these refineries stay out of operation the longer the spike in price. It will affect plane ticket prices as well as the prices of everything from plastics, chemical products and mail shipping.

About 22% of the US’s refining capacity has halted due to Hurricane Harvey. Refineries will have to resume operations soon to prevent too much of an economic problem. Prices around the globe will be affected. British petrol prices are on the rise.

North Sea energy sector loses thousands of jobs

The UK’s North Sea gas and oil sector has lost 60,000 jobs since last year. This comes despite the recovery of the price of oil, which has gone up a third since last year. There were 185,000 job losses between 2014 and the end of 2016. Some oil firms have sold stakes to smaller, independent companies in the region. Shell sold over half of its North Sea oil and gas fields. This may be a sign of further job losses to come. Oil & Gas UK said that the cuts were a result of nearly £6 billion of mergers and acquisitions. Yet activity remains slow. Only 14 exploration wells and 8 appraisal wells were drilled last year and only three new oilfields have been approved since 2016. Exploration activity is at its lowest level since the 1970s.
Back the Tri-Borough call from Credit Union

Credit Card borrowing is expensive

We can help you pay off your credit card bills and save for the future!

HMRC chasing almost £25 billion in unpaid tax
By Owen Fulda

The tax authorities are chasing large businesses for £24.8 billion of potential underpayments, £3 billion more than last year, as they step up efforts to close loopholes and stamp out avoidance. Investigations by the large business directorate at HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) have identified the sum as tax that might be recovered from previous years. Similar work has brought in £53 billion that would have otherwise gone unpaid since 2010, said HMRC.

Experts say that rises in the overall ‘underpaid taxes’ figure reflects a sharpened focus within HMRC on pursuing big companies for all money that they could potentially owe. That focus has been led recently by HMRC’s Large Business Directory, which is seen to be clamping down on tax avoidance or underpayment while being put under considerable pressure to do so by the government and the Treasury.

‘About bloody time!’ is probably the universal opinion. Joe Public has had quite enough of making up the taxation shortfall through stamp duty hikes and extortionate local business rates. Usually however, when one loophole closes another one opens. Prime Minister Theresa May committed Britain to having the lowest corporation tax of the world’s 20 biggest economies last Autumn; resulting Corporation tax being reduced from 20 percent to 19 percent earlier this year.

Of course this move is designed to stimulate economic growth, a move which may prove fruitful in time. But in order for it to truly have the desired effect the tax must actually be collected. But the tax produced less than 7 per cent of the total income going into the Exchequer last year (just £45.6 billion), partly because some of the biggest names on the High Street are not paying a penny.

Coffee emporium Caffe Nero for example, has more than 600 stores in Britain and Ireland but pays zero corporation tax, claiming to have been making consistent losses in its UK business. In the year to the end of May 2016, its parent company made an operating profit of more than £17 million, but that evaporated into a £25 million loss after deducting loan interest payments to several UK banks. Loading up with debt is a common way to cut tax.

“Tax under consideration is not tax owed or unpaid, it’s an estimate of what might be at stake if we didn’t investigate,” HMRC said. Ensuring companies and individuals pay their taxes has been rising up the political agenda since the financial crisis. The coalition government gave HMRC extra funds to chase avoiders and, more recently, Philip Hammond, the Chancellor, said that he hoped to raise an extra £2 billion by 2022 by targeting tax avoidance.

In total, large business paid £125 billion in VAT last year, corporation tax and other levies while small businesses paid £110 billion. HMRC classified small businesses as the five million firms with turnover of less than £10 million and fewer than 20 employees.

HMRC has come under fire in the past for agreeing controversial deals with Vodafone and Google. The sharp increase in HMRC’s “tax under consideration” this year reflects the complexity of new rules around “transfer pricing”, a way in which big business has been able to move profits between jurisdictions. Both Google and Vodafone used transfer pricing. Since 2015, the UK has operated a diverted profits’ tax to clamp down on the practice.
Staying sane during your home renovation
By Owen Fulda

They say moving house is the most stressful thing you can do. Well a top-to-bottom home renovation can’t be too far behind! But with a bit of planning and some considered decision-making, you can avoid tearing your hair out while you’re tearing walls down.

There’s no escaping the fact that there’ll be hurdles to overcome while your home gets the facelift it deserves, but a renovation isn’t a race, it’s more of an obstacle course designed to test your sanity.

Stay put or move out?
Say you decide to move out prior to the process. Consider your options carefully. Even the offer from your future parents-in-law. Staying with in-laws rent-free could be more comfortable! But a six-month stint in your other half’s old bedroom could become more traumatic than the renovation itself! Perhaps family are not an option.

Leave it to the professionals!
While it may be tempting to save yourself a bob or two by having a go at elements of the refurb yourself, you could end up regretting your decision. Nu-Line Builders Merchants have been based in Notting Hill since 1965 and now boast eleven specialist departments. Company director Mr Witcomb says plumbing and electrical work should always be left to the professionals. “Anything more complex than rewiring a light switch should ideally be left to a NICEIC registered electrician,” he says. “Electricity is the most dangerous of all DIY, so don’t put yourself at risk, leave it someone who knows what they’re doing. Plumbing is risky too, because when there’s water involved, even a small cock-up can put a big dent in your budget! It’s simply not worth the risk.”

Any electrical work you choose to attempt will require verification from an electrician in any case. As a friend of mine put it, DIY is all fun and games until it’s torts, criminal negligence and cancelled insurance claims.

Drop down the dust sheets.
If you can’t face the prospect of moving out, then you will find yourself waging a daily war on dust. Prepare your home for the impending renovation process. If you don’t fancy a regular session of lugging your furniture from room to room, it might make sense to rent some storage and keep things well out of harm’s reach.

Dust gets everywhere and there is no escaping it. But you can minimise its impact by taping down dust-sheets, and sealing doorways and staircases with polythene sheeting where you can. If possible ask your tradesperson to do any sanding outside, preferably downwind of your house.

Don’t scrimp on materials.
We’ve all heard the phrase ‘buy cheap, buy twice’ and it’s especially pertinent when it comes to a home renovation. Buying the home ‘own brand’ paint or tiles may seem like a great way of sticking to your carefully calculated budget, but it can often prove a false economy according to Peter Nolan, director of Flawless Design and Build, Hanwell W7. “Budget paint often requires so many coats that you’ll end up spending more than your initial savings on labour costs! Remember we can get trade discounts on the best brands and they’re the best for a reason.” Any other words of wisdom Pete? “Whatever you do, don’t go for Travertine tiles (a type of limestone). They’re always a nightmare!”

Choose the right tradespeople.
When it comes to selecting your trade professionals, don’t rush into the process. Doing some groundwork in the short-term will certainly pay-off in the long-term. Reputation, reviews and references carry a lot of weight in this industry, and remember, prevention is better than cure. And certainly a lot cheaper. Going with the bargain-basement quote can be tempting, but are you risking a major headache if you discover that corners have been cut down the line?

Communication is key!
Before work gets under way you’ll want to build a good rapport with your tradesperson. Of course he or she will be determined to do the best possible job, but good lines of communication are vital to ensure that you’re both singing from the same hymn sheet.

Even if you’ve planned down to the smallest details, you can’t guarantee things won’t go without a hitch. If you have an issue with any work throughout the process, be sure to air your thoughts straight away. Don’t let your concerns fester. The sooner you can work any problems out, the better for all concerned.

A certain level of flexibility on both sides is key. Your builder will expect you to change your mind once or twice on certain issues but just make sure they are kept fully in the loop with any alterations to the plan. And before work begins ensure you draw up a legally binding contract just in case the worst happens and you fall out with your builder with the job half done. It’s also wise to agree a payment plan in advance of work commencing. The more you talk to your tradesperson the better.

Remember, these things take time.
If the renovation looks as if it’s going to take longer than originally planned, try not to panic. Sure it’s not ideal but good things come to those who wait. A tradesperson takes pride in their work and if that means the job taking extra couple of days or weeks then so be it. You could even use it as an opportunity for a romantic getaway before returning, de-stressed, to your brand-new home.
Romulo Café
By David Hughes

Philippine food does not have much of a distinctive profile in London, but Rowena Romulo would like to change that. She is the granddaughter of one of the Philippines most famous diplomats, and after a long interlude in the banking world has returned to being involved in running a restaurant, but one with a very personal stamp.

Philippino cuisine has had many influences wrought upon it over the years, from the early Spanish invaders to Japan’s wartime occupation and America’s post war emancipation, and there are over 7000 islands that make up the nation. You would think this would give license to be very adventurous, but, a bit like the Italians, Philippinos sometimes have a very strong idea of what is “authentic” for their region!

For that reason, I’m briefed that the menu consists of a mix of family interpretations of classics such as the Adobo, and others dishes where the chef has cast off the shackles and allowed himself a bit more free rein. Whilst I’m all for a bit of authenticity, in some areas it can be a bit stifling on the creativity, so I’m looking forward to see where the boundaries are going to be pushed.

Having been let down by my guest (I’m looking at you, Jack!) I decided to treat myself to a not-quite-sharing selection for 1, starting with a Tuna Kilawin and Chef Lorenzo’s Pork Sisig. The Tuna ceviche was a refreshing bowl of hearty tuna chunks, red onion, cucumber, pepper & radish, made distinctive by the punch of the cane vinegar, which set the ‘Tigers Milk’ (the juice /marinade) quite apart from the usual South American flavours.

The Pork Sisig might puzzle the average islander, using belly of pork, leaving out the ears and cheeks, and being topped with an egg, but don’t let that put you off. The presentation and thin sliced apple make this a delight, and one that shows that it’s possible to successfully update and adapt even the most prescriptive of recipes.

Another little departure from the norm is the Twin Treats bit of the menu, where you can mix and match a mains plate from 11 choices, however I plumped for the Romulo’s Surf & Turf which consists of Prawns in Aligue sauce, which consists of Prawns indulgent for a Tuesday afternoon. I couldn’t leave without a local, and the sticky rice was better than I ever remembered it being served when I was in Manila, and you can’t have a better endorsement than that.

Go for: great family style restaurant with the best welcome in town! Bookings on 020 3141 6390 or bookatable.co.uk, opentable.co.uk
343 Kensington High St, W8 6NW
www.romulocafe.co.uk

Golden Dragon at Bang Bang Oriental
By David Hughes

Bang Bang is, whisper it, in NW9. I’ll help you out a bit here; it’s very close to Brent Cross, and for those with a more aerial turn of mind, bang on route for Elstree Aerodrome and your next trip to the races. Having made the trek up the Edgware Rd, here’s what’s in store.

Sunday brunch will literally see queues round the block for the Dim Sum. There are no flights of experimental fantasy, but plenty of good traditional items abound. If you are like me, and prefer your food MSG free it’s easy to pick most things on the menu. The Dim Sum’s on offer until 3pm every day, but I thought I would try an evening trip to see what else was to be had.

I’m a bit more into my seafood than chicken feet, so we started with a Cobra beer, some house red and a flavoursome soft shell crab. Not revolutionary, but perky enough with the red chilli & spring onion scattered over it. Next, the lobster in garlic and ginger. It arrived coated in that slightly glutinous sauce that the Chinese specialise in, and cut and laid out on the plate as though it had been artfully washed up on a rising tide. A little fresh coriander was laid over this tableau like stricken seaweed, and every morsel was devoured with great pleasure.

So, was it all downhill from there? Not quite, though I have to admit that the lobster outshone the squid, and the Special Rice and perfectly cooked and crunchy Chinese broccoli were again tasty rather than show stoppers, but perhaps I’m asking too much of good (but simple) dishes here. I left with a slightly tight belt that contained a couple of beers, wine, some excellent seafood, rice and veg and a bill that barely touched £100.

For those that want a bit more of a street food experience, there’s a huge food hall upstairs with a restaurant/community space/shopping centre, with 33 kiosks and room for 450 diners, where you can forsake the attentive table service, but cast your net a bit more widely around the eclectic tastes of Asia; Korean, Japanese, Indian and Vietnamese food all get a look in, plus some usually unde-represented cuisines like Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan.

Chinese Dragon,
399 Edgware Rd, NW9 0FH
(free parking in Morrison’s car park);
Surely it’s what’s in the bottle that counts?

By Edward Burns

In 1945 Baron Philippe de Rothschild had the visionary idea of commissioning leading contemporary artists to realize paintings for the Chateau Mouton Rothschild label. Since that initial 1945 label, Mouton Rothschild has commissioned some of the most celebrated artists of their day, including Chagall, Picasso, Francis Bacon, Dali and even Prince Charles. This was radical thinking at the time, however, it helped shape the way we see wine labels today. The 1993 vintage was a relatively poor one in Bordeaux, however, the 1993 Mouton Rothschild is highly prized by collectors as the image by Balthus of an adolescent nude girl was branded indecent by the United States, so the labels on the export bottles were blank; which begs the question, surely it is what’s in the bottle that counts!

Wine labels are important for the consumers in giving them the curriculum vitae of the wine. They should usually have the country of origin, level of alcohol, producer and grape variety, however, with a lot of French labels, grapes used in the blend are not always mentioned, which can cause confusion; if we had a pound for every time someone said, “I like Chablis and Puligny but I don’t like Chardonnay” we would be rich men!

A Rhone producer called Michel Chapoutier went a step further in terms of being informative, by becoming the first wine producer to include braille descriptions on all his labels in 1996. With space on wine shelves being so competitive a new trend seems to be emerging with some producers seeming to intentionally brand their wines with labels similar to the market leaders. Earlier this year Sainsbury’s introduced a range of Chilean wines called Camino del Angel, which bore an uncanny resemblance to Chile’s largest wine brand Castillo del Diablo. It was then pointed out that Sainsbury’s Villeta New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc bore a noticeable similarity in both name and label of market leader Villa Maria causing a flurry of legal exchanges!

Wine labels are meant to be informative and can be incredibly beautiful but can it ever be right to buy a wine because you like the label? The answer should be “No” but we all know it’s not that simple. However, we should remember it’s the wine we will be drinking and the bottle will soon be forgotten and dropped into the recycling!

Edward Burns
Burns & German Vintners Ltd, Chelsea, SW3
www.bgvintners.co.uk
**September 2017**

**AUCTIONS**

**September 21**

*Art, Antiques and Aperitifs*  
Lots Road Auctions  
What better way to kick off the Chelsea auction season than with a glass of bubbles in one hand and a vol-au-vent in the other. Lots Road Auctions is happy to host a special viewing of its next fine sale and invites everyone to stop in and see the fabulous and unique items on offer.

71-73 Lots Road, Chelsea  
020 7736 6800  
Info@lotsroad.com  
lotsroad.com  

**September 25**

Christie’s LATES: Audrey Hepburn  
Join us for an evening celebrating globally renowned film and stage actress, fashion legend and humanitarian Audrey Hepburn, ahead of Christie’s auctions of her personal collection. Free entry and pay bar. Come and see the full sale preview of the auctions, chronicling the life and career of arguably the most famous screen actress of the 20th Century through the lens of the objects she collected, used and loved. Join us from 6.30pm to 8.30pm for a screening of Breakfast at Tiffany’s. Arriving dressed in the style of Audrey is encouraged. Entrance will be first come first served. 6.00 – 9.30 pm  
Christie’s King Street, 8 King Street, St James’s, London SW1Y 6QZ  
Free entry, pay bar  
#AudreyAtChristies  
Find out more at www.christies.com/lates

**COMEDY**

**Ongoing**

*The Comedy About a Bank Robbery*  
Beck Theatre  
For tickets go to: becktheatre.org.uk  
020 7729 2202  

**September 25 – 30**

*You Forgot the Mince*  
The Courtyard Theatre  
You Forgot the Mince is a story about what we do to protect those around us and how we fuck them up in the process. It is about real people and the journeys they choose to go on in life. How we love and how we hurt.” Francesca Joy, Writer 40 Pinfield St, London N1 6EU  
020 7729 2202  
thecourtyard.org.uk  

**October 3 – November 4**

*Giselle*  
Sadler’s Wells  
Giselle Following its sensational 2016 world premiere and UK tour, Akram Khan’s Giselle, ‘a beautiful and intelligent remaking’. New Wimbledon Theatre  
September 21 – 30  
Sadler’s Wells  
New Wimbledon Theatre  
Sadler’s Wells  
020 8863 8222  
Sadlerwells.com  

**September 25 – 30**

*The Peacock*  
Leicester Square Theatre  
020 7478 0100  

**September 29**

*The Last Leg*  
UK tour

**September 25 – 30**

*The Breath*  
New Wimbledon Theatre  
In the role that earned him an Olivier award nomination and WhatsOnStage award, Will Young reprisess his critically acclaimed performance of Emcee in Rufus Norris’ production of Cabaret.

**September 25 – 30**

*The Lyric*  
London by popular demand for six performances only.  
020 7863 8000  
Sadlerwells.com  

**September 25 – October 14**

*The Courtyard Theatre*  
Harlequin

**September 25 – 30**

*Sean Kelly and the Stars of Storage Hunters*  
The Lyric, King St, London W6 0QL  
lyric.co.uk  

**September 27 – 30**

*Footloose*  
The Peacock  
Footloose is back and better than ever before. Everybody cut loose as the explosive 1980s rock ‘n’ roll sensation bursts on to the stage in a remastered show for 2017 starring Gareth Gates as Willard and Maureen Nolan as Vi Moore.

**October 3 – November 4**

*The Seagull*  
Lyric Theatre  
Chekhov’s celebrated masterpiece is given vibrant new life in this dynamic new version by Olivier-award winning playwright Simon Stephens directed by Sean Holmes and starring Lesley Sharp as Irina Arkadina. Switching effortlessly between the ridiculous and the profound The Seagull forensically examines the transience and destructiveness of love. The burning need to create Art and how harshly that need can be crushed permeates the play.

