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THE WEEK

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THE BEST OF THE BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

Nato expansion

Will it provoke the Russian bear?

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What happened

Reforming the Protocol

Liz Truss confirmed this week that ministers would bring forward a new law to unilaterally suspend parts of the post-Brexit trade deal for Northern Ireland, which she said was “undermining” the peace process. The Foreign Secretary stressed that the Government was seeking to fix, not scrap, the Protocol, and claimed the bill would be legal under international law. Truss said negotiations with the EU about the operation of the Protocol would continue “in parallel” with the passage of the law through the Commons, which could take up to a year. The EU said it was happy to continue discussions, but warned that it would “respond with all measures at its disposal” if the UK pushed ahead with the new legislation.



Truss: reckless brinkmanship?

The leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, Jeffrey Donaldson, welcomed the proposed bill and said that his party would take “cautious” steps to re-engage with power sharing in Northern Ireland as it progresses. The DUP has refused to go into government with Sinn Féin at Stormont until reforms are made to the Protocol, which it says drives a wedge between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

What the editorials said

Downing Street is engaging in reckless brinkmanship, said the Irish Independent. Its position on the Protocol appears to be that it is prepared to be reasonable provided it's given exactly what it wants; and if it isn't, it will “take it anyway”. To risk provoking a trade war in this way is “massively irresponsible”. It's a “disreputable” bid to deflect blame on to the EU, said The Guardian. To avoid a north-south hard border on the island of Ireland, Boris Johnson agreed in 2019 to a trade border in the Irish Sea, betraying an earlier promise to the DUP. He then made out that the border didn't really exist, indicating that “he either didn't understand his deal or didn't intend to honour it; most likely both”.

The Protocol, signed under pressure, was always going to be a “deeply uncomfortable arrangement”, said the Daily Mail. But “with sensitive implementation it might have worked”. It's the EU's “heavy-handed”, punitive approach that has brought us to this pass. The EU hasn't been obdurate, said The Economist. In October, it offered concessions that it said would eliminate up to 80% of checks at the sea border. Doubtless more can still be negotiated, but it will be hard to move things forward “if one side forfeits trust by renegeing on the treaty”.

What happened

The expanding alliance

Finland and Sweden formally submitted their applications to join Nato on Wednesday, paving the way for a significant shake-up of Europe's security architecture. Support for membership has surged in the previously neutral countries since Russia invaded Ukraine. Their applications were welcomed by Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, but must be approved by all 30 Nato states. Last week, Boris Johnson visited both Nordic countries, where he signed deals saying that the UK would come to their aid were they to be attacked before gaining full membership.

Russia – whose troops finally seemed to have seized full control of Mariupol this week (see page 5) – warned of “retaliatory steps” of a “military-technical nature” after Finland announced its Nato plans, though it later rowed back somewhat. Nato member Turkey threatened to block the two countries' accession, citing their alleged willingness to host Kurdish militants.



A Nato exercise in Poland

What the editorials said

Talk about a plan backfiring, said The Independent. Putin had hoped his war on Ukraine would deter further Nato expansion and neutralise its influence. Instead, his aggression has given rise to an extraordinary sense of unity among Nato states – and now a “significant bulking up” of the alliance's military potential. Putin's “dangerous and unpredictable” behaviour suggests Finland and Sweden are quite right to seek greater security guarantees, said The Economist. “Their applications should rapidly be approved.”

This is a potentially risky move, said The Times. Nato states would be taking on a commitment to defend Finland and Sweden from attack. And the addition of Finland would involve the alliance acquiring a new 810-mile border with Russia, fuelling Moscow's paranoia that it is encircled by “hostile forces” (see page 11). On the other hand, with its forces “depleted and bogged down” in Donbas, Moscow has few ways to retaliate, aside from positioning a few missile systems on the Finnish border. In short, the risks of expansion “are more than offset by the benefits”.

It wasn't all bad

A footwear entrepreneur has won a £250,000 grant to develop an extendable shoe for children. Jeroo Doodhmal, founder of the brand Pip & Henry, says she came up with the idea after realising that her daughter was growing out of her shoes long before they wore out. Typically parents have to replace children's shoes every four months; and of the 80 million pairs of shoes sold in Britain each year, 60 million are for children. Several designs are being explored.

Jake Daniels, a 17-year-old striker for Blackpool FC, has become the UK's first male professional footballer to come out as gay during his playing career since the late Justin Fashanu, in 1990. Daniels said he had known that he was gay since he was about five or six, but thought that might change as he got older because football and being gay “didn't really mix”. He decided that now was finally “the right time” to be upfront about it, and added, “I want people to know the real me and lying all the time just isn't what I wanted to do.” Boris Johnson described Daniels as an “inspiration to us all”.



A passenger with no flying experience safely landed a plane in Florida after the pilot collapsed en route from the Bahamas, sending the single-engine Cessna nose-diving towards the ocean. Darren Harrison, 39, told air traffic control: “I've got a serious situation here... I have no idea how to fly the plane.” Controller Robert Morgan, who happened to be a flight instructor, found an image of the plane's controls, and guided Harrison through the steps for landing. The men hugged on the runway, and the pilot was taken to hospital.

What the commentators said

How extraordinary that people are portraying the UK Government as the wrecker, said Daniel Hannan in *The Sunday Telegraph*. Its aim, after all, is only “the careful removal of some pointless checks on goods moving within the UK”. Trade between Great Britain and NI is “equivalent to 0.0008% of the EU’s GDP. Yet Brussels conducts around 20% of all its goods checks on this trade.” It acts as if the single market would be “imperilled by a Tesco chicken sandwich entering Donegal”. There’s no good reason why GB-imported goods that are clearly going to stay in Northern Ireland should be subjected to stringent checks.

These checks are causing real difficulties, said Annabel Denham in *The Spectator*. Some NI firms have given up trying to procure goods from the rest of the UK, in some cases leaving consumers unable to access particular products. And the impact will only grow if and when the EU ends the grace periods protecting specific British goods entering NI ports. The chairman of M&S, Archie Norman, this week described the vast amounts of paperwork involved in importing food products to the Republic of Ireland (“every piece of butter in a sandwich has to have an EU vet certificate”). He warned that comparable controls for NI would be disastrous.

The UK and EU can work to smooth out the most onerous aspects of the Protocol, said Rafael Behr in *The Guardian*, but they’re never going to be able to fix it to the Government’s satisfaction. Why? Because the underlying problem is Brexit itself. The reason so many people warned against leaving the single market is precisely that it was bound to create bothersome barriers to trade. That’s an inescapable feature of the deal. Another “inconvenient truth” is that Brexit is “incompatible with the spirit or letter of the 1998 Belfast Good Friday Agreement”, said Sean O’Grady on *The Independent*. Whether the trade barrier was on the island of Ireland or in the Irish Sea, it was going to upset one community or the other. As this row continues, one thing we can be sure of is that Brexit won’t be “done” any time soon. “Just like the Irish question, into which Brexit has sadly and inevitably morphed.”

What the commentators said

The significance of Sweden and Finland joining Nato “cannot be underestimated”, said Andrew Neil in the *Daily Mail*. Sweden has avoided such alliances for 200 years, and has stayed out of two World Wars; Finland long refused to even contemplate Nato membership, despite Russia having invaded it several times. Now, Putin’s aggression has led them to change their stance. Yet letting them join Nato is no “act of charity”, said Max Boot in *The Washington Post*. These countries boast serious military capabilities; their well-drilled soldiers have trained with Nato for years. Finland has a large artillery force as well as F-18 fighter jets and rocket systems. It still has conscription, and can mobilise 280,000 troops. For its part, Sweden has a smaller military, but is hiking defence spending and buying state-of-the-art aircraft. Crucially, its territory includes the Baltic island of Gotland, which Nato could use as a base, countering the threat of weapons Russia keeps in its Kaliningrad enclave on the Baltic coast. “Having Sweden and Finland in the alliance is a game changer and tilts the Northern battlefield in Nato’s favour.”

Maybe so, said Anne-Marie Slaughter in the *FT*, but is now really the time to expand Nato still further? The alliance has already added 14 countries since 1999, and “the threat of Russia invading either Finland or Sweden is remote”. Admitting them risks reopening Cold War wounds and pushing Russia closer to China. We should slow down. After all, “a weak and humiliated Russia just means a permanent spoiler in European and global politics”. Putin’s initial response to the news of Nato’s likely expansion has been pretty muted, said Robin Wright in *The New Yorker*. “The surprise was that he took it so calmly”, Finnish president Sauli Niinistö said after calling his Russian counterpart to explain his decision. But “the longer-term reality is a wider and deeper fissure dividing Nato and Russia”. Where Putin is concerned, “every action generates a reaction – and further Nato expansion may well, too”.

What next?

Truss said that she would table her bill in “the coming weeks”. Brussels sources say no decisions have been taken about how the EU will respond, reports *The Guardian*. The expectation is that Brussels will at that point issue a formal warning and launch a process to decide on retaliatory measures, which would come into effect once the bill became law.

In the meantime, talks between the UK and EU are set to continue into the summer, says Adam Payne on *Politics Home*. The key deadline is 28 October. If the DUP is to form a government with Sinn Féin, it must happen by that date. If not, Johnson’s Government will be obliged to call another election in the province.

What next?