**October 29 – 30**

**RHS London Autumn Garden Show**  
Wed 25 – Thu 26 Oct 10am – 5pm  
Late Tues 26 Oct 6 – 9pm  
Royal Horticultural Halls  
St James’s Park/Pimlico  
London Victoria  
RHS Members £5, public £6 in advance / £9 on day. Late £5 for all  
rhs.org.uk/londonshows  

**September 21 – 23**

**Giselle**  
Sadler’s Wells  
Following its sensational 2016 world premiere and UK tour, Akram Khan’s Giselle, ‘a beautiful and intelligent remaking’. New Wimbledon Theatre  
September 21 – 30  
Sadler’s Wells  
New Wimbledon Theatre  
Sadler’s Wells  
020 8863 8000  
Sadlerwells.com  

**September 21 – 30**

**DANCE**  
The Lyric  
Dance

**September 25 – 30**

**FOOD & DRINK**  
The Play that goes wrong.com  
The Peacock

**September 26 – 30**

**Showcase**  
The Peacock  
The Peacock
original lyrics pour forth from her own life in a torrent. She sings songs of birth and death, women’s rights, first love, the call of motherhood, the death of men at sea and post-colonial wrongs.

020 7676 7499
35-47 Bethnal Green Rd, London E1 6LA
richmix.org.uk

October 2 – 7

Flashdance
New Wimbledon Theatre
Starring Strictly Come Dancing Champion Joanne Clifton and A1 heart throb Ben Adams, Flashdance - The Musical is the inspiring and unforgettable story of Alex, a determined welder who dreams of becoming a professional dancer. When a romance complicates her ambitions, she harnesses it to drive her dream of attending Shipley Dance Academy.

0844 871 7646
93 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London SW19 1QG

EXHIBITIONS

Ends September 16

Playground Structure Blair Southern
The group exhibition Playground Structure takes its title from a 2008 photograph by Jeff Wall that depicts a climbing frame in a suburban park. The climbing frame is an invitation to play, and yet it also resembles an anonymous public artwork that might bring to mind a modernist grid or a constructivist sculpture. In the exhibition, Wall’s large-scale photograph will be exhibited with paintings from 1969 to the present day from various artists.

020 7493 4492
4 Hanover Square, Mayfair, London W1S 1BP
blainsouthern.com

Houses of Parliament

EVENTS

22 September 2017

present day from various artists.

exhibited with paintings from 1969 to the

Wall’s large-scale photograph will be

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a climbing frame in

Playground Structure
Blair Southern
Ends September 16
English Heritage
Ends September 16

Kensington and Chelsea.
MUSIC AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY

The Choir of Westminster Abbey
James O’Donnell | St James’ Baroque | Lucy Crowe | Vincent Dubois | Peter Holder | Matthew Jorysz | Roger Sayer | Lucy Wakeford

CONCERTS

SCHÜTZ A Christmas Story – Tuesday 5th December 2017
BACH St Matthew Passion – Tuesday 27th March 2018
HAYDN Creation – Tuesday 26th June 2018
Annual Christmas Concert
London Festival of Baroque Music

ORGAN RECITALS

Summer Organ Festival – 17th July to 14th August 2018
Weekly Sunday Recitals

CHORISTER EXPERIENCE

Special open days for boys aged seven and eight
offering a taste of life as an Abbey chorister
7th October 2017 | 3rd March 2018 | 19th May 2018

CHORAL EVENSONG

Sung by the Choir of Westminster Abbey
Daily (except Wednesdays)

Find out more: www.westminster-abbey.org/music
**EVENTS**

**NW1 2DB**

**bl.uk**

**September 23 – 24**

**Cavendish’s Horses:**
From Manège To Dressage

Bolsover Castle
Witness expert horsemanship in flamboyant 17th century costume, training for art and battle to baroque music in the spectacular surroundings of the Riding School at Bolsover Castle. Behold breathtaking displays of horses in training, as they refine the methods created by one of the great equestrian masters, William Cavendish. Be amazed as Peter Maddison-Greenwell and the team of El Caballo de España demonstrate the dressage movements from history with commentary explaining how these classical methods are still as relevant today. Suitable for all, perfect for those with an interest in modern dressage and its heritage.

Castle St, Bolsover S44 6PR
english-heritage.org.uk

**September 24**

**Kenwood Stories**
Kenwood
The art collections and stories of Kenwood come alive through narrative and live interpretation as told by Kenwood volunteers. This event is held on the last Sunday of every month.

Hampstead Lane, Hampstead, NW3 7JR
english-heritage.org.uk

**September 28 – December 7**

**Polka Youth Theatre**
Polka Theatre
A unique opportunity to get expert drama training and develop new performance skills, for everyone aged 9 – 14 who enjoys theatre and performance.

020 8543 4888
240 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London SW19 1SB
polkatheatre.com

**September 29 – October 15**

**Child of the Divide**
Polka Theatre
Summer 1947 and 16 million people are on the move between India and the newly-formed Pakistan. Amid the upheaval young Pali’s fingers slip from his father’s hand, and his destiny changes forever. Taken in by a Muslim family, he is given a new name, a new faith and a new life. But when his real father returns to claim him, Pali must decide who he is: the Hindu boy he was born to be, the Muslim boy he has become, or simply a child of the divide. Marking the 70th anniversary of the partition of India, this compelling and timely play returns to Polka after premiering in 2006.

020 8543 4888
240 The Broadway, Wimbledon, London SW19 1SB
polkatheatre.com

**September 30 – October 1**

**Stott in Steam Days**
Stott Park Bobbin Mill
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0370 333 1181
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english-heritage.org.uk

**October 7 – 8**

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Beeston Castle and Woodland Park
A celebration of autumn comes to Beeston Castle and Woodland Park, as the castle holds its annual Autumn Fair. Falconry displays, music, foraging, local craftsmen, wildlife groups, and even a dog show will be amongst the outdoor entertainments on offer over the weekend, as well as a chance to explore the castle’s 4,000-year history and 40 acres of woodland park.

0370 333 1181
Chapel Lane, Beeston CW6 9TX
english-heritage.org.uk

**FILM & PHOTOGRAPHY**

**Ongoing**
Franklin: Death in the Ice
National Maritime Museum
Opening 14 July 2017, the exhibition explores the mysterious fate of Sir John Franklin and his crew on their final expedition; a mystery that still remains unsolved today.

020 8858 4422
Park Row, Greenwich, London SE10 9NF
rmg.co.uk

**September 29 – October 5**

**The Grime and the Glamour: NYC 1976-90**
Barbican
In a major season at Barbican Cinema audiences get a taste of the blisteringly creative streets of late 1970s and 1980s New York, with a season of films that take us back to Jean-Michel Basquiat’s home town. Screenings include hip-hop classic Wild Style, and Jim Jarmusch’s first feature, Permanent Vacation, cult rom-com Desperately Seeking Susan, and Chantal Akerman’s poignant time capsule of NYC in 1976, News From Home.

**September 22, November 10**

**Dino Snores for Grown-ups**
Natural History Museum
Enjoy a night of music, food, science and cinema at the Natural History Museum’s sleepover, Dino Snores for Grown-ups.

020 7942 5511
Cromwell Rd, Kensington, London SW7 5BD
nhm.ac.uk

**September 29 – October 5**

**Desperately Seeking Susan**
Barbican

**Next Stop Saigon**
Barbican

**September 29 – October 5**

**Gay UK: Love, Law and Liberty**
British Library
1895, the trial of Oscar Wilde. 2017, the pardoning of gay men by the ‘Alan Turing Law’. How far have we come in 122 years? Personal testimony. Public protest. Art and culture. We tell the story of love, legislative change and the battles for equality experienced by gay men and women in the UK. 50 years after the Sexual Offences Act partially decriminalised homosexuality, our exhibition looks at the build up to this monumental step, its impact, and asks what challenges still remain.

0330 333 1144
96 Euston Rd, Kings Cross, London NW1 2DB
bl.uk

**September 29 – October 5**

**The Grime and the Glamour: NYC 1976-90**
Barbican

**In a major season at Barbican Cinema audiences get a taste of the blisteringly creative streets of late 1970s and 1980s New York, with a season of films that take us back to Jean-Michel Basquiat’s home town. Screenings include hip-hop classic Wild Style, and Jim Jarmusch’s first feature, Permanent Vacation, cult rom-com Desperately Seeking Susan, and Chantal Akerman’s poignant time capsule of NYC in 1976, News From Home.**

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In more than 60 Somnyama Ngonyama. presents her ongoing self-portrait series South African visual activist Zanele Muholi. In her first solo exhibition in London, Hail the Dark Lioness thephotographersgallery.org.uk. W1F 7LW 16-18 Ramillies St, Soho, London through slow looking. people to cultivate their visual literacy skills. The photograph. It links with one of the Touchstone is a changing display inviting. The Photographer’s Gallery barbican.org.uk 020 7638 4141. Ends October 8 Silk St, London EC2Y 8DS barbican.org.uk.

Ends October 1 Silent Film and Live Music Barbican Barbican Cinema opens its autumn Silent Film and Live Music series with the UK premiere of London Symphony with live musical accompaniment by the Covent Garden Sinfonia. Also screening is Sergei Eisenstein’s powerful classic, Strike. September 20 – 22 Hammersmith Apollo Sigur Ros September 19 6-9.30pm.

ends october 8 november 8

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For more info please contact: 07423 008 119 gadenngai@gmail.com

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Contact - 07423 008 119
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020 7638 4141 Silk St, London EC2Y 8DS barbican.org.uk

ends October 8

NO VACANCY THE PHOTOGRAPHER’S GALLERY Touchstone is a changing display inviting you to look more closely at a single photograph. It links with one of the Gallery’s wider educational aims: to inspire people to cultivate their visual literacy skills through slow looking. 020 7087 9300
16-18 Ramillies St, Soho, London W1F 7LW thephotographersgalleries.org.uk

ENDS OCTOBER 28 Zanele Muholi: Somnyama Ngonyama, Hail the Dark Lioness Autograph ABP In her first solo exhibition in London, South African visual artist Zanele Muholi presents her ongoing self-portrait series Somnyama Ngonyama. In more than 60 photographs Muholi uses her body as a canvas to confront the politics of race and representation in the visual archive. 020 7729 9200
Rivington Pl, London EC2A 3BA
tagraph-abp.co.uk

October 5 – 16 BFI London Film Festival The 61st BFI Film Festival will feature Andy Serkis’s directorial debut, Breathé, starring Andrew Garfield and Claire Foy. It is a heart-warming celebration of bravery and human possibility. See website for more information bfi.org.uk

October 21, November 18 SING-A-LONG-A FROZEN Prince Charles Cinema A full screening of Disney’s Frozen with lyrics on screen. The Singalonga host will guide you through this interactive screening, showing you how to use your free prop bag, warming up your singing voices and teaching you some dance moves. So, get your little ones dressed up as their favourite character and come and enjoy Sing-a-Long-a-Frozen where YOU the audience are the stars. Adults only. 020 7494 3654
7 Leicester Pl, London WC2H 7BY princecharlescinema.com

MUSIC

24 SEPTEMBER Anne Boleyn’s Music Book Royal College of Music The Anne Boleyn Music Book is one of the most significant books of Renaissance music in Britain and one of the RCM’s greatest treasures. Join us for talks by experts, and a performance of excerpts of the manuscript music by Alamire ensemble.

This unique event also marks the 50th anniversary of the Society for Renaissance Studies.

020 7591 4314 Royal College of Music, Prince Consort Road SW7 2BS rcm.ac.uk

5 October Chamber Orchestra of Europe: Schumann’s Symphony No. 2 Royal College of Music Principal players from the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, renowned for their enthusiastic performances and shared love of music-making between members of various cultural backgrounds, perform Schumann’s Second Symphony with the RCM Chamber Orchestra.

020 7591 4314 Royal College of Music, Prince Consort Road SW7 2BS rcm.ac.uk

6 October Marmen Quartet Royal College of Music The Marmen Quartet, the RCM’s new Artist Diploma in Chamber Music string quartet, performs lyrical quartets by Brahms, Haydn and Janáček.

020 7591 4314 Royal College of Music, Prince Consort Road SW7 2BS rcm.ac.uk

September 24, October 8 Irish Music Sessions The Harrison Irish music jam session. Open to musicians of all levels to join in. Sunday Roasts are served all day until they run out and we serve a full dinner menu from 6-9.30pm. 020 7278 3966
Kings Cross, London WC1H 8JF harrisonbar.co.uk

September 19 Senza Sangue & Bluebeards Castle Hackney Empire This rare double bill performance will take place on a Sunday night only with a full scale Orchestra by the Pannon Philharmonic Orchestra; taking over the stalls area of the Hackney Empire. Seating will be from Dress Circle, Upper Circle & Gallery. 020 9895 2424
291 Mare St, London E8 1EJ hackneyempire.co.uk

September 20 – 22 Sigur Ros Hammer smith Apollo The Sigur Rós tour that had American writers reaching for the thesaurus is coming to Europe, and will be the only chance to capture the band in the best theatres and concert halls across the continent for the foreseeable future.

020 8535 3800
45 Queen Caroline St, Hammersmith, London W6 9QH eventimapollo.com

Ends October 14 Evita the Musical Phoenix Theatre The story of an ordinary woman’s meteoric rise to power at a time of extraordinary political unrest, Evita is set to captivate West End audiences again as it makes a much anticipated return to London, playing 12 weeks at the Phoenix Theatre. 0844 871 7627
Charity Cross Rd, London WC2H 0JP phoenixtheatrelondon.co.uk

ENDS OCTOBER 14 The Book of Mormon Prince of Wales Theatre Winner of 4 Oliviers Awards including Best New Musical, The Book of Mormon is one of the West End’s most popular musicals. Since opening in New York at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre in 2011, the musical prompted rave reviews and unanimous critical praise, and was hailed as “the best musical of the century” by the New York Times.

0844 482 5115
Coventry St, London W1J 6AS princeofwalestheatrelondon.info

October 7 Pete ‘Tiger’ Sheppard Gypsy guitar duo Le QuecumBar Don’t miss the mighty sound of Pete ‘Tiger’ Sheppard & Co, stomping Gypsy swing guitar. 020 7787 2227
42-44 Battersea High St, Battersea, London SW11 3HX quecumbar.co.uk

October 18 – 28 Michael Clark Company: to a simple, rock ‘n’ roll . . . song. Barbican Theatre Michael Clark is back with an extended version of his latest show. Enjoying its premiere here in 2016, the Olivier Award-nominated ‘to a simple, rock ‘n’ roll . . . song’ comprises a triple bill of arresting choreography by Barbican Artist Associate Clark. 020 7638 4141
Silk St, London EC2Y 8DS barbican.org.uk

November 8 Amy Macdonald St John at Hackney Church Following her sold-out 13 date UK tour earlier this year, Amy Macdonald has announced a very special, intimate acoustic UK tour for the Autumn. Amy has released her new single ‘Down by the Water’. The track is taken from her current record ‘Live at the BBC’, which charted at No.2 on the UK album chart.

Lower Clapton Road London, E5 0PD stjohnathackney.org

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55 York Rd, Lambeth, London SE1 7NJ londonducktours.co.uk

ONGOING War Paint: Brushes with conflict National Army Museum Explore why artists and soldiers have
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Events

Kensington, Chelsea & Westminster Today
September 2017
www.KCWToday.co.uk

Painted scenes of conflict, in our first temporary exhibition at the new museum. Artists and soldiers have painted scenes of conflict for many reasons; to create records, report news or commemorate events. But above all, war paintings are personal perspectives on war and its vast impact on people and places. War Paint features over 130 paintings and objects exploring the complex relationship between war and the men and women who map, record, celebrate and document it. 020 7730 0717 Royal Hospital Rd, Chelsea, London SW3 4HT nam.ac.uk

September 12
The Surprising Truth About Why You Really Do What You Do
The Lecture Club
A fascinating journey through the vagaries of behaviour, influence and motivation.
9 Icchelster Place, London, W14 8AA thelectureclub.com

September 19
Ruthless Science: The Mindset of Nazi Medical Researchers
The Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide
The full-scale reconstruction of the totality of Nazi medical research allows us to draw conclusions about the timing and circumstances of the coerced experiments and the taking of anthropological measurements. Based on collective biographical analysis, as well as perpetrator statements made during interrogations and post-war trials, it is now possible to gain greater insight into the mentalities of perpetrators.
020 7636 7247 29 Russell Square, Bloomsbury, London WC1B 5DP wienerlibrary.co.uk

September 23
“As I Myself Should Be Left Behind”: William Morris In Iceland, A Talk By Lavinia Greenlaw
The reasons for Morris’s journeys to Iceland are complex. The journal he wrote while he was there reveals more about them than he probably knew. As he writes about ponies and lava, frying pans and rain, he unconsciously returns to questions of travel and how we travel in order to escape ourselves only to discover that we

October 28
Re-imaging the art market: The Lecture Club
The importance of collecting art from early-career artists.
9 Icchelster Place, London, W14 8AA thelectureclub.com

October 1
A Celebration of Science & Reason
Hammermills Apollo
A Celebration of Science & Reason
October 1
A Thought provoking lecture about the future of space mining.
9 Icchelster Place, London, W14 8AA thelectureclub.com

October 14
Design and Craftsmanship in the 20th And 21st Centuries
William Morris Society
Both hands-on craftsmen and design entrepreneurs, David Mellor was a key figure in the British 20th century design whose work ranged from cutlery and silverware to street furniture.
020 8741 3735 Kelmscott, Lechlade GL7 3HJ williammorriossociety.org

November 22
Newsrewired
Reuter
The next newsrewired digital journalism conference takes place on 22 November at Reuters in Canary Wharf, London. Newsrewired is powered by a focus on practical learning, with panels, workshops and talks throughout the day highlighting the latest techniques in digital newsgathering and storytelling.
020 7359 7000 80 Sir Colonnade, Canary Wharf, London E14 5EP