Nato is likely to fast-track applications from Finland and Sweden to join. Accession usually takes 8-12 months. However, Germany’s foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, said the applications would be dealt with quickly after a Nato summit in Madrid next month, warning that the alliance should minimise the length of a “transition period, a grey zone, where their status is unclear”.

Ankara is likely to support the applications in return for guarantees that both countries will condemn Kurdish terrorism and drop restrictions on arms exports to Turkey, says *The Times*.

THE WEEK

On 31 January 1990, McDonald’s opened its first restaurant in Russia. It served 30,000 people on its first day. “I felt like I was eating America itself,” said one satisfied customer. This week,

McDonald’s announced that it was leaving Russia, the first time it has left a major market, citing the humanitarian situation in Ukraine (see page 39). It was a sad moment for the chain, and for the Golden Arches Theory of Conflict Prevention, expounded by the *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman in 1996. “No two countries that both have a McDonald’s have ever fought a war against each other,” he declared. And nor, he hoped, would they: by integrating with the global economy and empowering consumers, nations would permanently restrict their “capacity for troublemaking”. It was a beguiling piece of 1990s utopianism: history had ended, and in time we would all have eternal peace, with a burger and fries. It was wrong, of course. India and Pakistan went to war in 1999, Israel and Lebanon in 2006, Russia and Georgia in 2008. Friedman later modified his theory into the Dell Theory of Conflict Prevention: “No two countries that are both part of a major global supply chain, like Dell’s, will ever fight a war against each other.” Sadly, Russia (850 McDonald’s) vs. Ukraine (about 80) proved that wrong, too. McWorld peace is well and truly over. But I like to think that the Friedman contract is being honoured in the breach. The burger giant has begun what it calls the “de-Arching” of its Russian outlets. No peace, no McDonald’s.

Theo Tait

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Controversy of the week

The housing crisis

“It’s almost as if the Tories have a death wish,” said James Forsyth in *The Times*. For years, they’ve failed to tackle the lack of affordable housing in the UK, particularly for younger people, though it poses a profound threat to their party. House prices have risen by 20% since 2020. “The average age of a first-time buyer today is 34; in the 1990s it was 29.” Since homeowners are much more likely than renters to vote Conservative, the Tories should be doing everything they can to boost home ownership. This Government was in fact elected in 2019 on a pledge to build 300,000 homes a year, but efforts to relax planning rules by former housing minister Robert Jenrick turned out badly: a backbench revolt and a “thumping defeat” in the Chesham and Amersham by-election that was blamed on the issue led the Tories to back off. Now Michael Gove has again tried to grasp this “hot potato” with his Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. But it’s hardly a radical overhaul. It will leave most planning rules intact, while trying to make new developments more attractive, in the hope that local people will support them.



Gove: grasping the hot potato

So far, the Tories have actually made the crisis worse, said Jonn Elledge in *The New Statesman*. “Help to Buy” chucked money at the market without raising supply, so it did little except heat up house prices. And Gove’s proposals (which would apply only in England) are “useless”. He’s promising to look again at “right to buy” for housing association tenants – though it’s the majority of renters in private accommodation who really need help. He also wants to introduce “street votes”, giving residents a chance to propose new developments, and vote on whether they should go ahead – which “looks like a Nimby’s charter”. Gove was wise to retreat from Jenrick’s plan, said *The Daily Telegraph* – it would have zoned whole areas for development, imposing new estates on reluctant communities. What he should do now is “free up the market” with policies such as cutting stamp duty for older people seeking to downsize. The target of 300,000 homes was never realistic, said John Rentoul on *The Independent*. Gordon Brown failed to meet his pledge to build 240,000 a year. David Cameron promised 200,000, and Theresa May 300,000; they both failed too.

So how should the “never-endingly intractable” problem of housing be tackled, asked Rowan Moore in *The Observer*. The private sector has proved itself “incapable”. So the Government must step in, by identifying where new homes are needed, locating land, providing infrastructure and backing good designs. This could be done at little or no cost, as it can compulsorily purchase land and sell it at a profit to developers. “No one should pretend that any of this is easy. It is fantasy to think that the competing interests of people who own homes and those who are desperate for somewhere to live can be reconciled.” But the Conservatives deserve “electoral oblivion” if they don’t even try.

“Apocalyptic” price rises

Rising food prices are a “major worry”, the Governor of the Bank of England told MPs this week. Apologising for sounding “apocalyptic”, Andrew Bailey warned that the war in Ukraine was affecting global supplies of cooking oil and wheat in particular, and that this could have a serious impact on Britain, and on the developing world. UK inflation hit 9% in April – its highest level in 40 years, and well above the Bank’s 2% target. However, Bailey said he did not think the Bank could have prevented the “overshoot”, which he said was mainly down to Covid and the war in Ukraine.

Reconciliation bill

The Government has unveiled a bill that would give immunity from prosecution to some perpetrators of Troubles-era crimes in Northern Ireland. The bill would create a body, the Independent Commission for Reconciliation and Information Recovery, which would investigate the conflict and have the power to grant immunity to individuals who cooperated with it. The Government said the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill would provide “answers” to families; but critics said it was a worrying interference with the rule of law.

Spirit of the age

Calling a man “bald” at work amounts to sexist harassment, an employment tribunal has concluded. The ruling came in a case between a manufacturing firm and an electrician, who alleged he’d been called a “bald c**t” by a supervisor during a shop-floor row. Commenting on baldness is like remarking on the size of a woman’s breasts, three judges decided, as it is “inherently related to sex”.

First there was “mansplaining”; now staff at the exam regulator Ofqual have been urged to avoid “hepeating”. In an internal handbook, the term – a portmanteau of “he” and “repeating” – is defined as referring to situations in which a man repeats a woman’s ideas, and is praised for them “as if they were his own”.

Good week for:

Rambo, a Limousin bull and “superstud”, who sold at auction for a world record price of £189,000. Bidding for the Welsh-reared breed champion started at £5,250, but quickly escalated.

George Bromley, a former Army captain, who celebrated the end of a 44-day trek in which he had travelled from Land’s End to John O’Groats, in a straight line. The “beeline challenge” had involved kayaking from Cornwall to the Isle of Man and climbing through the Cairngorms, among other challenges.

Bad week for:

Margaret Thatcher, after eggs were thrown at her statue, within hours of it being installed in her hometown of Grantham. Former Labour leader Neil Kinnock was among those who condemned the egging; however, such incidents were not unexpected. The statue was offered to Grantham after Westminster Council turned it down, partly over fears it would be targeted. The alleged egg-thrower was identified as an official at the University of Leicester.

Cambridge dons, who were accused of insensitivity for feasting on beef during a student-organised vegan dinner. While the students at Emmanuel College ate spring rolls with spicy sauce, as part of the university-wide “green week”, fellows at the high table tucked into roast sirloin with shallots and a tarragon jus.

Jonathan Van-Tam, who missed his own knighthood ceremony because he had tested positive for Covid-19. The former deputy chief medical officer was awarded a knighthood in the New Year Honours, for his work throughout the pandemic. The investiture will be rescheduled.

Poll watch

36% of UK adults think the term “woke” is an insult. **26%** see it as a compliment. The proportion who have never heard of “being woke” has halved from **32%** in 2020 to **16%** now. *Ipsos UK/Daily Mail*

46% of British voters say the political issue they feel “most passionate about” is the cost of living, followed by the NHS, the war in Ukraine, and climate change. **6%** say they feel “passionate” about whether trans women should take part in women’s sport. *Opinium/The Independent*

45% of adults in Scotland support keeping the monarchy, compared with almost six in ten people across Britain; **85%** of British adults expect the monarchy to still exist in a decade. *British Future/The Guardian*

Mariupol, Ukraine

The city falls: After a devastating siege lasting three months, the fall of Mariupol seemed this week to be complete. Around 260 Ukrainian troops who had been holed up in the Azovstal steelworks laid down their arms on Monday, and were evacuated out of the city; and efforts were under way to evacuate the hundreds more who were still trapped. The soldiers – many of whom were emaciated and severely wounded – were taken to Russian-controlled territory. Ukraine said it hoped that they would be freed as part of a prisoner exchange; but some influential Russian officials described them as “terrorists” and neo-Nazis and called for them to be executed. The Azov Battalion was formed as a volunteer militia to fight Russian separatists in 2014, and some of its original members were from the far-right; however, it has since been integrated into the Ukrainian military.



Lying on the Black Sea coast, close to the breakaway Donetsk region, the port of Mariupol is a strategic prize for Russia. However, the once-thriving city now lies in ruins. It has been estimated that tens of thousands of civilians died during the siege; but with Russians now in control there, the true death toll may never be established.

Moscow

Retired colonel breaks ranks: A retired Russian colonel now working as a military analyst astonished viewers of a Russian state TV channel this week by offering a damning assessment of his country’s war in Ukraine. Mikhail Khodaryonok, who had cautioned against the invasion, warned viewers that “the situation [for Russia] will clearly get worse” as Kyiv receives further military assistance from the West. He pointed out that “the whole world is against us”, and urged Russians not to take “informational tranquillisers” about the war. He also noted that “ultimate victory on the battlefield is determined by the high morale of [the Ukrainian] troops, who are spilling blood for the ideas they are ready to fight for” (see page 19).