THEATRE
Ends September 23
Jesus Christ Superstar
Regent’s Park Open Air Theatre
Following its overwhelming sell-out success in 2016, Jesus Christ Superstar is back. Winner of the Olivier Award for Best Musical Revival, and Best Musical in the Evening Standard Awards - the production returns in an extended engagement (now playing until 23 Sept), giving audiences one final chance to see it in its original home. 0844 826 4242 Inner Cir, London NW1 4NU openairtheatre.com

September 12 – 30
Dolphins and Sharks
Finborough Theatre
Yusuf needs a break. His philosophy degree from NYU isn’t opening any doors, but his new job would help him pay his overdue rent; Xiomara doesn’t want to settle for the marriage scenario her Dominican mother keeps pushing on her; and Isabel needs her keeps pushing on her; and Isabel needs her

September 14 – October 14
Trouble in Mind

Coronet Printroom
Wiletta Mayer is a talented African-American actress who has spent a lifetime building a career in the theatre. Now she is on Broadway, rehearsing Chaos in Belleville, an anti-lynching play with a white director. As rehearsals progress, Wiletta finds it increasingly difficult to relate to the part she is playing. Will she be able to overcome her misgivings and let the show go on?
020 3642 6606 103 Notting Hill Gate, London W11 3LB the-print-room.org

September 24
Dead Poets Live
Coronet Printroom
After two sell-out events, Dead Poets Live returns to The Print Room with an unmissable show this September.
020 3642 6606 103 Notting Hill Gate, London W11 3LB the-print-room.org

Ends October 1
Boudica
Shakespeare’s Globe
On the fortieth anniversary of the Roman Empire, at the very edge of the known world, rebellion is brewing. The King of the Iceni has died and his widow Boudica has tried to claim her rightful throne. For her insurrection, she is to have his lost score for Rupert Julian’s silent classic film, The Phantom of the Opera, premiered at the London Coliseum, 24 silent classic film, The Phantom of the Opera, premiered at the London Coliseum, 24

October 18
An Evening with Tom Holland
The Clement James Centre
Tom Holland is one of the UK’s major historians, a well known author and the TV presenter and producer of “Islam: The Untold Story” and “Dinosaurs, Myths and Monsters.” Described as the leading writer on the ancient world, his most recent book ‘Dynasty – the rise and fall of the House of Caesar’ was highly critically acclaimed.
95 Sideral Road, W1 EQ
mydonate.bt.com/events/tomholland/445325 £30pp

October 18 – November 25
Of Kith and Kin
Bush Theatre
Daniel and Oliver are about to have their first baby. With their best friend, Priya, acting as surrogate, they’ve turned the study into a nursery and the bottles are sterilised. All that’s missing is the bundle of joy they’ve been pining for.
020 8743 9305 7 Usbridge Rd, Shepherd’s Bush, London W12 8JF

Compiled and edited by Fahad Redha
The Art of Research in the Digital Age
by Anna Kretschmer

Research and the internet are perhaps two words which raise some wariness in educators. There is definitely the need to teach students about research and how to do it well, and also to open up the wealth of libraries and archives on our doorstep in London.

For many researchers, the love of solitary work in a quiet archive is an integral part of the job. And undoubtedly there is a lot to be said for the pleasurable experience of using texts, and of sitting down with a text as a physical artefact.

However, the rise in digital humanities is changing the way we do research. It’s affecting the practical ways in which we access material, and also changing the ways researchers conceive of their projects and the questions they ask of the archive.

The New York Public Library is widely regarded as a world-leader in digitising collections, and its online portal is an impressive tool which brings together all of the Libraries collections across different archives, and is even pioneering ways of exploring the collections as a vast interconnected network.

Digitisation is an important tool in terms of conserving delicate material like manuscripts and rare books. Increasingly, librarians will ask researchers to access digital images as a first port of call before bringing delicate material out for handling.

The British Museum’s Search the Collections site is one major example of an institution opening up its collections to both the interested amateur, who can search on any time period or topic they would like to browse, right up to specialist researchers who can access excellent-quality images of delicate ephemera like Hogarth, handbills or woodblock prints.

Libraries are also archiving digital material. Recently, the British Library archived the Grenfell Action Group blog in its UK Web Archive, which is dedicated to ‘web resources of scholarly and cultural importance’.

Dr Jennie Batchelor is a Professor of eighteenth-century studies at the University of Kent. Her latest project is dedicated to ‘web resources of scholarly and cultural importance’.

She heads up the *The Ladies Magazine Project*, which has just completed its digital index of a magazine which was hugely influential in its day, but which is seldom accessed nowadays.

“More people were reading the magazine than were going out to buy non-fiction books such as Lyrical Ballads,” explains Dr Batchelor. “Or, they’d be reading the Lyrical Ballads in the pages of the magazine, alongside poetry written by readers.” The magazine had ten to fifteen thousand readers a month, a particularly impressive figure compared to the Jane Austen’s original anonymous print run of 750 copies of *Sense and Sensibility*.

She remembers the old days of having to use microfiche to read the magazine.

“It gave me an awful headache,” she laughs. “It’s a tiresome and unwieldy process that is really at odds with the experience of reading a magazine.”

Thanks to digitisation, the entire run of the magazine is now easily accessible. “I really chanced my arm,” explains Dr Batchelor, “and asked the owners of the microfiche archive to create an online database”.

But digitising content alone isn’t enough.

Navigating the archive is an immense task. *The Ladies Magazine* was hugely popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, running for 62 years with 13 issues per year. As well as being dense in terms of volume, it is also a multi-media affair, with pictures, musical scores, and, as we shall see, stitching patterns all featuring in the publication.

“It’s a real window on the world in that period,” elaborates Dr Batchelor. From the latest on the Reform Act, to changing hemlines, the *Ladies Magazine* was vitally interested in wide-ranging, multifarious topics. It was also a significant platform for readers, mainly women, to write and to engage with ideas.

The magazine had multiple authors, and in fact most of its original material was written by readers themselves. They would often write and converse with each other through its pages, sometimes over decades.

It quickly became clear to Dr Batchelor that developing a navigation tool would be of utmost importance in “opening up” the magazine to new readers and researchers alike.

There are several ways in which her digital index is a valuable tool for researchers. Key-word searching, usually available in online databases, is useful, but can be misleading. The project sought to define its own keywords for every individual article, a labour-intensive task but a profitable one.

“Let’s take ‘suicide’ as a bit of a morbid example,” says Batchelor. It could maybe not even feature as a word in an actual article and you could be faced instead with having to work through polite eighteenth-century synonyms for self-sacrifice, or conversely going through every grisly method you can think of in order to turn up a result.

Other ways in which researchers on the project are using the index include looking at the concentration of contributors and geographic spread, and the spread of material and changes over time. Content can also be sorted generically, which isn’t always a straightforward task for a complex text which can be very fluid generally. Researchers can also distinguish original content from previously published sources.

Dr Batchelor and her colleagues became emotionally invested, too, in the people behind the raw data. They traced friendships made, and even relationships kindled, in the pages of the magazine.

She has always maintained, also, that the index should be open-access. This brings into question issues about paywalls and access limitations. Although free-to-use and high quality resources like the British Museum and New York Public Library archives are highly accessible and useful for interested members of the public and specialist researchers alike, access to other digitised archives can be patchy and dependant on membership of institutions. Even the British Library, although free to use, does make some demands for membership, asking that members demonstrate a need to access their resources specifically.

Unfortunately the digitised content of the *Ladies Magazine* remains behind a paywall, but the index itself will always be open access for everyone.

For Dr Batchelor, the digitisation process and the research that followed has really made her forthcoming book. Originally conceived as a traditionally-structured monograph, “the way it’s structured and the people I’m talking to with it have completely changed,” she says.

Social media has also played a surprising part in her research journey. “Honestly, it’s been revelatory!” she laughs. “I originally thought it would just be a bolt-on to the project, but it’s taken on a life of its own.”

Twitter has been an asset, from gaining an insight as author into what really animates readers, to getting people from different disciplines from around the world interested in the project.

However, tweeting pictures of surviving embroidery patterns from the magazine was what really took off. The buzz of excitement about the fragile printed designs, which normally would have been taken out of the magazine to be used, and lost to the archive, led to the *The Great Ladies Magazine Stitch Off*. Talented readers from the around the world stitched their own beautiful copies of the designs, in an unusual and exciting way that connected historical material with living artistic production.

It also resulted in an exhibition at the Chawton House Library, seen by over seven thousand people.

Dr Batchelor has also utilised blogging as an important strand of the project. “I would really recommend it as research practice. It’s a great way to write as you go and really test out ideas.”

There’s a neat echoing of eighteenth-century practices, too, in the back-and-forth intellectual exchanges seen in the pages of the magazine.

What she hopes will emerge from the *Ladies Magazine Project* is re-evaluation of university teaching of this period, and an engagement with what women were actually reading and writing in their everyday lives.

What’s certain is that digitisation projects like this are opening up more and more texts for researchers, and opening up the archive for more and more people beyond the world of academia.
Creating Creatives:
Can you teach creative writing?
By Max Feldman

One of the more or less truthful clichés of humanity is that deep down most people feel that they’re probably got a novel in them. Whether they are ‘actively’ pursuing this hazy dream: boring their friends for years with frequent assertions about how they’re ‘working on a novel in my spare time’ by occasionally writing down a potential name or one liner that pops into their head, or perhaps simply possess a general and only mildly arrogant feeling that if you could just get some time to yourself then you could spit out the Great American Novel in about three weeks, no sweat. Yet somehow even when the time is found, a million other things fill it. As though subconsciously there is a desire not to break this, rather satisfying, illusion.

One of the central things holding people back is that if a prospective writer ever does sit down and start rattling the keys, the work that emerges tends not to be an elegant fusion of literary influences but instead something closer to Jeff Goldblum in ‘The Fly’, a hideous mutant begging to be put out of its misery. These failures are as inevitable as if you tried to run a marathon without ever having exercised. Writing, particularly creative writing, is much like using a muscle and as in the physical world, most people are grotesquely out of shape. Whilst the best/only thing to do in this scenario is the old ‘try-try-try-try-etc. ad infinitum again’, aspiring writers of all ages are often drawn towards creative writing courses, as the importance of having some kind of structure for learning is ingrained in us for almost every other subject, from painting to sports, so it seems odd to place creative writing outside the realm of the teachable.

However almost beyond any other subject, the debate over whether it can actually be taught has long been an academic battleground. In university level education, teaching generally takes place in workshops where the tutor (either an academic with a degree in creative writing or an actual writer, washed up or taking advantage of their fame for a celebrity level salary) tends to shepherd debate rather than lead it (in accordance with workshop protocol) with a focus on getting the students to workshop each other’s stories. This raises concerns considering that if no-one doing the workshop has been published then how can their opinions be taken seriously. Isn’t there a danger of being put on the wrong path due to an overly assured undergrad in a beret and a goatee who convinces you that punctuation is bourgeois? The central concern however has always been the question of whether creativity and drive can even be taught; there is no single way you can teach ‘how to structure a novel’ because it is so personal.

This scepticism is widely shared, and one way for creative-writing programs to handle it is simply to concede the point. The University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop is the most renowned creative-writing program in the world. Pulitzer Prize winners and Poet Laureates galore are graduates of the program. However whilst Iowa pseudo-humbly acknowledging the success of its students, the school’s official position is that the course had nothing to do with it. ‘The fact that the Workshop can claim as alumni nationally and internationally prominent poets, novelists, and short story writers is, we believe, more the result of what they brought here than of what they gained from us,’ the Iowa Web site explains. Iowa merely admits people who are really good at writing; it puts them up for two years, and then, like an academic version of the Wizard of Oz, it gives them a diploma. ‘We continue to look for the most promising talent in the country,’ the school says, ‘in our conviction that writing cannot be taught, but that writers can be encouraged.’

However the arguments against creative writing courses have the unfortunate side effect of helping to shore up the actively unhelpful and patronising idea that writers are chosen by some sort of celestial lottery like it’s a gene that flares up generationally and without which writing of a higher calibre than laundry lists is impossible. No one is born a writer, you are shaped to become one by your life experiences and your overall ambitions (one thing that literary courses legitimately can’t teach is the hunger for success), but for many people trying to hone their skills by themselves can be a dispiriting experience and often enough to turn them off writing altogether. Whereas the variety of techniques and processes taught in classes (creative writing courses are often accused of turning out ‘cookie cutter’ novelists who are functionally identical, but this is generally the accusation with the least validity) can be a helpfully demystifying springboard into writing for a teenager or adult who might want to learn the skill for any number of reasons.

For students looking to study creative writing as a means to become a published and successful author, there are plenty of reasons to undertake a course. Whilst the courses might not be able to make you into a good writer by themselves, for those who find themselves more receptive to communal teaching, they can hone skills faster, cutting down a writer’s learning the ropes ‘woodshedding’ period, potentially by years. In addition, creative writing courses have an individualistic nature that can stand out from the well-honed machine of modern academia: the course is essentially focused on what the student is producing in a unique way compared to other degrees where the work of others is, necessarily, the central focal point.

Overall imagination is not something that can be standardised or marked, but much like art schools, institutions are capable of expanding the horizons of those willing to augment their own worldview. It’s hard to put a price on learning (although university vice-chancellors certainly seem to feel qualified to do so), but for those who want their relationship with the written word to be a two way street, creativity can be priceless.
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EDUCATION

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International Mindedness: should you be part of the new trend?

A new trend among parents is for a ‘mix and match’ approach to education. Starting perhaps with private nursery for the crucial early years; switching to state for primary where there’s a top church school or high performing local school on the doorstep, then switching back to private for secondary or sixth form.

This approach allows thousands of children to experience the benefits of both private and state education. It allows them to become more rounded individuals and escape the bubble which inhabiting only one type of environment can create, or where incapacitating cliques can develop.

Now the smart money is on adding an international education element in that mix. Traditionally the preserve of expat families, local British families or long-stay residents have discovered the huge relevance and value of their children having an international education, and are adding this type of school to the education mix.

Half of all pupils at ACS International Schools, for example, are now British, enjoying a world class education along with up to fifty different nationalities in a typical year group.

Parents see the rapid pace of change in the world, and worry that a traditional British or national education won’t prepare their children to thrive in the modern, culturally diverse, globally mobile world.

Where once the concept of international mindedness seemed intellectual or aloof, it now seems like basic common sense to be taught how to enjoy, thrive and respect different cultures; to come out of school equipped with the skills to live and work successfully with people from other countries or cultures, or to be able to thrive anywhere in the world you choose to live.

Research has proved just how tangible the qualities of an international education really are. In a survey of University Admissions Officers carried out in April this year, the International Baccalaureate was rated as a far better preparation to thrive at university than A levels.

A survey of school leavers who had been to an international school, where 67% had also attended a state school, showed the top five qualities they had gained from their international education were:

• Greater tolerance and respect for other cultures. 85%
• Greater self-confidence through making friends with people from all over the world. 79%
• The confidence to live and work anywhere in the world. 78%
• A better education through experiencing different approaches to learning. 64%
• The ability to learn more and be happier through freedom from traditional school cliques and attitudes. 44%

It’s results like this, combined with the seismic changes that seem to be happening in the world, that are making an international education the trending part of the educational mix.

To find out more about ACS International Schools, or to register for an open morning visit www.acs-schools.com/opendays.

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The Arts in Crisis:
how schools funding is putting arts education at risk
by Antonia Williams

The University of Kent’s School of Music and Fine Arts has recently confirmed it will close as an academic entity by July 2019. It will allow full-time MA applications for 2017 entries only, according to local online newspaper Kent Online.

The University of Kent’s Fine Art department was a highly competitive and well-regarded institution, with two of the department’s students having won the Platform Graduate Art Award. The university placed seventh in The Guardian’s 2017 ‘league table for art’; a guide that particularly analyses the study of drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking and other media.

In a statement released by the University of Kent, the decision to close the school and cease the Fine Arts is a direct response “to changing student demand… while hoping to offer new undergraduate programmes.”

“The university has put these proposals forward with a great deal of regret… unfortunately we can’t make these programmes sustainable,” the Dean of Humanities at the University of Kent, Simon Kirchin, commented.

Meanwhile, Kent Online reported the school had a million pound deficit, which the university could not continue to subsidise.

The decline in arts departments is hitting other universities, too. Canterbury Christ Church University has closed its BA in Fine Arts, leaving the University of the Creative Arts (UCA) at Canterbury one of the few UK universities to still provide a Fine Art programme.

The arts crisis isn’t only affecting higher education institutions. According to the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCoQ), figures show the number of students completing A levels in creative arts and technical subjects in 2016-17 has dropped by 2 per cent, compared with the previous year.

This continuing decline of the arts is due to the funding crisis sweeping through schools in England. Although the Conservatives pledged more funding for schools in the last election, the real picture is more complex, and more worrying.

In December 2016, Secretary of Education Justine Greening proposed a controversial new reform known as the New Funding Formula. It is currently in its second stage of consultation and is expected to be rolled out fully in 2018. This new government reform challenges the former school funding system, which allocated money inconsistently across English schools. The aim of the reform is to redistribute and allocate funding more consistently, and mend the large gap in pupil and school inequality throughout the country.

However, the Department of Education also acknowledged that the new national funding formula could result in devastating outcomes. The Education Policy Institute (EPI) published a report explaining the implications of this reform; stating that many schools will actually see reductions in their budgets.

They warn that the distribution of funding based on area deprivation means that pupils who live in the least deprived areas will experience the highest relative gains. Meanwhile the National Union of Teachers predicts that “unless the Government allocates more money, schools will lose £3 billion a year in real terms by 2020.”

In London, the most disadvantaged primary and secondary schools in London are expected to see an overall loss of around £16.1m by 2019-20.

Without a clear outcome, the new funding formula has piled extra pressure on to schools which are already having to make cutbacks. Schools are axing support staff, resulting in increased class sizes and reductions to the current curriculum. Some go as far as planning to reduce teaching hours.

Such sharp redistribution is leading to arts courses, which are categorised as “less academic”, being axed from curricula altogether.