Paris

New prime minister: President Macron has appointed a centre-left technocrat as his new prime minister. Élisabeth Borne becomes France’s first female PM in 30 years; she was reportedly offered the job after at least two other women on the president’s shortlist turned it down. Commentators have said her appointment is designed to appeal to centre-left voters who have grown disillusioned by Macron’s perceived rightward drift. Macron said that his new PM would focus on “ecology, health, education, full employment, democratic renaissance, Europe and security”. Borne, 61, who has spent much of her career as an adviser in Socialist-led administrations, said that she hoped her appointment would act as a message to “all the little girls, saying to them ‘Don’t give up on your dreams,’ and that nothing must slow the fight for the place of women in our society”. France has never had a female president; the only previous female PM was Édith Cresson, who held the job for less than a year in 1991-2.



Madrid

Menstrual leave: Spain’s Socialist-led government has unveiled plans to give women who suffer from severe period pain the right to paid leave. If the law is passed, it will make Spain the first country in Europe to offer the right to menstrual leave – a right that only exists in a handful of countries in the world, including Japan, South Korea and Zambia. In order to qualify for leave, which would be unlimited, women would have to be experiencing symptoms such as diarrhoea, severe headaches and fever. The proposal has been welcomed by some groups, but others have warned that it could make some employers reluctant to hire women. The package of reforms, which must now go before parliament, also includes free provision of sanitary pads and tampons for women and girls who need them, the scrapping of VAT on sanitary products, and the right for girls aged 16 and 17 to have an abortion without parental permission.

Venice, Italy

Digital nomads wanted: Venice is hoping to attract thousands of “digital nomads” to help repopulate its centre and diversify its economy. In the 1950s, La Serenissima had around 175,000 permanent residents, a figure that has since slumped to 50,000; in the same period, the number of tourists visiting has soared. On the busiest days, up to 120,000 crowd into the city. The new scheme, called “Venywhere”, is designed to reverse the trend, by attracting young professionals from around the world. “The aim is to change Venice from a city of tourism to a city of work,” Massimo Warglien, a professor of management at the Ca’ Foscari University, told The Times. And the newcomers will be well looked after, he said. “We will set up work locations in museums, gardens, on lagoon islands – the city is your office.” The scheme launches in September, and 2,200 nomads have already signed up to it.



Athens

Guilty verdict: The Greek pilot who killed his British wife at their home in Athens last year has been found guilty of her premeditated murder. Charalambos Anagnostopoulos, 34, told police that Caroline Crouch, 20, had been killed by a gang of burglars, who’d bound and gagged him, as their baby slept, and also strangled their dog. When his story unravelled, he admitted killing her himself, but claimed he had been in a “blurred state” after she’d threatened to leave him. But a tribunal of judges and jurors unanimously rejected this defence, and he was sentenced to life.



Buffalo, New York

Racist massacre: The teenager accused of shooting dead ten people in a supermarket in the city of Buffalo last Saturday had planned the attack for months, and had driven 300 miles from his home to carry it out, police believe. The suspect, 18-year-old Payton Gendron, donned combat gear and a military helmet before the attack, which he live-streamed to social media. Police say that he had earlier posted online a 180-page “manifesto” in which he

identified himself as a white supremacist, and claimed that white people were being intentionally “replaced” by other races. He is believed to have targeted the Tops supermarket because it is in a mainly black neighbourhood; 11 of the 13 people he shot were black. One of the ten people he killed was an 86-year-old woman; another was a retired Buffalo police officer.

Gendron was arrested at the scene and has since pleaded not guilty to charges of first-degree murder. Police are investigating the attack as an incident of “racially motivated violent extremism”.

Washington DC

Million mark: The number of people known to have died from Covid-19 in the US passed one million last week. That’s more than four times the worst-case scenario of 240,000 predicted by the US government around the time of the first Covid death, in February 2020, and is the biggest official death toll in the world (though India’s true death toll may be as high as five million, according to the WHO). America’s Covid deaths per 100,000 people stands at 300 (compared to 261 in the UK). Among the 20 countries with the highest number of deaths, only four have a higher per capita death toll – Peru (646), Romania (339), Brazil (312) and Poland (306). The Biden administration is forecasting a major wave of infections in the autumn, and wants congress to authorise billions of dollars in spending on vaccine doses and treatments.

Port-au-Prince

Gang rule: Nearly 150 people have been killed and scores wounded over the past few weeks in a surge in the violence that has engulfed Haiti since the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse last July, and the subsequent collapse of law and order. Much of the violence stems from a turf war between two criminal gangs – the Chen Mechan (meaning “bad dog” in Haitian Creole) and the more powerful 400 Mawozo; and disputes between the latter and the network of gangs known as G9. In a disturbing report released last week, the National Human Rights Defence Network – a US-Haitian human rights group – described a fortnight of brutal violence in one Port-au-Prince neighbourhood, in which 47 people were killed; some of them were burned alive. “A massacre of incredible cruelty was perpetrated,” the report says. “At the highest level of the state, there was no reaction.”



Isla Barú, Colombia

Prosecutor assassinated: A Paraguayan public prosecutor known for pursuing cases against gangsters and drug traffickers was shot dead last week while on honeymoon in Colombia. Marcelo Pecci, 45, was killed in front of his wife on a private hotel beach by gunmen who arrived by jet ski. Hours before the attack, his wife, the journalist Claudia Aguilera, had revealed on social media that the couple were expecting their first child. “The final sunset in Barú, but we’ll

have millions more together,” she had written. In recent years, Paraguay has seen a number of contract killings linked to its growing role in the drugs trade – in particular as a key route for Bolivian-produced cocaine that is being trafficked to Europe.

New York

Abortion rights protests: Tens of thousands of people took part in rallies across the US last Saturday in support of abortion rights. The organisers of the protests said they would be the start of a “summer of rage”, triggered by the leak earlier this month of a draft opinion suggesting that the supreme court is poised to overturn Roe v. Wade, the 1973 ruling that enshrined a woman’s constitutional right to terminate her pregnancy. The final decision is expected in June. At the rallies, in New York, Washington DC, Atlanta, Chicago and other cities, women held banners reading “Bans Off Our Bodies”. Last week, a senate motion that would have codified abortion rights into law was defeated by 51-49. All Republican senators voted against it, along with one Democrat. President Biden said the opponents of the motion had “chosen to stand in the way of Americans’ rights to make the most personal decisions about their own bodies, families and lives”.



Buenos Aires

Inflation anger: Up to 100,000 protesters brought the centre of Buenos Aires to a standstill last Thursday, in another protest against the government’s handling of the soaring inflation rate, and its social policies. The “Federal march for work and salaries, and against hunger and poverty” was organised by unions and left-wing groups. Prices rose 23% in the first four months of this year, including a 6% jump in April alone. Annual inflation is projected to be above 60% this year, up from 50% last year. Protesters say that the centre-left government led by President Alberto Fernández is doing too little to mitigate the cost of living crisis, owing to its debt repayment negotiations with the IMF. Their slogan is: “the debt is to the people”.