These drastic measures have drawn the attention of researchers from Sussex University’s School of Education and Social Work, who warn that music and art “could be facing extinction in the classroom.”

Unions also warn that even the so-called winners in the funding shakeup are likely to see their gains outweighed by real-terms cuts to their funding over the next three years. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) found that nearly half of the schools in England are already under pressure to solely focus on core compulsory subjects, referred to as ‘the more academic courses’.

The continued funding crisis is already affecting which AS levels students are choosing to sit. Figures from the most recent batch of AS level students show a dramatic decline in Drama and Music exam entries, which have fallen by over 50 per cent.

In addition, a fifth of teachers in UK schools say a staggering 18 per cent of the student body have dropped Music and Arts as GCSE options in the last year, according to a survey conducted by ASCL.

The erosion of arts in the national curriculum may well see parents choosing to provide tuition privately for their children, with those who are economically less fortunate missing out. The knock-on effect on universities is already seriously affecting the UK’s academic landscape. Students are already being deprived of opportunity, and it remains to be seen whether the arts will make it back on to the national agenda and weather the funding crisis.
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Casualisation in HE
by Anna Kretschmer

Zero-hour contracts and the gig economy have been making the headlines recently. What many students, and their families, may not realise however is the extent to which universities run their teaching along the lines of Sports Direct.

Universities have long relied on TAs, variously Teaching Assistants, or Teaching Associates, to help run their courses. A TA is traditionally a PhD student, who teaches seminars and offers feedback, return assignments, and help students negotiate their university lives. TAs also don’t have any accredited teacher training.

Jessica Jacobs is a UCU union rep at Queen Mary, University of London, and she helps put the TA situation in further context.

“The PhD student model just isn’t the case for an increasing amount of people teaching in universities,” she explains. Instead, early-career academics who have gained their PhDs and have teaching experience under their belts are now seeing, instead of steady career progression, an ever-revolving door of perpetual short-term contracts.

“What we’re seeing is in fact a massive de-skilling,” elaborates Jacobs, as more experienced, post-doctoral researchers are forced into casual posts that don’t fully make use of their skills and expertise.

Full-time academic posts are shrinking as universities instead favour investment in new buildings and facilities. Although impressive selling-points for institutions, Jacobs worries that sparkling new campus buildings are draining resources that could be invested in people.

The widespread ten-month contract is of particular concern to Dr Ben Poore, a Teaching Fellow and early career researcher. These contracts differ from the hourly-paid TA contract, in that they recruit mostly younger early career researchers to design, implement and convene courses in addition to teaching. What they don’t do is cover a paid period over the summer.

“One of the few opportunities one has to get research done is the summer, and being paid for that period is a really important part of being able to get that article or book proposal finished and sent off. Of course there is enormous pressure to get such things done when it comes to getting a permanent post.”

“Universities are increasingly demanding that early career researchers be all-singing-all-dancing hyper-productive researchers, yet also cultivating an environment that precludes people from doing research.”

This model “puts everyone in the case to do several contracts at once,” explains Jacobs.

What they don’t do is cover a paid period over the summer.

“At the end of the day, what students are actually getting are commitment but informally-trained TAs who are a bargain for universities. TA pay for one course for a year is about £5000, compared to a full-time lecturer salary of around forty to fifty thousand pounds per annum.

“I think that parents and students ought to be really angry” echoes Poore.

“Widespread instability and fixed-term contracts are bad for teaching quality. It takes time to develop and run-in really good courses.”

The future of HE teaching is murky, Jacobs says unions can focus on campaigning, or negotiating with institutions. The problem is that the majority negotiation must be done with HR departments, who themselves have little to no say on policy.

“What we are seeing instead is a turn towards things like the People’s Tribunal”, says Jacobs. This involves a community coming together and collectively gathering evidence and working through solutions for change on their own terms, without the constraints of institutional management.

It seems fitting, as we meet in the People’s Palace, a beacon of education for all in London’s East End, to think about what that could look like. It’s about “generating an alternative mission statement”, says Jacobs, “and thinking about what the point of a university is”.

If quality teaching and quality research are what we truly value in our universities, casualisation of labour should be an urgent concern for all.
A change is a good as a move

Bespoke interior & soft furnishings designer Gaynor Hill talks to Lynne McGowan

W indows need dressing up like people do and the same goes for sofas, chairs, beds and all manner of soft furnishing that require a new luxury look from time to time. Fabrics become jaded just like people do, they droop looking dreary and drab or simply fall out of fashion. One sure way to completely enhance the home instead of changing it is to go window-shopping, literally.

As someone who has been in the business since 1985 and freshened up or completed the look to spanking new interiors for clients from Formula 1 entrepreneurs to Vogue fashion editors, not to mention the famous, fanciful and finicky in between, Gaynor is highly respected and always in demand.

Q. What brought you to the world of interiors and fine fabrics?
A. After doing Textile Design at Chelsea School of Art, inspired by Colefax & Fowler and Nina Campbell designs I made some cushions using pieces of floral chinz and old silk velvets. In those days festoon blinds were becoming popular and I made lots using fabrics from silk taffeta to antique brocade. It was also the time of swags and tails, frills, pleats and bound edges everywhere, everything had to be hand sewn so calico patterns were made for all the different shapes. Doing a couple of dining rooms where plenty of guests visited helped and my name started to be passed around, all my work has been by word of mouth recommendation. I also learned how to do fabric walling, again very popular at the time, and this work took me to New York, Long Island and Palm Beach.

Q. What special qualities are needed to cater for your sort of high-end client?
A. My clients require plenty of time and personal attention. It’s not good to rush ideas, they can change and evolve and mistakes with fabric can be expensive. I always ensure clients have large samples so they are completely happy with the end result.

Q. What is the most usual reason people seek your service?
A. I would say, it’s clients who are redecorating a room, apartment or the whole house but don’t necessarily want to change everything so they don’t need an interior designer who will want to do that. Usually, they have had several homes and so have a good idea of what they want, my focus is on fabrics so perhaps just some furniture recovering and a change of window treatment.

Q. You offer a customised service, what does that entail?
A. Many of my clients already have a good idea of what they want and it’s not something you can buy in a shop or even the quality department stores. Ideas can always be adapted or tweaked to suit different situations, they know I can do that where possible and arrive at the best solution they are happy with. I have a great team of skilled workers and we can solve most problems.

Q. Many clients return to you again and again, why is that?
A. I usually get along with my clients well and develop a connected relationship, they know I am reliable and they will be pleased with the results. When it’s time to move or update, they call me.

Q. Traditional or Contemporary?
A. Layers always work well, especially in London where there are privacy issues as well as a luxurious interior finish required. It’s a traditional window treatment concept but can have a smart new look depending upon the choice of fabrics. At the moment I’m working mostly with contemporary interiors but then again I have just finished a decorating a traditional four-poster bed. It depends on the client and I am quite happy to work in either style.

Q. What are your favourite fabrics?
A. Silks and velvets look lovely when they’re made up – but can be tricky to work with, the same with most linens. At the moment for curtains I am enjoying using Fox Linton ‘Lambwood’ which has a great colour range and hangs well. I like to work with Zimmer + Rohde fabrics for upholstery and I also use Ian Mankin fabrics when possible as they are all produced in the UK and are good value. Abbott & Boyd also have a good, wide range of fabrics.

Q. Do you have any tips for re-vamping an interior without spending a fortune?
A. If you want a change from curtains, Roman Blinds use much less fabric than curtains so are good for a budget. Visit fabric show rooms and collect plenty of samples to see how they look in your home, in daylight and evening light. Live with them for a few days. Add a trimming or lay on a braid to existing curtains, as trimmings seem to be having a revival. Have a tired piece of furniture recovered in something plain then add a collection of new cushions to introduce different colours. Or cover a small chair in a bold pattern or hue and remember to change lamp shades as old shades can be very dated. New artwork and mirrors on the walls can give a room an uplift and in the bedroom a new headboard and bed cover will make all the difference.

Q. Cushion shapes change as regularly as handbags, what’s trending now?
A. The good thing about cushion covers is that they can easily be changed and at the moment fearny greens and heathery pinks would be a good colour palette to use. Simple large squares, no piping, different fabrics front and back or two tones of the same fabric front and back. Feature cushions are still popular and there are some beautiful fabrics to use. The fabric shows Decorex at Syon Park and Focus at Chelsea Harbour start on September 17-20th and there are public days, so go along and get inspired.

Q. Not to name any names but tell us a funny story?
A. There isn’t one, curtains are a serious business!

www.gaynorhilldesign.com
www.decorex.com www.dcch.co.uk
The London office of AMH Interiors is a hive of activity following the announcement that Ann Marie Hess has been shortlisted as one of the finalists of the upcoming Society of British Interior Design Awards, one of the most prestigious events for the Interior Design world. She is taking this all in her stride, preferring to focus on the intricate details of the lighting plan of a media suite currently being built in one of her latest projects.

We are meeting to discuss the awards which will be held at The Dorchester Hotel later this month, and to get an insight into how this design visionary with offices in London and the USA views such an accolade.

Ann Marie Hess is a statuesque brunette with piercing green eyes; she is however quite reserved and talks quietly as all around her is going into meltdown. It is a rather off-putting trait, but of course draws you in to really listen to the point she is making. I begin by asking how this elegant woman before me squares up to the harsh and noisy world of a construction site, and I am immediately cut down to size. “Walking onto a project is key for me,” she says “it is that point where I start to understand what the space is, and what it could be; it is where the creativity begins. I am never happier than when walls are coming down, and the transformation begins; connecting with the space is paramount.”

Hess always had a wanderlust; an acute need to explore the world soaking up different cultures, and following her studies in New York, she took off around the world. Her schedule of travelling is challenging, but she clearly manages to keep her workload flowing wherever she happens to be, which typically is more likely to be in a departure lounge than anywhere else. “Even if I am working on a client’s brief, I will take in the immediate surroundings”, and as she says this she whips out her laptop to illustrate the point, bringing up a fabulous selection of tiles from Italy (www.projectitaliasrl.com) which could be used alongside a selection of exquisite wallpapers (www.cole-and-son.com) for our meeting room’s bathroom. “When you are in that zone of creativity, of improving a work or home space, there is nothing to beat it, and the process simply takes on a life of its own.”

Hess’s extensive travels have clearly helped to shape a design philosophy which is now intrinsic in each commission. She has a particular love of The East, and talks with great authority of the ideals behind many of the features which are apparent in her work, as represented by the juxtaposition of elements like fire and water “I love bringing the purity of nature into a cutting edge contemporary scheme, not necessarily to soften it, but to highlight the marriage of the two entities. Mother Nature surely has to be the best designer of us all?”

On the subject of the approaching awards, Ann Marie is much more reticent, “Of course I am incredibly proud to be considered, but also rather humbled to be placed alongside an exceptional group of talented people within the SBID. What Vanessa Brady has achieved within that organisation is amazing. However the one thing we all share in common, is an end goal of creativity, which is why I enjoy the chance to come together and celebrate our work across the board. For all of us though, I think the ultimate result is knowing that we have brought about the very best design scheme for our client; being given the opportunity to enhance their world is what fires me up.”

Having worked extensively around the world, I ask Ann Marie for a particular highlight “Dubai was pretty fun. We had an amazing team out there, and the energy was infectious; everything came together perfectly, and as a designer, whatever I needed was at my fingertips. But if you are asking where I get inspired every day, nowhere beats London; I relish the formality and the diversity there. I always hate leaving.”

And on that note, Ann Marie’s driver calls to whisk her away. As she goes, I cannot erase the mental picture of this incredibly elegant lady navigating her way around dusty concrete and scaffolding in her exquisite Jimmy Choos, leaving a calm serenity in her wake.

Best of luck at the awards!
Cyclinteriors
By Owen Fulda

Cyclists are taking over. MAMILS (Middle Aged Men In Lycra) now dominate the morning commute cityscape, as ever more of us vie to escape packed, overpriced trains. To some, bicycles are particularly aesthetically pleasing, but you don’t have to adore life on two wheels to consider incorporating bikes into your interior design.

If you already store a bicycle or two in the home, they can be a bit of a nuisance unless you have a dedicated storage space for them. Increasingly in urban homes, where space is of the essence, people are utilising the bicycle a part of the interior design itself. Allow your imagination to free wheel.

Rather than bikes creating assault courses in hallways, being relegated to the shed or the garage, Design Studio Quarterre’s range of stands are effective and highly aesthetic storage solutions designed to seamlessly and elegantly integrate cycling with work or home environments. Visit www.quarterrestudio.com for more information.

Quarterre launched their first range of Furniture For Bikes recently, and they can be seen at the cult East London cyclists’ hub, the London Design Festival. Designed to support everyday life on two wheels, these premium pieces unite cycling culture with interior design.

Driven by personal passions for cycling, the designers sought to address the challenges of owning a bike in an urban environment.

Even if your bikes are stored outside of the living accommodation why not wall mount a bicycle as a sculpture in its own right? If that is a bit too much for your taste, bicycles still make great subjects for more traditional artwork. Even a model or a stylised photograph can unify a room if you have given it a bicycle based theme.

Old bicycles deserve a new lease of life too. Upcycled cycles if you will! A spray paint job on a bike that is no longer of any use, will make it a great addition to a garden and can act as an interesting feature, especially if you are waiting for planting to mature in a particular area.

Another bright idea is to offer an old bicycle a second life as a piece of furniture. Why not use one from a junkyard and convert it into a slim line table or a pedestal for a hand wash basin?

But you needn’t be a Tour de France expert, or even regular visitor to your local velodrome to consider adding some vintage bicycle parts to your living room as an interesting focal point. Bicycle-themed artwork can fit with almost any style. Explore some 1960s Italian cycling posters. A mountainbiking image from an aerial view can add a nature-inspired touch to a contemporary space.

Designer Andrew Gregg manipulates bike parts to create interesting bespoke table and chair designs. Whilst the wheels of the bikes can create a lovely effect there are also other elements of a bicycle which can be up-cycled. Some lovely examples of this include a chandelier made from bike chains and this lamp made from some of the gears and the body of the bicycle.

Check out his website www.bikefurniture.com.
Soul of a Nation
Tate Modern
Until 22 October 2017
Admission £15
tate.org.uk

This show has drama, anger, wit, pride, energy and diversity, all united under the big, black umbrella of art...

The recently-released film *Detroit* (reviewed by Max Feldman on p.48) is a dramatisation of an unsavoury slice of American pie, which centred around the riots in July 1967, and a subsequent unlawful killing of innocent black youths in the Algiers Motel. That was 50 years ago. It still goes on. The United States of America should hang its collective white head in shame. Black youths are still being gunned down by racist law enforcement officers, including an unarmed 18-year-old in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014, a 22-year-old killed in his car in New Orleans in 2016, and a 15-year-old shot down in a suburb in Dallas, Texas in May of this year. According to one database, at least 1,092 people were killed by police in the US in 2016. Of that total, nearly a quarter were African Americans, although the group only accounts for roughly 12 percent of the total US population, with the irrefutable fact that black men are six times as likely to be incarcerated as white men. No officers were convicted.

Martin Luther King wanted a non-violent solution to this ingrained bigotry through the Civil Rights Movement, but his cause was hijacked by a more militant faction, known as Black Power, and subsequently the Black Panthers.

Starting with the March on Washington in 1963, during which King gave his heart-swelling and intoxicating ‘I have a dream speech’, this exhibition traces the growth and development of twenty years of black American art and struggle against racial inequality. There are some arresting images; terrific black and white photographs, paintings, posters, sculpture, textiles, film and newspaper clippings, including the inauguration of an artists’ collective called the Spiral Group. Working only in black and white, painter Norman Lewis came up with some chilling images, one of which only takes shape out of the darkness and transforms into a group of white-hooded Klu-Klux-Klansmen, with burning torches and blazing crucifixes. Portraitist Barkley L Hendricks has three large canvases, the first of a life-size black man (himself?) in Ray-Bans, afro haircut and a Superman tee-shirt, entitled *Iron for My Man Superman (Superman Never Saved any Black People – Bobby Seale).* The second is a nude self-portrait, save for a jaunty white cap, matching tennis shoes and socks, and jewellery, called *Brilliantly Endowed*, which does not quite measure the stereotype-holding beliefs about black male sexuality. The third is *What’s Going On*, named after Marvin Gaye’s album of the same name, features four cool dudes in Persil-white suits with a naked black lady in their midst.

One dramatic work in this dynamic exhibition is the reconstruction by Dara Chandler of a bullet-ridden green door through which police peppered a young Black Panther activist named Fred Hampton in his Chicago apartment in 1969. Melvin Edwards has welded together hooks, bolts, chains, gears, nails, padlocks, spikes and wrenches into wall-hanging, African mask-size sculptures, called *Lynch Fragments* that resonate deeply with the shackles and manacles of the enslaved victims, not only of slavery, but also of the Klan Lynch-mobs. There are photographs in the exhibition featuring nooses hanging from trees. Noah Purifoy’s work comprises charred fragments of wood, plaster, paint and signage cobbled together to echo the desperate violence and destruction following the Watts riots of 1965. The way artists engaged with street activism is explored through posters and newspapers, such as the work of the Black Panther Party’s Culture Minister Emory Douglas, who declared ‘The ghetto itself is the gallery’. The exhibition uses archive photographs and documentary material to illustrate the mural movement, including the *Wall of Respect* in Chicago and the *Smokehouse* wall paintings in Harlem. Black Feminism is also touched on, with contributions from Betye Saar, much influenced by Joseph Cornell, whose iconic *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima,* utilises a smiling Mammy in polka-dot headscarf as a notebook holder. She also has a metronome with the charred body of a man attached to the pendulum, and a press cutting about a black man being lynched for refusing to dance to a white man’s tune. It is called *I’ve Got Rhythm.* It is gruesome and compelling at the same time. Ninety-two year-old Saar also confesses to being influenced by Martin Puryear’s sculpture, whose extraordinary carved wood *Self*’s like a giant dorsal fin rising out of the wooden boards of Tate Modern.

This show has drama, anger, wit, pride, energy and diversity, all united under the big, black umbrella of art and how black America struggled to raise its voice above the clamour of hatred, atrocity and bigotry, which has been fermenting for many decades before, and is still in evidence today.

Don Grant
Can Graphic Design Save Your Life?

Wellcome Collection
Until 14 January 2018
Admission free
wellcomecollection.org

Well, can it? A graphic designer might say, ‘I make a living.’ In terms of persuasive, informative, instructive and empowering graphics, this exhibition shows the relationship between healthcare and how the role of graphic design communicates the various messages it wishes to convey.

From the outset of this spacious exhibition, it has to be said that its own graphic panels, printed, as they are, in gloss ink, are difficult to read at the best of times, and illegible at others, depending on the lighting.

The first graphics one sees are the three red-on-white emblems of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, and an additional neutral protection symbol which had been under discussion for a number of years at the UN, called the Red Crystal (previously referred to as the Red Lozenge or Red Diamond).

The show starts with Raymond Loewy’s design for Lucky Strike cigarettes; a classic and iconic image in its own right. Having designed the Coca-Cola bottle and the Shell Oil logo, he transformed the pack into a symbol of the American soldier’s cigarette of choice, and not just because they were enfolded into the army rations. In 1996, Alan Kitchen, a British typographic designer, was invited to take part in the launch of Gitanes Blondes, and came up with new packaging, which aligned the brand with culture and the arts. Then we are shown the Silk Cut campaign devised by Paul Arden for Saatchis, but no mention of the groundbreaking Benson and Hedges series of surreal ads from CDP, which surely was the precursor to the ‘purple haze’?

So, from persuasion, we move to dissuasion, with an anti-smoking cartoon shown alongside packets of fags portraying skulls and cancerous growths, when the tide finally turned, through government legislation, against smoking, it was still defended by the powerful tobacco industry, which brings in billions in taxes.

Education is a strong suit played in this exhibition, from 16th century dissection guides for surgeons, to the digital apps available today for medical students, taking in the pop-up books, developed by David Pelham at Penguin Books in the 1960s. In the world of medication, giant pharmaceutical companies competed on the world’s stage for customers and profit. Bayer and Geigy are cited as pioneering the ‘international style’ associated with visual simplicity, minimalism and clean, clean graphics. Basically, this exhibition comprises very small objects in large vitrines, but there are some larger exhibits, such as the seminal Don’t Die of Ignorance commercial, made by Nick Roeg and narrated by John Hurt, which scared the living bejesus out of a generation. An anti-zika campaign in Brazil features bus stop poster sites that actually draw mosquitos into the billboard through the emission of CO2 and lactic acid, and then electrocute them, from a range of 2.5km radius. This is shown alongside Abram Games’ anti-malaria poster, and a hand-painted Ebola awareness mural displaying symptoms during the outbreak in West Africa in 2014.

The final chapter in this exhibition relates how design has empowered ordinary people to react to increase organ donation in a Scottish Kill Jill campaign, and a series of ads on Network Rail promoting the We Listen posters for the Samaritans. All in all a good, worthy, exhibition, that informs and educates, but does not titillate or amuse, ignoring a plethora of available material.

Don Grant
The Festival of Film at the Royal Albert Hall

Throughout its history Royal Albert Hall has established itself as more than just a concert venue, hosting everything from marathons to sci-fi conventions. It’s this willingness to step outside of the lines of what people might normally expect from a venue that sparked their annual Festival of Film, now onto its fourth year, which will be taking place this year between October 7th to November 3rd.

The main stage will play host to three major screenings that will be accompanied by full live symphonic orchestras where audiences can get their teeth into Spielberg’s Jaws (shark fans can also look beyond the stereotypes with a talk from the director of The Shark Trust), be enchanted by Disney’s Fantasia and drop in on The Addams Family. The hall will also play host to concerts celebrating the careers of Hollywood composers such as twelve time Grammy Winning composer James Horner (Braveheart, Titanic, Avatar) and James Newton Howard, who will personally conduct a curated selection of highlights from cherry picked from his three decade career accompanied by filmed interviews and stories.

Beyond the main stage however there is a whole host of events for the budding cineaste, from film showings in the Elgar Room which range from an exploration of the career of surrealistic auteur David Lynch to a look at some of the more seldom explored sides of Marilyn Monroe featuring a screening of the rarely shown film noir Clash By Night alongside the classic Some Like It Hot.

For those who like to get up from their cinema seats there will be all sorts of celebrations of cinema that can be done on your feet, from a movie soundtrack orientated silent disco to a prize filled film quiz and the comedians cinema club which will see comedians having to improvise their way through their recollections of famous films.

KCWToday recently spoke to Lucy Noble (the Hall’s Artistic and Commercial Director) about the festival and she placed the Film Festival in the context of the Hall’s refusal to take a boring and easy route, by subverting expectations and keeping the Hall right at the heart of London’s cultural life.

The Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair

London’s chicest, and largest, antiques and period design event, the Autumn 2017 Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair (3-8 October at Battersea Park London) has sailed in with a nautical tack. The Autumn Decorative Fair is a high point of the Design Season for interior decorators. With more than 160 exhibitors taking part, the Fair is at capacity, with an exciting selection of stands up on the Mezzanine to be discovered, in addition to those on the ground floor. New this Autumn is an early-opening for the eponymous brasserie, Megan’s Kitchen, allowing visitors the chance to come an hour before the Fair (from 11am Tuesday 3rd, and from 10am from Wednesday 4th through Sunday 8th October) for brunch or leisurely coffee before shopping.

New exhibitors at the Autumn 2017 Fair include McWhirter Antiques Ltd (Langton Street, London SW10), established for over 25 years, dealers in interesting and quirky furniture and works of art from the 18th century to the present day; Bleu Anglais (London, by appointment), with Chinese and Indigo folk textiles, and up on the Mezzanine, Inglis Hall Antiques (Heathfield, E. Sussex) with cabinet curiosities, unusual objects d’art and design, and Joseph Berry Interiors (Blanchard Collective & by appointment London) with unique pieces from lighting to taxidermy and furniture.

Expect to find dealers in traditional country house antiques, fine furniture, 20th century design, decorative and vernacular antiques making a strong show, plus a fascinating selection of quirky accessories and unusual objects for the decorator and collector.

Battersea Evolution
Battersea Park
London SW11 4NJ
From the 3rd-8th October
The Royal Parks of London
By Marian Maitland

Take a walk in the Park! London has eight Royal Parks all strongly associated with a rich, historical Heritage, National Events, Prime Ministers and Royalty. The Parks are famous for their nature reserves, sporting facilities, world class entertainments and excellent catering.

Ceremonial occasions have not changed with the passing years; Coronations, Trooping The Colour and other processions still take place along the Mall in St James’s Park. Government Buildings, Palaces, Memorials and Statues can be seen within and without the Parks, all reflecting their history.

London has more open green spaces than any other city this is especially noticeable in aerial views. The Royal Parks of London are all strongly associated with a rich, historical heritage and Royal Events. The Parks are used for duelling and other activities by soldiers.

In 1869 William III took up residence in Kensington Palace and constructed a driveway across its Southern border, known as the King’s Private Road, which later became known as ‘Rotten Row’, famous for horse riding today. It was the first road in London to be lit up at night; problems with highwaymen! The Road now winds through Hyde Park from the Serpentine to the Long Water by a bridge designed by Charles Bridgeman. The Serpentine was created at Victoria Gate with a fountain designed by Commissioner of Works, George Lansbury. It was immediately popular and a splendid restaurant was added later.

Another significant event in the Park was the first Victoria Cross Investiture in 1857. Queen Victoria decorated sixty-two men in the presence of Prince Albert and other members of the Royal Family. Also present was their future son-in-law Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia, later Emperor Frederick III.

In 1861 the Italian Water Garden was created at Victoria Gate with a fountain and summer house. Queen Anne’s alow cross, designed by Christopher Wren, was moved from Kensington Gardens to Hyde Park. The Lido was opened in 1930, designed by Commissioner of Works, George Lansbury. It was immediately popular and a splendid restaurant was added later.

Rock concerts in Hyde Park have been very popular several drawing huge crowds. The Park has hosted events featuring Pink Floyd, Roy Harper, Blind Faith, The Rolling Stones, Queen, British Live 8, U2 and Coldplay. Bob Geldof, Elton John, Madonna, Paul McCartney, Eric Clapton, Steve Winwood and such great names as these have all made appearances.

Neighbours sought a limit on the decibels reached and encores were banned. Freddie Mercury was threatened with arrest if he tried!

The Park hosted a Jubilee Exhibition in 1977 and a major Festival for the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in 2012. It has hosted Winter Wonderland, a spectacular winter themed Festival since 2007 which has attracted 14 million visitors.

Hyde Park is so entertaining. Speakers’ Corner still happens on Sundays, where over the years, many have aired their views from platforms, often, quite rightly being heckled! Tourists are fascinated by the freedom of speech. The Chartists, the Reform League, Suffragettes and Stop the War have all been active there.

Bands played in the Park for the Opening Ceremony of the 2012 Summer Olympics and the Park hosted the Triathlon and the ITU World Triathlon Grand Final.

Tragedy struck in 1982 when the Park was bombed by two devices linked to the Irish Provisional Army which killed eight members of the Household cavalry and Royal Green Jackets and also seven horses. The 7th July Memorial marks this outrage.

Statues, sculptures and memorials are ubiquitous in Hyde Park. For example, the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial, London Holocaust Memorial. Statues include Still Water, Jolly Baby Family and Vroom Vroom! There are sculptures by Epstein and his Memorial to the author, William Henry Hudson, featuring his character ‘Rimes’ which caused quite a stir on arrival!

I love Parks; they have an aura of relaxation and community spirit. Seats for the elderly, swings for children, bread for ducks. One and all they come for enjoyment surrounded by history and culture.
Arts & Culture

Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity.
Until 29th October. 2017
Leighton House.

This Exhibition, the largest for Sir Lawrence Tadema-Alma in London since 1913, is organised by the Fries Museum, Leeuwarden, Netherlands; Alma-Tadema’s home town. It was earlier displayed at the Belvedere, Vienna and comprises over a hundred works by the Artist and his daughter, Anna, together with furniture and photographs.

The Exhibition is curated by D. Robins with Peter Tripi and is partly sponsored by Strutt and Parker and Christie’s International Real Estate. The venue is perfect and the Exhibition is displayed throughout the house. Lord Leighton and Alma-Tadema were close friends and the Alma-Tadema family were frequent visitors at his home Leighton House.

Important works by Alma-Tadema reflect his enthusiasm for representing scenes of domestic life and transposing them into antiquity. He relates them to domesticity in his own two studio homes in St. Johns Wood. He gave people an insight into how life looked in antiquity and these images were much used as references in films and plays. e.g Ridley Scott’s film, Gladiator in 2000 and Cecil. B. De Mille’s The Ten Commandments which used The Finding of Moses. Alma-Tadema was always popular with film producers.

He loved all things Roman, temples, palaces, Roman maidens and Archaeology. His work reveals his depth of feeling for the past, but he was ever mindful that his paintings would sell easily. He often reworked motifs which the Exhibition has displayed together and this works well. His true genre was ‘History Painting’ which was a recognised and acceptable art form.

Alma Tadema was born in 1836 in a small village outside Leeuwarden, Netherlands, but educated in the city until he dropped out to become an artist. His first wife and son having died, he moved to London in 1870 where he was well received and made his name. He created a sumptuous London studio with his second wife, Laura, which rivalled that of Lord Leighton. He was knighted by Queen Victoria.

His popularity eventually dwindled and John Ruskin said of him, “He was the worst painter of the 19th century.”

Alma-Tadema died in 1912.

We see in the Exhibition that early works were confused in style. However, following a visit to Pompeii in 1863, he found his niche. He did not portray philosophers or heroes or any mythological figures in his paintings, but just ordinary people. The Victorians of the time could connect themselves to these scenes.

The Roses of Heliogabalus (1888) from the Simon Perez Collection, portrays an Emperor who drowned his dinner guests in a sea of rose petals. (We have all probably felt like doing that on occasion!) Alma-Tadema revelled in painting this scene. Look at the expressions on the faces of the Emperor and his entourage. The victims represent young Victorian ladies of the day. Remember the British Empire flourished during the Victorian era.

If the past fascinates you and women draped, in all sizes appeal, you will appreciate Alma Tadema’s work. Many have done so for a long period. ‘History Painting’ is a valuable and informative art form and in Alma-Tadema’s work the public is made aware of an idealised, classical world.

Marian Maitland.

Leighton House
12 Holland Park Road
W14 8LZ
museums@rbkc.gov.uk
The Royal Ballet School Performance...  
A triumph for British Dance!

Every year there is a sense of excitement from parents, ballet fans and the great and the good from the international dance scene when the curtain rises on the Royal Ballet School’s annual showcase performance at The Royal Opera House at Covent Garden. This year was no exception and for good reason. For years the performance is seen as a barometer for people to gauge how Britain’s doing on the world stage of dance. Much of the discussion at the interval and around the stage door after the performance is whether it was a vintage year and who are the ones to watch in the future!

Dame Ninette de Valois founded The Sadler’s Royal Ballet renamed The Royal Ballet by Royal Charter in 1956. Madam, as de Valois became fondly known, at the outset believed in order to have a great company one had to have a great school. It was Madam’s vision and sheer tenacity and determination that created The Royal Ballet, The Birmingham Royal Ballet and The Royal Ballet School. The School was founded in 1926 by Madam as the Academy of Choreographic Art. It is now the official school of both Royal Companies. Many graduates will join dance companies around the globe every year, so it is a truly international centre of excellence in classical ballet training.

The programme started with Fokine’s romantic ballet Le Sylphide. A fitting choice as Alicia Markova, one of Britain’s most famous international ballerinas, learnt the ballet from Fokine himself whilst with the Ballet Russes and performed it throughout her career. A good choice for the students as the corps de ballet have to dance in large groups completely in unison in the romantic style that is performed less and less these days by professional companies, bar Giselle, Le Sylphide and Coppelia. The dancers performed the romantic style with assurance including the lead Principals Sadie Maeda, Nudia Maillova-Barley, Ellie Young and Haoiang Feng. Erik Bruhn’s Here We Come showed off the talents of the younger White Lodge Lower School boys to good effect. The twelve sailors danced the drilled routines with a happy-go-lucky exuberance and flair. The lines and fleeting footprint of the Danish training engaged the audience with Morton Gould’s music in an uplifting display of virtuosity though somewhat camp at times! Daischi Ikakashi, dazzled the audience with his razor sharp pirouettes and entrechats; definitely a talent and one to watch out for in the future!

Jonathan Watkins, a former pupil, created a contemporary piece called Outwards with music by Benjamin Ellin. Inspired by the process of training to be a professional dancer Watkins had the students weave around the stage in passing patterns and clusters with lifts depicting the journey onwards to their future. A decent piece but soon to be forgotten as the dancers progress!

Yu Kurihara, Amelia Townsend, Eli Gruska and Harrison Lee, gave an assured performance of Frederick Ashton’s Swan Lake Act 3 Pas de Quatre. The tricky choreography was performed with speed and style, however some of the musical accents of the steps were at odds with Ashton’s original choreography. The first half ended with an edge of poignancy. The second half of the programme started with August Bournonville’s The Conservatory (The Dancing School) which is a fiendishly difficult piece in the Danish style of dance. It’s fitting that students should perform the ballet as it is called The Dancing School and it is exactly what it says on the tin. However, the demanding batterie and adagio turns a la seconde will challenge the most seasoned of professionals. The cast did well considering the challenges of the ballet and the particular Danish style. The lead Pas de Trois gave an admirable and accomplished performance; Emily Hoff, Ginevra Zambon and Brayden Gallucci. Another talent to watch in the future, Lucy Wales, caught the eye as having a star quality and technique with her stunning long limbs.

A highlight of the programme was Hans Van Manen’s Solo created in 1997. Three strong and vibrant male dancers, Jerome Barnes, Joshua Junker and Augustus Payne, come on stage in quick succession with speedy, darting, turns and leaps with their own take on Van Manen’s gestures to tease the audience and fellow dancers with a sense of ‘anything you can do I can do better’. A fabulous witty and engaging piece... perfect to bring a light touch for any gala to showcase a galaxy of stars... it was cosmic!

Another striking piece was next up called See Blue Through by Didy Veldman. The exquisitely engaging piece for two dancers, Katherina Nikesliki and Harris Bell, was created for Ballet Gulbenkian in 2001 for seven dancers. This piece deserves another airing by a professional company such as English National Ballet.

Kenneth MacMillan’s Concerto with music by Shostakovich is ideal for a school performance. The students danced with confidence and enjoyment. Attention to detail with the technique of classical line was very much in evidence. The slow second movement pas de deux saw a polished performance by Yu Hang and Nicholas Landon. Rodrigo Pinto as one of the soloists also caught the eye as a neo-classical dancer of the future. The performance ended with the crescendo of the now famous Défilé originally conceived by the legendary director Gilene Stock and choreographed by her artistic staff. Maybe not a vintage year for outstanding stars of the future. 23 Graduate students gained contracts with: The Royal Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet, English National Ballet, Scottish Ballet, Houston and Orland Ballet, Semperoper Ballett, Bayerische Staatsballet, Dutch National Ballet, Ballet Ireland and Ballet Nacional de Uruguay.

It was definitely a very good year for the school's current director Christopher Powney and his staff.
London is ready to shake, Rattle and roll
By Geoff Cowart

Who said classical music was boring? Expect fireworks to welcome the arrival of Sir Simon Rattle as he takes up his new post as music director of the London Symphony Orchestra this week (14 September).