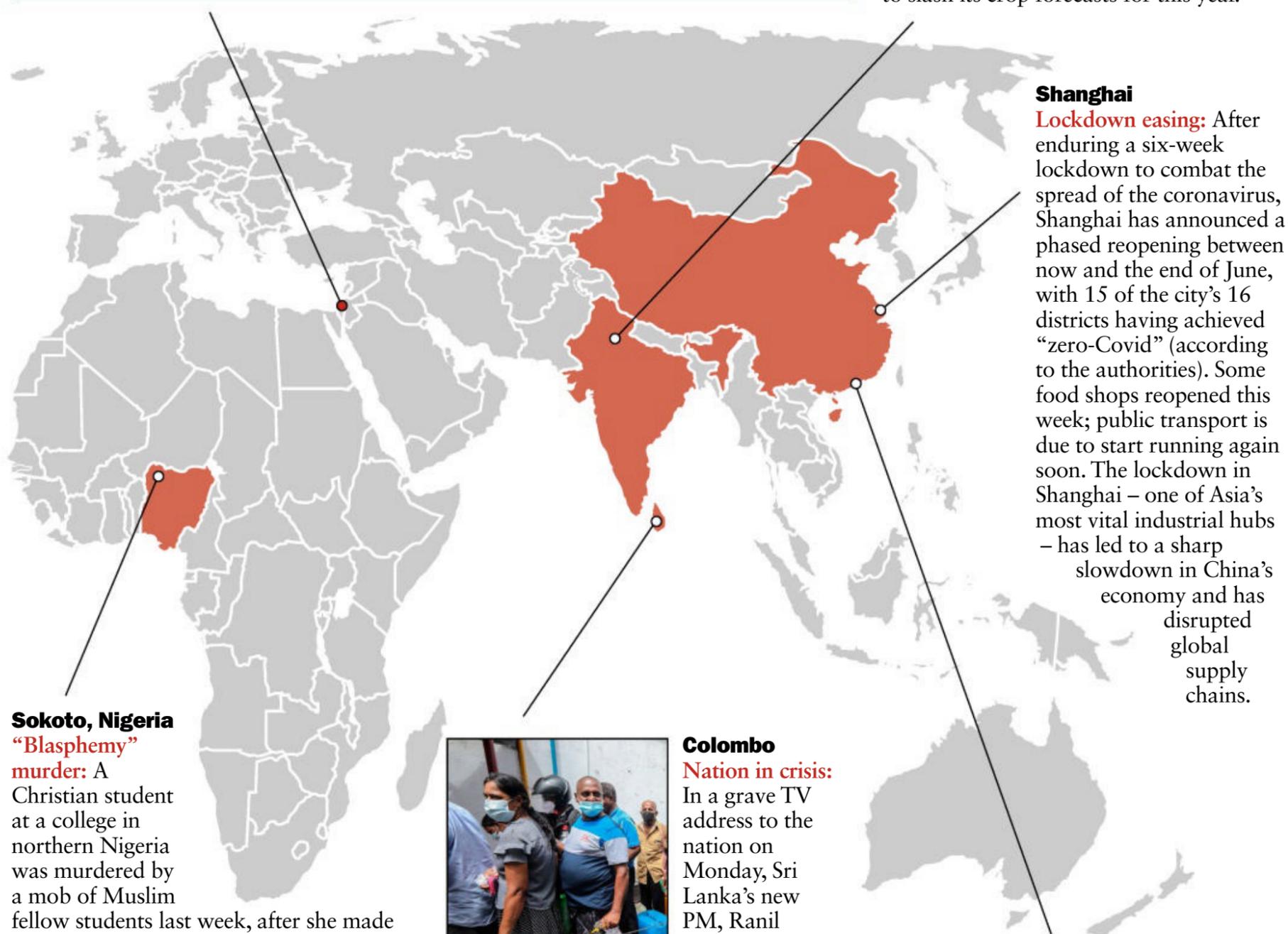
West Bank, Palestinian Territories

Funeral outrage: An assault by Israeli police, on pallbearers and mourners at the funeral of a well-known Palestinian-American journalist, has prompted international condemnation. Al Jazeera's Shireen Abu Akleh was shot in the head last Wednesday while covering an Israeli raid in Jenin, a city in the occupied West Bank. It seems increasingly clear from video evidence that she was shot by Israeli forces, even though she was wearing a blue vest labelled "press". Israel initially claimed she had been killed by Palestinians, though it later backtracked. On the day of her funeral, last Friday, thousands of mourners joined the procession as it set off from St Joseph's Hospital in east Jerusalem to a Roman Catholic church in the Old City (Abu Akleh's family are Christians). But the procession was disrupted by Israeli riot police, who pushed and clubbed mourners and fired stun grenades to disperse the crowd, later claiming the mourners had been throwing stones and "disrupting public order". The action has been condemned by UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the EU. The Vatican's representative in Jerusalem has accused Israel of "brutally violating" a decades-old agreement to uphold religious freedom.



New Delhi

Wheat export ban: India has delivered a shock to global food markets by announcing an immediate ban on exports of wheat "in order to manage the overall food security of the country, and to support the needs of the neighbouring and other vulnerable countries". Global wheat prices, which rose sharply at the news, have surged by 60% so far this year, driven by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the closure of Ukraine's Black Sea ports. Prior to the war, Ukraine and India together accounted for almost a third of the world's wheat exports. India, which is the world's second-largest wheat producer after China, had stepped up its exports to help ease the global shortage. However, that policy has now been abruptly reversed, after two months of extreme hot weather led India to slash its crop forecasts for this year.



Shanghai

Lockdown easing: After enduring a six-week lockdown to combat the spread of the coronavirus, Shanghai has announced a phased reopening between now and the end of June, with 15 of the city's 16 districts having achieved "zero-Covid" (according to the authorities). Some food shops reopened this week; public transport is due to start running again soon. The lockdown in Shanghai – one of Asia's most vital industrial hubs – has led to a sharp slowdown in China's economy and has disrupted global supply chains.

Sokoto, Nigeria

"Blasphemy" murder: A Christian student at a college in northern Nigeria was murdered by a mob of Muslim fellow students last week, after she made a comment on the class WhatsApp group deemed to have insulted the Prophet Muhammad. The students beat Deborah Yakubu to death and then burned her body. Police and school security tried to save her, but were outnumbered by the mob. Video footage of the killing at Shehu Shagari College in Sokoto was widely circulated on social media. Violent street protests then broke out in the city, with the crowd demanding the release of two suspects arrested for the murder. Sectarian killings are not uncommon in Nigeria, which is divided between a largely Muslim north and largely Christian south.



Colombo

Nation in crisis: In a grave TV address to the nation on Monday, Sri Lanka's new PM, Ranil Wickremesinghe, warned that the country had only one day's supply of petrol left, and that it needed \$75m of foreign currency within days to pay for essential imports. "The next couple of months will be the most difficult of our lives," he said. Wickremesinghe, who has served four previous stints as PM, said he had ordered the printing of money in order to pay public officials, notwithstanding the extra inflation that this would cause. However, he pledged that there would be no "hunger crisis" in the country.