It’s great news for the LSO which could do with his steady hand after years of gigging conductors jetting in and out. (More about Valery Gergiev later…) But it’s also great news for the capital as Rattle’s arrival ushers in the mad dash to fill it. No one expects anything else complete with daring programmes fit to fill it. No one expects anything else but success from his new posting in London, even if he’s already expressed his worries about the effects of Brexit on the orchestra and the wider UK classical music scene in an uncharacteristically frank manner. Buckle up and enjoy the ride.

Rattle’s return kicks off 11 days of special concerts, events and installations, running at the Barbican Centre, LSO St Luke’s and the Guildhall School’s Milton Court Concert Hall, until 24 September. His first concert at the Barbican on 14 September will feature an all-British programme of forward-looking music from contemporary composers Thomas Adès, Harrison Birtwistle and Oliver Knussen, along with the world premiere of Helen Grime’s Fanfare. Good luck getting tickets. But you can always catch the action as it’s beamed onto a massive cinema screen in the Barbican’s sculpture court. You can catch the last concert on Sunday 24 September from the comfort of your own home, as it will be streamed live by the LSO on YouTube.

Looking forward to his new challenge Sir Simon Rattle told us: “It is a huge moment in my life to be able to return to the UK and work with the orchestra I love. My ambition is to open up the electrifying experience of music and share my passion for music making with as many people as possible, whatever their age or whatever their background.”

For more details visit: lso.co.uk/thisisrattle

Wigmore Hall plays it Faust and Schiff

Two stars will light up the Autumn season at Wigmore Hall by playing a series of recitals. Hungarian pianist Sir András Schiff returns for two nights of Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Brahms and Bach on Saturday 23 September and Tuesday 26 September. Both sold out immediately. However, tickets are still available for his evening of Schubert Lieder on Thursday 28 September as he accompanies highly-rated Dutch baritone Robert Holl. Snap up tickets (£15-£50) while they last. Meanwhile, all eyes will be on violinist Isabelle Faust as she brings a variety of Mozart sonatas, which she recently recorded for label Harmonia Mundi, to the stage with fortepiano player Alexander Melkinov. She performs twice on Sunday 7 October (11.30am and 7.30pm) with tickets from £15-£37. But it’s her Sunday 8 October coffee morning recital that is the hot ticket, priced at just £15, including a programme and your choice of coffee, sherry or juice.

Rite of passage for Kensington Symphony Orchestra

Great minds are thinking alike at the Kensington Symphony Orchestra. Because while Gergiev is whipping his Russian comrades into a frenzy at Cadogan Hall, it will also be tackling Stravinsky at St John’s Smith Square on Monday 9 October. The orchestra, led by conductor Russell Keable, will perform the riotous Stravinsky favourite The Rite of Spring, alongside Strauss’ Till Eulenspiegel, Bartók’s Out of Doors and Joseph Phibbs’ Rivers To The Sea.

Full details at: www.wigmore-hall.org.uk
Where did you go on your holiday?

S
ome people head for the beach, some for the hills and some to discover cities. If you opt for a city, what makes you choose one above another? Architectural tourism took off in a big, but aristocratic way in the 18th century with the Grand Tour. The Acropolis, Colosseum, Pyramids, the Duomo, St Peter’s. Some choose the Ancient world, some Renaissance and now, some more modern. Think of a city and picture its Icon.

Paris, the Eiffel Tower is the World’s most identifiable city icon. Built for the 1889 Exposition Universelle to celebrate the centennial of the French Revolution. The foregone winner of a competition, it was supposed to be demolished after 20 years. There was considerable controversy; it was alleged that it would overshadow the historic monuments of Paris. The opposition was overruled by the French President and Minister of Trade.

Nearly 1.9 million visitors had paid to experience the elevated views of Paris by the end of the Exposition. A century later, nearly 1.9 million visitors had paid to enjoy those views. So what makes an icon such a people magnet? The Image, and more recently, the Experience. How can such extravagant ventures be funded?

The Statue of Liberty, NYC’s definitive icon, was a gift in 1876 from the French, in honour of the centennial of the Declaration of Independence. It was funded by public donation in France and the USA. When the Americans were not giving enough, the ingenious Joseph Pulitzer, in his newspaper The World, criticised the wealthy for not getting behind the project and then the dollars rolled in. The completed head and shoulders of the giant sculpture were displayed in France to encourage donations. The Statue of Liberty was the first sculpture of that scale that people could experience by climbing inside.

Architecture Competitions have proved the creative springboard for many urban icons. Jorn Utzon’s stunning image of sails in Sydney Harbour caught the imagination and won. When the Basque authorities were considering regeneration of their region in North East Spain, they approached the Guggenheim Foundation. The Foundation held an invited competition for concept designs. Frank Gehry’s huge free flowing ribbons of titanium wrapping around a soaring glass atrium was selected, built and put Bilbao on the international tourist map. A giant sculpture to explore contemporary art, whilst experiencing the drama, light and movement of the expressionistic spaces embodied in the architectural idea.

In 1993, a competition was launched for a new London landmark to celebrate the millennium. Marks & Barfield came up with an idea for a continuously revolving wheel with walk-in pods as an effortless way to lift people up and over London. It didn’t win the competition, nobody did. The judges didn’t consider any submissions worthy. Stubborn and entrepreneurial, the young architects pursued their dream, raising major sponsorship, battling through the interminable planning processes. Now it’s there, a key new iconic image for London and major tourist attraction. Just like the Eiffel Tower, on a twenty-year lease.

The New York High Line was created out of a redundant elevated freight rail track that was threatened with demolition. A community of residents fought for its preservation and raised the money to create a pedestrian linear urban park in the down at heel lower West Side meat packing district. The tracks have been acquired and developed in phases. The first 2 phases were only completed in 2014 and the 3rd is just beginning. 90% of the funding has been raised from private sources and it is maintained by NY Parks Dept. Not only is it a relaxing place to enjoy a different perspective on the Big Apple but it has brought huge investment, employment and enjoyment. It is one of NYC’s top tourist attractions and half its visitors are New Yorkers.

In London, the Garden Bridge project has been axed because of lack of support from the Mayor. The issue being over guaranteeing funds for long term maintenance. Elements of the press report the story as stopping a waste of public money. To others, the cancellation of the Garden Bridge project is a lost opportunity and a sad symbol of loss of confidence in our great city. Is it not the case, that The Garden Bridge would attract more tourism and income than its cost? Might it be a symbol of optimism and an amenity for Londoners? Great cities need constant re-invention and new icons. What is your view?
Logan Lucky
Director: Steven Soderbergh
Running Time: 119 Minutes

In Ocean’s 11 and its sequels, Steven Soderbergh made the business of robbery seem like a multifaceted lark: part boys’ club, part performance space, part showcase for the pleasures of improbably smooth professionalism. The heists that Danny Ocean and his crew pulled off were supposedly motivated by revenge or desperation, but the money itself always seemed secondary at best; almost gauche, in the world of the movie, to fully acknowledge.

After a four-year break from film directing, and a decade away from the heist genre, Soderbergh has returned with Logan Lucky, which features dialogue referring to the hillbilly heistng of Ocean’s 7–11 before any smartass critics have a chance to put it in their headlines. It shares with the Ocean’s pictures an intricate plan to rob a heavily trafficked institution, here the Charlotte Motor Speedway in North Carolina, rather than a glitzy casino, but focuses on characters significantly less well-heeled. Jimmy Logan (late-period Soderbergh muse Channing Tatum); his brother, Clyde (Adam Driver); and their sister, Mellie (Riley Keough) don’t have much money. They also have what Clyde has determined to be a family curse of bad luck.

Their bad run includes Clyde’s stint in Iraq that left him with a prosthetic arm and Jimmy’s high school football injury that leads to his firing from a job heading a heavily trafficked institution, here the Charlotte Motor Speedway in North Carolina, rather than a glitzy casino, but focuses on characters significantly less well-heeled. Jimmy Logan (late-period Soderbergh muse Channing Tatum); his brother, Clyde (Adam Driver); and their sister, Mellie (Riley Keough) don’t have much money. They also have what Clyde has determined to be a family curse of bad luck.

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The plan involves the facility’s vast network of pneumatic tubes; that much is clear from the outset. As a heist picture, Logan Lucky knows just how often to alternate straight exposition with cagey withholding. The full robbery blueprint is revealed slowly; new details are still twisting the narrative even after the big heist day has passed, perfect for Soderbergh’s control-freak tendencies (once again, he shoots and edits himself). The snappy script by unknown (and possibly pseudonymous) newcomer Rebecca Blunt offers some Coen brothers-like dialogue, which Soderbergh complements with a precise camera movement, he shows real warmth toward his characters here. The whole Logan family is treated with an uncaring systemic kind, coming out of the way of making a movie look like it simply couldn’t afford a professional cinematographer. Regrettably this means that the film looks flat and ugly in spots; but then its subject is ugly, too. Still, one can’t help but think what the Bigelow of old (or, baring that, the more dramatic lensing of Greig Fraser, Zero Dark Thirty’s cinematographer) could have made of Detroit’s long, queasy centerpiece, in which Krauss and two other white cops torture the guests as Dismukes and a semi-sympathetic National Guard officer (Austin Hébert) look on. Detroit isn’t some kind of noble middle-brow social-issue turkey; it’s a very angry movie packed with ideas about the difference (or lack thereof) between racist threats and racist violence and the militarization of American policing, drawing the Vietnam War, the racism of law enforcement, and the country’s later forays into the Middle East into a continuum. There is even a reason to admire its dawdling moments. Among all the movies that wallow in the horrors of violence against America’s black citizenry, there are few that devote this much time to grief.
they had risen to rock's highest echelons. However even with Homme's penchant for playing fast and loose with his band's sound, when the news came out that he had hired Mark Ronson (of Uptown Funk fame) even his most devoted fans felt a shiver of unease; QOTSA had always managed to marry their diseased riffs to a stealth pop sensibility, but would the addition of the architect of Amy Winehouse's Valerie send the scales to tip over with a crash?

As it turns out this angle of Ronson-inspired pop sensibility is something of a bait and switch; the record wears Ronson's disco/soul influences like Buffalo Bill planned to wear his victims skin in Silence of The Lambs. The band explodes off the bat with album highlight Fist Don't Kill Me Now a cross between an hip wiggling dance beast and the end of the world, all drilling riffs and stuttering arpeggios that establishes the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next 48 minutes. Homme seems to have gotten a little bored with the psycho swagger which dominates the next...
Breakthrough in peanut allergy research

By Owen Fulda

Could a cure for peanut allergies be close? A new Australian study showed that 82 percent of participants saw their peanut allergies cured within the first 18 months, using a treatment which combines a common probiotic with peanut protein. Four years later, 80 percent of the participants still showed no signs of an allergy, and 70 percent passed a further test meant to confirm long-term peanut tolerance.

The research out of Murdoch Childrens Research Institute involved 48 children, some of whom were given an immunotherapy treatment and some of whom received a placebo. The children who still appeared to be cured four years later “had been eating peanut freely in their diet without having to follow any particular program of peanut intake,” according to Mimi Tang, the lead researcher.

Tang, an immunologist and allergist, combined a probiotic with a method known as peanut oral immunotherapy. This effectively means treating the allergy by inducing, enhancing, or suppressing an immune response. A high dose of the probiotic Lactobacillus rhamnosus was combined with peanut protein in increasing amounts. The probiotic is known to calm the immune system and reduce allergic reactions; the idea is to ‘reprogram’ the way the immune system reacts to peanut intake, Tang explains.

She hopes to have a product to market within five years, The Age reports. “This changes sufferers’ lives. They can now eat peanuts. Their lives change completely,” she said. “Our feedback is that these kids are now going to parties without worry.”

Lactobacillus rhamnosus, commonly found in small doses in yoghurt, is a known immune system modulator. It calms the immune system’s response to things it would normally react to, reducing the severity of allergic reactions. Paired together, the probiotic mix encourages the immune system to gradually tolerate larger and larger doses of peanut flour.

“Probiotics are very potent immune-modulating agents to shift the way the immune system responds. This particular probiotic has been shown in other situations to support tolerance-like responses. It creates an environment for the immune system to respond differently,” said Professor Tang.

In 2013 Professor Tang’s team administered the therapy to 28 allergic children. The amount of peanut flour was slowly increased over about 18 months, allowing the children to build up tolerance. At the end of the original trial, 82 percent of treated children were happily eating peanuts as part of a normal diet.

In a follow-up study, researchers went back and re-tested those children for peanut allergy to determine if the treatment had lasted. It had. They found that four years later, 80 percent of those cured children were still showing no signs of allergic reaction to eating peanuts. About 3 percent of babies are born with a peanut allergy. Peanuts are among the most-common causes of anaphylaxis with hospital admissions over the past decade increasing five-fold in children under four years of age.

Sperm counts plummeting in Western world says new study

By Owen Fulda

Sperm counts in the Western world have fallen by about 60% in the past 40 years according to claims made by a major new study. The research, based on data collected from almost 200 studies between 1974 and 2011, found that men in America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, have seen a 52.4% decrease in sperm concentration and a 59.3% decrease in their total sperm count.

Hagai Levine, the Israeli scientist who led the research, said his findings were “the canary in the coal mine” for male health. Levine also noted that sperm counts are not falling anywhere near as fast in the developing world. “I think health authorities should be concerned,” he said. “We have a huge public health problem that was under the radar until now.”

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“Probiotics are very potent immune-modulating agents to shift the way the immune system responds. This particular probiotic has been shown in other situations to support tolerance-like responses. It creates an environment for the immune system to respond differently,” said Professor Tang.

In 2013 Professor Tang’s team administered the therapy to 28 allergic children. The amount of peanut flour was slowly increased over about 18 months, allowing the children to build up tolerance. At the end of the original trial, 82 percent of treated children were happily eating peanuts as part of a normal diet.

In a follow-up study, researchers went back and re-tested those children for peanut allergy to determine if the treatment had lasted. It had. They found that four years later, 80 percent of those cured children were still showing no signs of allergic reaction to eating peanuts. About 3 percent of babies are born with a peanut allergy. Peanuts are among the most-common causes of anaphylaxis with hospital admissions over the past decade increasing five-fold in children under four years of age.
Research shows BCG vaccine longer-lasting than previously thought
By Owen Fulda

Previously thought to be effective for 10−15 years, a new case-control study found that if given in early teenage years (12−13), the Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccine protected over 50% of UK children against TB for at least 20 years, then waned. The research was led by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and funded by the National Institute for Health Research.

Although some studies in countries such as Brazil and Norway have indicated that the BCG might be effective for longer than first thought, this study provides the most robust evidence to date. The BCG vaccination, named after the French scientists who developed it, was first used in 1921, but in spite of the passage of time and the limited protection it offers, there is still no other.

With no new vaccine for TB imminently available, the researchers say their findings highlight the important role BCG is playing in preventing the spread of the disease, and provide an argument for uptake to be higher in areas where TB risk is high but vaccination coverage is low, such as parts of Central and Western Africa, East Asia and the Pacific; important new evidence for agencies like the World Health Organization (WHO) advising on vaccines.

TB is a major, and preventable, cause of death and disease which mainly affects the lungs. Two to three billion of the world’s population are infected with Mycobacterium tuberculosis, 10% of whom progress to clinical disease. In 2015 there were an estimated 10.4 million new cases of TB and 1.8 million deaths globally.

Scientists have invented a device the size of the pen which can detect cancer in a matter of seconds, aiding surgeons to remove “every last trace” of the disease. The device is capable of identifying cancerous cells 150 times faster than conventional technologies and was 96% accurate in tests. Researchers from the University of Texas say that the MasSpec Pen can help surgeons identify which tissue should be removed and which should be preserved, to help patients’ recover. Dr Livia Schiavinato Eberlin, who designed the study, said: “If you talk to cancer patients after surgery, one of the first things many will say is ‘I hope the surgeon got all the cancer out’.

“It’s just heartbreaking when that’s not the case. But our technology could vastly improve the odds that surgeons really do remove every last trace of cancer during surgery.”

The MasSpec Pen works by releasing a tiny droplet of water onto the target tissue, absorbing the chemicals inside of the cells. This droplet is then analysed by an instrument called a mass spectrometer, which can analyse thousands of molecules, and quickly deliver the results to doctors on a computer screen.

Currently, distinguishing between cancerous and normal tissues involves a slow and unreliable process called frozen section analysis. It can be risky because if a surgeon is unable to remove enough of the cancerous tissue it can allow tumours to regrow, but removing too much healthy tissue can also have detrimental effects.

These can be painful and could involve nerve damage in breast cancer patients, while thyroid patients could lose their ability to speak. The study has been published in the Science Translational Medicine journal, and the team hopes to start testing the device during surgeries next year.
The suicide rate in Britain falls

The suicide rate in Britain fell by 4.7% last year to the lowest level since 2011, with prevention work in England credited for the drop. The rate fell in England and Wales, although the rate in Wales is generally more erratic because of its smaller population, but increased slightly in Scotland. Overall there were 10.1 suicides per 100,000 in 2016, compared with 10.6 in the previous 12 months. It was the third consecutive year in which suicide rates have fallen in Britain as the number registered dropped by 202 or 3.4% to 5,688.

A spokeswoman for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said: “The recent decline in the suicide rate is likely to be due to the suicide prevention work in England by the government, the NHS, charities, the British Transport Police and others. The national suicide prevention strategy for England has included work to reduce the risk of suicide in high-risk groups. These include young and middle-aged men, people in the care of mental health services, and those in the criminal justice system.”

The proportion of male suicides was 75% last year, which has remained broadly consistent since the early 1990s. Middle-aged men remain the group at greatest risk. Citing research by the Samaritans, the ONS says relationship breakdown can contribute to suicide risk, which is greatest among divorced men, who are almost three times more likely to end their lives than men who are married or in a civil partnership.

The suicide rate for males fell by 3.1% to 15.7 per 100,000 males last year, while the rate for females decreased 9.4% to 4.8 per 100,000 after the latter hit a 10-year high in 2015. Inequality is another major risk factor, with people among the most deprived 10% of society more than twice as likely to kill themselves than the least deprived 10%, according to the ONS. Suicide rates generally fell between 1981 and 2007 before rising again to hit a peak of 11.1 deaths per 100,000 in 2013, although that was still substantially lower than the rates in the 80s and 90s.

The Samaritans chief executive, Ruth Sutherland, welcomed last year’s fall but said the number of deaths was still too high. “Every suicide is a tragedy leaving devastation in its wake,” she said. “These figures emphasise the urgency with which we as a society need to work together to prevent needless loss of life.”

The charity is campaigning for every area to have an effective suicide plan. The government’s latest progress report on preventing suicide in England, published in January, found that 95% of local authorities “have plans in place or in development”. Sutherland said: “Suicide is not inevitable, it’s preventable, and politicians, employers, health bodies and educators all have a role in identifying and supporting those most at risk.”

The chair of the Local Government Association’s community wellbeing board, Izzi Seccombe, said a commitment was needed to invest in local government to help tackle mental illness and prevent suicide. “Suicide is preventable, but it needs to be everybody’s business to work together to tackle this tragic loss of life,” she said.

The suicide rate in England dropped from 10.1 per 100,000 people in 2015 to 9.5 last year, a decrease the ONS described as statistically significant. In Wales it fell from 13.0 to 11.8, but in Scotland it rose from 14.0 to 15.0. The ONS says differences in Scotland’s coroner system and the way that suicides are certified and registered there make comparisons with the rest of Britain inappropriate.
Consultant surgeon Nick Boyle sees a lot of patients suffering with heartburn and reflux. It’s a common complaint, with up to thirty percent of people in the UK suffering the symptoms.

We may all be familiar with the misery of indigestion to some extent, but some of the symptoms of reflux are surprising. Even doctors may often misunderstand how it presents. Fifty percent of reflux sufferers in fact don’t complain from indigestion at all, and actually may have persistent cough, problems with their voice, and worsening asthma. Indeed some of Mr Boyle’s patients include barristers whose public-speaking has been adversely affected by these kinds of reflux symptoms, and even well-known actors.

“This might sound surprising,” says Mr Boyle. “But what this actually stems from is inhalation of the stomach acid. It can lead to lung damage.”

This is where the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to treatment comes in. With the complexities in how reflux disease can present, it’s crucial to work closely with other specialists like respiratory physicians to determine the correct course of action.

“We need to distinguish between gallstones and reflux, for example,” explains Mr Boyle. “Long-term use of antacids can cause IBS-like symptoms, as can a condition called Small Intestinal Bacterial Growth. So, we need to have gastroenterologists on hand.” ENT specialists are essential too in cases of dysphonia, the hoarseness of voice which affected Mr Boyle’s barrister patient.

The multi-disciplinary team at the Reflux Centre, plus access to the latest diagnostic tools, makes the Lister an efficient diagnostic and treatment centre.

“Another option is surgery, which historically hasn’t been a popular option. Pre-existing techniques have their own side-effects, and between thirty and forty percent of surgical patients can see themselves back on PPIs. The risks involved in surgery mean that only one percent of suitable candidates for surgery actually opt for surgical treatment.”

A neat and simple surgical solution is the LINX technique, of which Mr Boyle is the most experienced partitioner in the UK. He’s seen about 100 patients through the surgery, with some great outcomes.

“I particularly remember a young own who was a nurse. Her reflux was really interrupting her sleep which was particularly aggravating because of her shift work. She’d spent years on drugs.”

The technique involves using a ring of magnetic beads to essentially replace the stomach valve.

Whereas preexisting techniques use stomach tissue to shore up the stomach valve, they do not in fact address the loss of the valve’s ability to relax and contract.

With LINX, the magnets keep the valve closed, so acid can no longer pass through. When the patient swallows, the magnets open to allow food to pass through as normal.

The surgery requires minimal access through keyhole surgery, and is usually completed as a day case.

The procedure is relatively new, having only been offered in the UK over the last five years, but there’s a robust body of research with published outcomes. After five years, eighty-five percent of patients with LINX have not needed to return to PPI drugs.

The Lister is the first specialist centre dedicated to reflux London, and one of only the handful of places in the UK to offer LINX. “Nowhere else does this,” explains Mr Boyle. He’s been pleased with some great patient outcomes, including the young nurse who went on replace her reflux-induced sleepless nights with a much happier cause - a newborn baby.

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Health

Statin drugs may help to protect against breast cancer
By Max Feldman

Women with high cholesterol tend to have lower rates of breast cancer than those with lower levels, according to new research, and those who do get breast cancer are less likely to die from their disease. These findings suggest that statins (drugs that are commonly prescribed to lower cholesterol) may also protect against cancer, say the study authors.

The study was presented this week at the European Society of Cardiology Congress in Barcelona, and has not yet been published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

Previous studies that have looked at the link between cholesterol and cancer have been mixed; some have found that people with high cholesterol are more likely to get cancer, others have found they are less likely, and still others have found no association at all. The relationships also seem to vary based on the type of cancer.

The new study compared breast cancer rates and outcomes in more than 16,000 women with high cholesterol and an equal number of women with low cholesterol. All of the women were over 40, and none had a history of breast cancer at the start of that study. Over the next 14 years, however, 204 were diagnosed with the disease.

After adjusting for factors that could influence cancer or death rates (including age, ethnicity, and the top 10 causes of death) the researchers found that those with high cholesterol were 33% less likely to develop breast cancer than those without. And among those who did develop breast cancer, women with high cholesterol were 40% less likely to die over the 14-year period than women with lower levels. The reason behind this may have to do with medications the women were taking to lower their cholesterol: statin drugs.

Statin not only work to reduce cholesterol produced by the liver, they also reduce inflammation, a risk factor for both heart disease and cancer. A paper recently published in the New England Journal of Medicine suggests that other types of anti-inflammatory drugs may be protective against cancer; a finding that may help explain statin’s potential cancer-related benefits in this study as well. Other research also supports this theory. Studies on cell cultures in the lab, for example, have shown that statins can limit tumour growth. And population studies found that breast cancer patients who take statins are less likely to die from their disease or experience a recurrence after treatment.

The new study is the most conclusive and direct evidence yet to confirm the link between high cholesterol and breast cancer, say the study authors, but more research is still needed. They plan to conduct a clinical trial specifically designed to evaluate the protective effect of statins in patients who already have breast cancer. Until then, they say, it’s too early to recommend statins to prevent or slow the progression of breast cancer, lead researcher Dr. Paul Carter, a researcher at Aston University, said in a press release. Statins are currently only recommended for treating high cholesterol and to lower the risk of heart events, and not for treating cancer. For now, “patients with breast cancer who have high cholesterol, people at high risk of cardiovascular disease, and those with established cardiovascular disease should be given statins according to current guidelines.”

Ultrasound triggers new wave pain relief

In the fight against the increasing public health threat of opioid dependency, researchers are prioritising new ways of delivering pain relief. One novel delivery method which looks promising, is the use of ultrasound. It would be a safe and non-invasive way of triggering local anaesthesia that would be controlled by the patient.

Currently, treatment of acute pain relies heavily on opioids. These types of drugs are extremely addictive, and cause other unwanted side-effects such as clouding of the mental state. Tolerance is quickly achieved and so many patients rely on ever-increasing dosages to manage pain. The potential for overdoses is high. Other ways of managing pain include local anaesthetics, which bring with them other issues.

Opioid dependency became a cause of concern over the past decade as official figures revealed an increase in deaths by pain-reliever overdose in America of more than 400% in women and 237% in men between 1999 and 2010. In response to this problem, researchers from Boston, Madrid and Hong-Kong teamed up to create a safer substitute that would provide instant pain relief at specific locations. They designed a system that uses engineered liposomes containing an anaesthetic agent, and whose outer shell is triggered by ultrasound to burst the liposome open and release its cargo.

This strategy provides local anaesthesia where needed. The efficacy of delivery has been proven in vivo testing. Hopefully healthcare professionals will be able offer ultrasound-triggered pain management to patients soon. These researchers conducted experiments in rats for validation and examined whether the effects were responsible for nerve blockade, the phenomenon responsible for anaesthesia.

In an experiment which may sound cruel, but ultimately necessary, they injected liposomes directly in the nerve and sonicated, while assessing the status of the nerve by timing how long the rat could stay on a hot plate. The results validated their hypotheses and the group observed that the duration and intensity of anaesthesia were dependent upon the duration and intensity of the ultrasound beam.

After one injection, a 10-minute sonation led to 34 hr of nerve blockade; subsequent sonations with no reinjection of liposomes led to around 1 hr of additional nerve blockade. This result effectively paves the way for personalized narcotic-free pain management. Importantly, all of the 20 test cases survived the treatment and experiment.

The fact that the degree of nerve blockade is controlled by the ultrasound duration and intensity allows for customizable pain management. Patients could receive an injection at the hospital and relieve their pain themselves at home, whenever they need, using a small portable ultrasound device. This could potentially help combat opioid addiction, reduce the overall duration of hospitalization and hence alleviate bed blocking.
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Why Yemen’s Cholera outbreak is the worst the world has ever seen
By Max Horberry

Since the outbreak of Cholera in April, Yemen has seen over 500,000 cases and 2,000 fatalities, making it the worst Cholera outbreak in recorded history. With 15 million without basic health care, according to World Health Organisation (WHO), the Middle East’s poorest country is facing a crisis that shows no sign of slowing down.

Cholera is a bacterial disease that affects the small intestine. This causes vomiting and diarrhoea and if it is not treated adequately, the dehydration can lead to death. The first pandemic can be traced back to 1817 in South East Asia from where it spread to other countries. By 1961, the 7th pandemic, originating in Indonesia, spread across Asia to Europe and Africa and, by 1991, to Latin America. The incubation period of the disease is short, so not only spreads quickly, but develops rapidly in the infected individual. People can die within hours of the infection.

Cholera is a waterborne disease and Yemen’s outbreak is believed to have originated in the country’s capital, Sana, after the sewer system failed. The outbreak spread across the country and there are 5,000 new cases reported per day. Treatment is generally straightforward; a course of rehydration therapy. Many factors in Yemen, however, are preventing victims from receiving adequate treatment. 55% of all health facilities are closed or only partially operational, according to WHO. There is a critical shortage of health care workers since many have fled the country and about 30,000 local health care workers, who are involved in the Cholera treatment efforts, have not been paid in 10 months.

A major factor in the outbreak of Cholera in Yemen is civil war. After 2 and a half years of conflict 10,000 people have died and two thirds of the population are in need of humanitarian assistance. The fighting is between President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi’s forces and the Muslim minority Houthi rebels in support of ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh. It is the Civil War that has led to such a major disruption to water supplies. 14 million people are cut off from clean water, often a result of direct attacks on the infrastructure. In January 2016, for example, Saudi-led forces destroyed a Mokha water desalination plant in an airstrike. Waste collection has stopped in many cities across the country, which makes the risk of disease much higher.

With the health system and infrastructure in tatters, Cholera will continue to spread. The Saudi-led coalition is preventing aid from arriving in rebel-held cities, such as Sana, by restricting airspace and preventing the use of airports. The population therefore often have little if any access to clean water or vaccination. Yemeni civilians are caught in the middle of a conflict that is resulting in violence, famine, and a devastating epidemic.

The unpredictability of Zika still presents a danger
by Anna Kretschmer

Zika has virtually disappeared in the Americas. As of August 2017 there was only one recorded locally-transmitted case, in Hidalgo County, Texas.

The reasons behind its decline, however, don’t quite match up with what scientists predicted.

In 2015 the Zika virus exploded in Central and South America. The speed at which it ripped through countries including Brazil and Colombia sits in stark contrast to its seemingly rapid disappearance.

Although the virus has long been recognised as endemic in Africa and Asia, 2015’s outbreak was the first time it had been encountered in the Americas. Zika is usually considered relatively harmless, with symptoms including fever, rash, itching and joint pain. However this latest outbreak brought with it grave concerns for pregnant women, as it was quickly confirmed to cause severe birth defects including microcephaly.

It was also confirmed as a trigger for Guillain-Barré syndrome, a rare and serious nerve condition causing muscle weakness.

In September 2015 the Brazilian state of Pernambuco registered over 140 cases of microcephaly annually, compared to a usual rate of 10. By November, Brazil had declared a national public health emergency.

The World Health Organisation soon followed suit, declaring Zika a Public Health Emergency of International Concern in February 2016 and prioritising urgent research into a vaccine. The disease is still on the WHO’s emergency list. It is a ‘priority disease’, meaning that research into its prevention is still a top worldwide priority.

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With the health system and infrastructure in tatters, Cholera will continue to spread. The Saudi-led coalition is preventing aid from arriving in rebel-held cities, such as Sana, by restricting airspace and preventing the use of airports. The population therefore often have little if any access to clean water or vaccination. Yemeni civilians are caught in the middle of a conflict that is resulting in violence, famine, and a devastating epidemic.

The disease is primarily spread through the mosquito Aedes aegypti, although research also emerged confirming some cases of sexual transmission.

During the height of the 2015–16 Zika outbreak, hazmat-suited workers with fogging and spraying machines were perhaps the most recognisable image of the crisis. Although a readily-recognisable way to signal that governments are doing something to control mosquito populations, it is in fact not the most effective way of doing so. Indeed, scientists say that mosquito control overall has had little effect on Zika’s decline.

Instead, herd immunity is thought to account for the virus’ downturn. Populations in the Caribbean and Latin America are becoming immune, which means fewer infected people are entering the United States and transmitting the virus.

Many scientists, however, have been surprised with just how quickly Zika has died down. Some models predicted the disease’s decline would occur in 2018, while others maintain that populations that remained unaffected by Zika’s first wave could now be hit.

Exactly how the virus is likely to behave next is up for debate. This unpredictability means difficulties in estimating how long this current respite will last, and problems for ongoing vaccine trials.

One concern is the slipperiness of pinning down a Zika diagnosis. The virus presents in very similar ways to other mosquito-borne viruses including dengue and chikungunya. In fact, it’s thought that many cases that presented as Zika in 2015–16 could well have been chikungunya.

Transmission patterns are very similar for all three viruses, which see rapid spikes and rapid declines.

It’s also very difficult to measure the extent of herd immunity when diagnostic tests may not accurately distinguish between one disease and another.

In addition, up to 80 percent of infected people report no symptoms, and so do not come forward for treatment and, by extension, inclusion in research and trials.

Although Zika looks to have disappeared for the time being, scientists are still cautious. “Just because cases go down, doesn’t mean we should stop worrying about it,” says researcher Lyle Petersen of the Centre for Disease Control. “We need to maintain our vigilance.”
Geely is a Chinese company that you might never have heard of. But you have seen some of its products on the road, and will soon ride in them. Not only does it own Volvo, which it acquired from Ford in 2010, but it also owns The London Taxi Company. In March of this year it announced over £300 million in investment and a new factory in Coventry.

The London Taxi Company has now been rebranded LEVC, the London EV (electric vehicle) Company, and finally taken the wraps off its new model, the TX. Along with the Mini and the Porsche 911, the black cab is one of those iconic designs that no designer dare stray too far from. Like those two, it appears to have captured the iconic look of the original while still being modern. One welcome change is a return to 'suicide' or rear-hinged rear doors, not seen since the original Austin FX4.

But it's not the doors or the Volvo steering wheel that is the most dramatic change, it's under the skin. The TX will be the first London cab not powered by a diesel. It will be an extended electric car. This means an electric motor will spin the wheels while an engine ensures the battery has enough range to complete the journey. The driver can choose to either plug it in or fill it up, giving the best of both worlds.

On battery power alone, the company says it can achieve “well over 70 miles of range with zero emissions” and when the small petrol generator kicks in, that takes it to over 400 miles. This, LEVC claims, will save drivers over £100 per week in fuel and unlike other EV manufacturers, will not be sold with a separate battery lease.

Much to the surprise of some purists, the TX will be offered internationally with the company having taken 225 orders from the Netherlands. “From our heritage as the manufacturer of the iconic London Taxi, we have unparalleled insight into the needs of commercial operators,” Chris Gubbey, CEO of LEVC said. “Drawing on the best of British design and engineering as well as technical expertise from our sister company Volvo, our products will help transform city living and provide taxi drivers with an average weekly fuel saving of £100 compared with our outgoing diesel model.”

“London has led the way in setting out tough measures to reduce taxi and van emissions, and in just a few short years we expect EVs for the commercial operator will not just become commonplace, but mandatory in cities around the world creating huge opportunities for LEVC globally.”

The company has also announced that it plans to add a light commercial vehicle to join the range. This will have the same hybrid powertrain as the cab.

The new TX went on sale on the 1st of August. For more information, visit theelectrictaxi.co.uk.
Dad’s world revolved around cars. Well, cars, and jazz. And fags. And books. And the occasional drop of something. So, cars, jazz, fags, books and booze, but cars were his big passion. Since he was old enough to drive, he had cars. If they were polo ponies, he would have had a string of them. One of his favourites was a Frazer-Nash Le Mans, in which he used to tool about Glasgow and compete in rallies and trials up and down Scotland, including grass-track races. Anything that involved speed, and a whiff of competitive driving. He owned a three-wheeled Morgan, an early Bugatti, which he allegedly sold for twenty quid, numerous motorbikes, including a 1,000 cc HRD Vincent Rapide, and his mates all had tasty machinery, as well. While he was at the Glasgow Evening Post, he road tested motor cars, often doing pen and ink sketches of them as well. When he started his magazine Autosport in 1950, he used to get all sorts of cars on test from the manufacturers, who were starved of publicity and customers in post-war Britain. He preferred the sporty and mostly foreign models, rather than the mundane family saloons, but who wouldn’t? He managed to do a ‘ton’ in an English Allard J2, which was the magic number to beat in those days. Nowadays, even an average Ford or Vauxhall will top that, but, back then, it was considered quick. Developments came thick and fast in the fifties, with foreign imports, like Ferrari, Alfa-Romeo, Maserati and Mercedes-Benz adding to the high octane mix of Jaguar and Aston Martin. He knew Sir William Lyons very well, who understood the importance a magazine such as Autosport could have on sales. He was on hobnobbing terms with David Brown of Aston Martin, Colin Chapman of Lotus and Sidney Allard, as well as racing car manufacturers like John Cooper and Tony Vandervell, whose Vanwall Special was to take Stirling Moss to victory in the British Grand Prix at Aintree in 1957; the first British car to win a World Championship race. In between rallies, dad would borrow various cars to assess, at both home and abroad, often opting to drive to foreign races in something that would eat up the miles on the autobahn and autostradas, where one could properly open them up.

In the 1959 Sebring 12-hour race, four little red Fiat-Abarth Zagato 750 GT cars finished in the first four places in their class, entered by Franklin Delano Roosevelt Jr., the wealthy son of the ex-President, who had the concession to these Italian cars in North America. After the race, he lent dad his own machine to drive from Florida up to New York. It had been prepared as a spare race-car, but was not used in the race itself. He set off on his 1,500-mile trip, stopping off at Daytona, where he met up again with his friend, the legendary bandleader Paul Whiteman, ‘The King of Jazz,’ at the opening of the Daytona International Speedway, a banked, oval circuit built in the Florida swamps a dozen miles from the holiday resort of Daytona Beach. He continued up through Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, through Maryland to Washington, and then onto the Baltimore Highway towards New York. On this stretch of road he was tailed and then stopped by two troopers in a Highway Patrol car, pointing out that the speed limit was 55mph, not 85mph. They were intrigued by the speedy little red car, which still had its race number 62 on it, and by giving each of them a spin up the road, dad avoided a certain $50 fine. He dropped the car off in New York, where it was an exhibit at the New York Motor Show. The same car was then shipped to the UK where dad had entered it in the RAC Rally later that year. His navigator was Brian McCall, but he broke his leg during some pre-rally pranks on the icy steps of the hotel in Blackpool. A quick replacement was required and someone suggested Brian Melia, a young competitions manager at Motorcraft, who got his own break. He was a demon driver as well as being one of Ford’s most valued co-drivers, and then in Ford’s competition headquarters at Boreham.

While he was in New York dad went to the American launch of the 3.4-litre Jaguar, along with Briggs Cunningham and John Gordon Bennett, and sent back a glowing report on the car to the offices in Praed Street, in Paddington, which would have warmed the hearts of the men back in Coventry on the Friday morning when Autosport came out. In his write-up of the show, he mentioned not only the star cars, like the Aston Martin DB4 and the V8 Daimler Dart sports car, both making debuts, but majored on the Jag. During his visit, apart from driving the new model, he was loaned a Mercedes-Benz 300SL Roadster by Larry Richards, the East Coast importer, and he took it on a trip up into the Catskill Mountains in southeastern New York State, where he road-tested the car for his magazine, and obviously gave it a bit of a hammering. I recall being driven around Brands at the Boxing Day meeting in 1954 with my brother by dad’s chief road-tester John Bolster at an indecent speed in an earlier model. I also remember a ginger-haired gentleman called John Coombes, who used to race, but then switched to entering drivers in his E-types and Ferraris, like Graham Hill, Roy Salvadori, Jackie Stewart and the French drivers, Patrick Depailler and François Cevert, lending dad a Mk II Jag, with the licence plate BUY 1, which was one of the number plates he used on his race cars. Driving about in that car certainly caused a few heads to turn, mostly from enthusiasts in their Sprites and MGs. A year or two later dad turned up in another Mk II with the number plate BUY 12. There was another legendary figure called Col. Ronnie Hoare, who had a garage in Egham called Maranello Concessionaires, who specialised in Ferraris, and had an incredible run of success with work and quasi-works cars, driven by Mike Parkes, Graham Hill, Jo Bonnier and John Surtees. We quizzed dad as to why he clung onto his rank of Colonel years after the end of the war, but dad simply shrugged, maybe because he was happy to lend him a beautiful dark blue Ferrari 330GT for an extended road test, which dad let me drive. What trust, but I don’t think the Colonel knew.
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Stars come out to raise money at #Game4Grenfell
By Owen Fulda

Jose Mourinho played the pantomime villain role with aplomb at the #Game4Grenfell at QPR’s Loftus Road. The Manchester United manager took to the field as a goalkeeper alongside a plethora of other celebrities, to raise money in aid of the victims and survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire.

Despite a tragic and emotional backdrop, the atmosphere was far from sombre. As the team sheets were read out, popstar Olly Murs received the loudest cheers from the mainly youthful crowd. Following an immaculately respected minute’s silence for the victims of the fire, the teams, captained by QPR legend Les Ferdinand and record Premier League goalscorer Alan Shearer, kicked off in front of an 18,000 capacity crowd.

Just two minutes in, Britain’s greatest ever Olympian Mo Farah pounced on a loose ball on the edge of the area, before slamming it into the roof of the net to put Team Ferdinand ahead. It was inspiring to see survivors of the tragedy playing alongside ex-footballers, less than a mile from the scene of the inferno that claimed over 80 lives on June 14.

Homeland star Damian Lewis showed neat footwork down the left flank, while ex-Liverpool and Spurs star Jamie Redknapp showed that his passing and vision has not succumbed to age yet. But it was former QPR maestro Trevor Sinclair who was the most influential player on the park, and it was he who grabbed the equaliser midway through the first half.

Football then briefly took a back seat when four firefighters, who bravely battled the Grenfell blaze, were substituted on to a rapturous reception. The halftime show was up next, featuring local girl turned popstar Rita Ora, Emeli Sandé and Marcus Mumford. Their poignant and heartfelt performance of Bill Withers’ Lean on Me prompted tears from audience and players alike.

The halftime show was up next, featuring local girl turned popstar Rita Ora, Emeli Sandé and Marcus Mumford. Their poignant and heartfelt performance of Bill Withers’ Lean on Me prompted tears to be shed around the ground.

Second half highlights included a sumptuous free-kick that went in off the post from Sinclair to give Team Shearer the lead. Jarvis Cocker of Pulp fame running around in his trademark shades like Bambi on Ice and Mourinho’s comedy cameo in goal. After Khadidiatou’s Chris Edwards topped Stan Collymore’s pass into an empty net, the game finished 2-2 and thus was to be decided by penalty a shoot-out.

A pitch invasion briefly caused the game to be halted, but once it was cleared, the ensuing shootout saw Grenfell survivors and firefighters help Team Ferdinand go onto a 5-3 win to wrap up an emotional yet positive day under the blue skies of west London.

Saliva test for concussion could prove game-changer for rugby
By Owen Fulda

In a potentially game-changing medical breakthrough for rugby, head-injury detection could soon be determined by a simple pitch-side saliva test. The player provides two millilitres of saliva before the test decides, within ten minutes, whether they are fit to resume playing or should be declared injured.

Researchers at the University of Birmingham found a link between brain trauma and molecules found in saliva and urine after spending nine years researching the subject. The results may finally remove subjective opinion from head-injury diagnosis and the current examination test is now being trialled at every single game in the Aviva Premiership and the Greene King IPA Championship this season.

“The University of Birmingham recently made a significant breakthrough after identifying molecules, which can be found in saliva and act as biomarkers to indicate whether the brain has suffered injury,” said Neurosurgeon professor Tony Belli. “If these biomarkers are found to be reliable, we can continue our work with industrial partners, hoping to have a device available within the next two years that will instantaneously diagnose concussion on the pitch-side, with the same accuracy as in the laboratory.”

Biomarkers in the urine are intended to corroborate evidence found in saliva, but they take longer to appear in urine, which is why saliva only will be used as an immediate test for brain injury during game-time.

World Rugby, the sport’s world governing body, responded to accusations that the game is ‘not safe’, by introducing tough new sanctions on tackling earlier this year. These include a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to head contact in a bid to reduce the high numbers of concussions. RFU chief medical officer Simon Kemp insinuates that the fact that reported concussion numbers have increased for five consecutive seasons is due to better reporting and education around the issue, rather than the increasingly physical nature of professional rugby.

World Rugby state that “if a player makes accidental contact with an opponent’s head, even if contact starts below the line of shoulders, the player may still be sanctioned”. For the more serious offence of reckless play, where a player knew or should have known there was a risk of making contact with the head, but did so anyway, the maximum sanction is a red card. See Sonny Bill Williams’ shoulder charge which resulted in his sending-off in the second Test against the Lions earlier this summer as an example.

The movie Concussion, starring Will Smith, recently re-generated two points concerning head trauma discussion. First is the medical theory that chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) may be caused by the accumulation of minor head knocks and reverberations, not just the obvious knockout blows. The second disturbing aspect is the lack of reliable data as to whether past players are already brain injured.

Rugby has seemingly learned lessons from American Football where more than 4,500 retired NFL players filed a massive, class-action lawsuit against the NFL in 2011. They accused the League of covering up the long-term health dangers caused by football-related head injuries in an effort to protect the League’s image. World Rugby and the RFU are adamant that the long term health implications of playing the sport are being taken absolutely seriously, and this new concussion test is certainly a large leap in the right direction.
NFL International Series
London’s aim to become a global gridiron super city
By Owen Fulda

For the first time since the National Football League introduced the NFL International Series in 2007, London is set to host four American Football games at Wembley and Twickenham Stadiums. The playing of four games throughout September and October in the UK capital for the first time (half of a home schedule of regular-season games) is a milestone moment in the continuing rise in popularity of NFL football in the UK and beyond.

“We continue to be incredibly excited by the passion and love for the NFL shown by our millions of UK fans,” said NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell. “London is an amazing city. We have had tremendous support from our fans, from Mayor Khan and other government leaders and business partners, and we are looking forward to taking the next step in the UK by playing four games in London next season.”

Commissioner Goodell also commented that the NFL has not heard from fans who are concerned about traveling to London for this season's slate of International Series games despite two major terror attacks in England this year, and that ticket sales remain strong. “We’re not seeing that in our ticket sales,” Goodell said. “Obviously there could be fans who look at that and say, ‘That’s not something we want to do,’ but we’re not seeing that. Our ticket sales will be stronger than ever.”

The success of the International Series has led the NFL to focus its global expansion aims on the possibility of having a full franchise located in London. While no set timetable has been set, the league is working on a goal of establishing a franchise by around 2021, assuming they have all the necessary arrangements in place.

This would be most likely achieved through relocation of an existing franchise, with the Jacksonville Jaguars most often linked due to their association with the International Series. Their American billionaire business tycoon owner Shahid Khan, who also owns Fulham Football Club, is however believed to be content with the current arrangement with the Jaguars selling roughly 94% of tickets for their home games year on year. But the appetite for a franchise in London is here and still growing.

Since 2007, the NFL has achieved accelerated growth in the UK. Sunday viewership of NFL games has more than doubled and the Super Bowl audience has increased more than 75 percent. The league also has developed new and stronger business partnerships and, according to internal research, has a UK fan base of more than 13 million, including close to four million avid fans. Participation in amateur American football in the UK has risen by approximately 15% per year since.

The Baltimore Ravens, winners of the 2012 Super Bowl Championship, take on the Jacksonville Jaguars in the first of this year’s games at Wembley. It will be the Jags fifth appearance in the UK (they have a record of two wins and two defeats thus far), but neither team had a winning season last year, with Jacksonville mustering just three victories. This year’s matches feature none of the NFL’s most prestigious teams, reinforcing views among some UK based NFL fans that the organising is using our appetite for the game to effectively dump some of the league's less attractive fixtures.

The perennially under-achieving Miami Dolphins have one of the larger UK fan bases so are an obvious choice to send over the Atlantic, especially as their own home support in the Sunshine State support is notoriously fickle. Sun Life stadium, the Dolphins’ home, actually offers the worst home-field advantage in the entire NFL according ESPN. Since 2007, the Dolphins had an Registered Home (field) Advantage of less than a point (0.7) when it played at home.

In contrast, the Seattle Seahawks, who have the most vociferous support in the league, topped the chart at 5.1 points per home game.

Along with the Ravens, the Arizona Cardinals and the much-maligned Cleveland Browns will be making their first appearances in London. The Browns lost their first 14 games last season and were described as an “abomination of a football team”, as they finished the year with just a solitary win to their name. ‘They lost their first 14 games by, on average, 13.4 points. But the Browns have developed something of a cult following in the UK. Their game against the Minnesota Vikings at Twickenham is long sold-out, and anyone in attendance can expect to see plenty of Cleveland shirts at the famous pre-game tailgate party, as well as in the stands.

When it comes to a matchday experience in the NFL, the Americans certainly do it differently. Tailgating is a uniquely American experience in which fans set up huge RVs (Recreational Vehicles) in designated areas around the stadium many hours before the game is due to kick off. Pounds of meat are griddled on the the BBQ as fans mingle with fellow and opposing supporters, while the pre-game banter flows as fast as the beer. It’s not exactly any more sophisticated than football supporter drinking beer and singing songs on the train to Carlisle away, but tailgate parties certainly have a distinct charm of their own.

And if you’re outraged by the exorbitant amounts Premier League footballers earn these days, you might want to look away now. Detroit Lions have just made quarterback Matthew Stafford the highest-paid player in NFL history, after he agreed terms on a five-year contract extension. Widespread reports suggest the deal is worth $275m (£20.9m) a season, taking him ahead of Derek Carr who penned a $25m-a-year deal (£19.3m) with Oakland Raiders earlier this summer.

But the interesting thing about the NFL is its melding of American capitalism and perhaps the finest example of sports socialism. NFL teams share close to 61 percent of total revenues the league generates, which makes a great deal of business sense. The NFL also shares ticket and merchandise revenues, with the exception of the Cowboys. Dallas keeps revenues generated from merchandise sales and does not receive any from the other 31 teams.

The Green Bay Packers revenue for the year ending March 2017 totalled $441.4 million (£341.5m). The Packers are required to announce their earnings as they are technically a public entity, although the franchise’s 360,760 shareholders hold stock that they paid for that has no value and cannot be traded. If London is to eventually have its own NFL franchise, it could be well-advised to model it on Green Bay. The legendary Packers waiting list is now up to 115,000 names, a reported 30-year wait! Here’s hoping UK-based NFL supporters won’t have such a mammoth delay for a London franchise they can call their own.
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Chess: misses losses, and absences, it’s all in the game

The chess world expects, when it comes to battles across the board, and the more ‘bloody’ with sacrifices to attain a winning position at the top levels brings with it an entree not only into the brilliant strategies that occur from the minds of the players, but the sheer risk-taking that such dynamics incur! Similarly the history of chess is strewn with such battles both on and off the board. At world level the recent difficulties confronting FIDE, its president and women’s chess have all brought public attention to the organisation and disorganisation of chess and its politics, and the various characters who manage the international tournaments.

One such fulsome character, recently deceased was Andrew Paulson 1958-2017, who was instrumental in 2012 in bringing a new company, Acon, into the chess ring which acquired the commercial rights to the World Chess Championships, under FIDE’s mantle. He wanted to popularise chess by bringing interactive online broadcasting for example, that would deliver a new approach to chess and its politics, and the various events in which it is involved. Magnus Carlsen’s youthful style and win at the Electrical Institutions Candidates Match in London, and the specially designed cockpit type staging that Paulson insisted was needed for such an event, was a magnificent watershed in the staging of chess as an important event for the public, as much as it was for the players. Unlike many other sports which are often played in the open air there isn’t a season as such in chess. Seasons in chess are irregular and dependent on great players’ coming and going and to (their diagnostic writings?) coupled to sponsors and organise the Garry Kasparov season seemed to be over when he announced his decision to step down from further involvement in future international chess tournaments some while ago. Yet there he was putting himself up for a possible re-match in the recent St. Louis Rapid and Blitz tournament with the cream of world chess such as Aronian, Nakamura, Caruana etc. His courage was greatly admired, and with several draws and a win he seemed to be holding his own. His overall position at the end wasn’t good, and he commented on his loss to Navara, “It’s a nightmare. I am afraid that it will haunt me for the rest of my life!” More to follow on Kasparov’s return in next month’s issue.

Ches and Bridge online: www.KCWToday.co.uk

Monthly Bridge Tip for Intermediates with Andrew Robson

North-South bid optimistically to game despite only holding 21 points. However West was no Sherlock Holmes, and his uninspired defence allowed the contract to make.

Dealer South, North-South Vulnerable

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<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>A3K</td>
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<td>Pass</td>
<td>AK5</td>
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<td>4</td>
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1. Might raise to Two Spades.
2. Worth one game try, and correctly shows his five-five shape.
3. Close call, as his minor-suit honours are not working.

Answer: South 5 no trump, declarer 5 hearts.

West led ♥ A which held the trick, East following with ♥ 6. He followed with ♥ K, East playing ♥ 9. Hoping East had no diamonds remaining, or at least to be passive, West continued with ♥ 2. Dummy’s ♥ Q won, and declarer discarded ♥ 4. Declarer cashed ♥ AK, trumped ♥ 3 with ♥ A, and so established his long hearts; he then cashed his ♥ AK and claimed the remainder, conceding just one trick to ♥ Q.

West could have defeated the contract by switching to a club after cashing ♥ AK. How should he have known?

East had played first ♥ 6 then ♥ 9 under ♥ AK. If he had only held a doubleton diamond, he would have signalled encouragement by playing first ♥ 9 then ♥ 6. So West should have known that it was declarer who held the doubleton diamond. Why should West have switched specifically to clubs, looking at such strength in the dummy?

Declarer had opened the bidding ♥ 1A, then rebid hearts. Such a sequence indicates 5-5 in the two suits, leaving just three other cards. Two of them have been revealed as diamonds, therefore declarer has a singleton club. West must lead a club immediately, or else declarer will discard it on dummy’s ♥ Q (as he did). East wins Trick Three with ♥ A, and later scores ♥ Q to defeat the game.

ANDREW’S TIP: Work out declarer’s hand-pattern using clues from the bidding and the play to date.
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