Hong Kong

Cardinal held: Joseph Zen, a 90-year-old Catholic cardinal and former bishop of Hong Kong, was arrested last week and questioned for hours under the territory's draconian anti-sedition law imposed by Beijing. Zen is a trustee of a humanitarian fund set up to help people who took part in 2019 pro-democracy protests, and on account of this has been accused of colluding with "foreign forces". He has now been released on bail, but if convicted could face a potential life sentence. There are around 1.2 million Christians in Hong Kong, a third of whom are Catholics.

Minnie Driver on Weinstein

It's 25 years since Minnie Driver starred opposite Matt Damon in *Good Will Hunting*. The role changed her life: it won her an Oscar nomination, and led to a very public relationship with Damon. Yet it almost didn't happen: the film's producer, the convicted rapist Harvey Weinstein, had tried to block her from being given the part. "Nobody would want to f*** her," he allegedly told the film's casting director. Driver was "devastated", she told Louise Carpenter in *The Times*. "Until I realised, 'Hold on, just consider the source for a minute. That is an unutterable pig – why on earth are you worried about this f*** saying that you are not sexy?' How awful to think that I was one of the lucky ones [who escaped him] because he didn't think I was f***able."

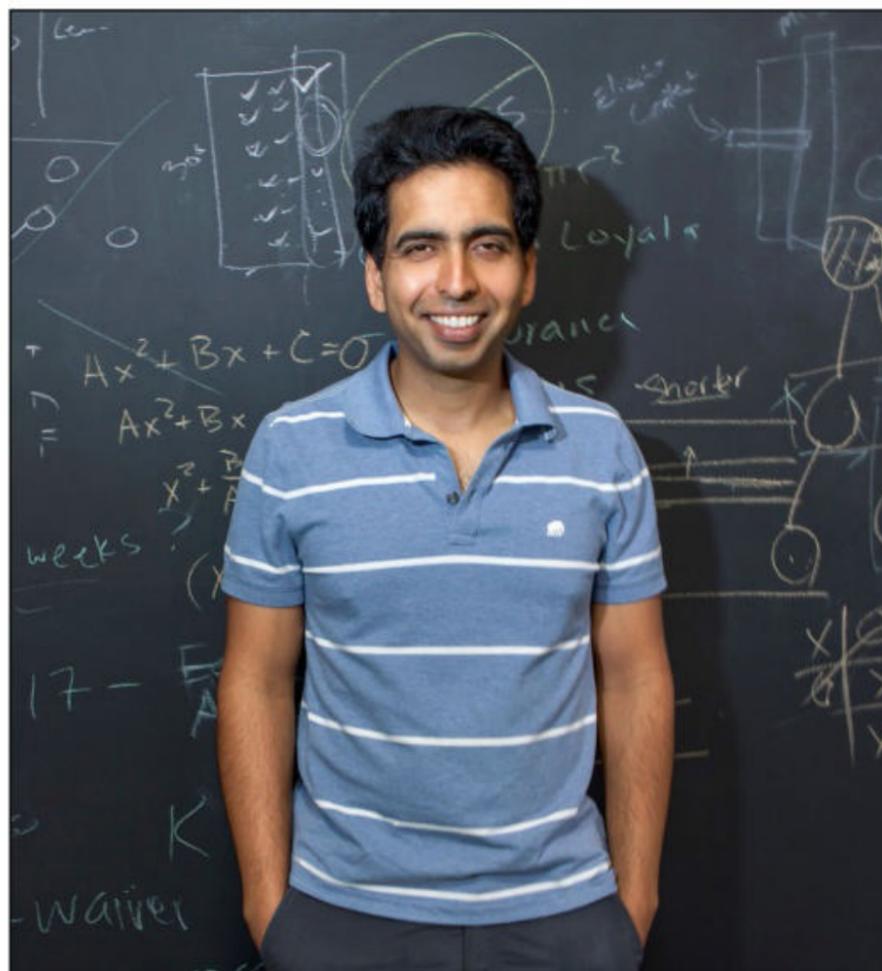
Me and Draco Malfoy

Tom Felton struck gold when he was cast as the malevolent young wizard Draco Malfoy in the *Harry Potter* films, says Michael Segalov in *The Observer*. He was only 12 but he already had a few acting gigs under his belt. And at the time, being one of the stars of the films didn't really change his life. "My schedules were fixed in a way I could stay at school, with weeks on and weeks off. Rupert [Grint], Emma [Watson] and Daniel [Radcliffe], meanwhile, were there non-stop for ten years. I carried on as normal. I'd get the occasional gag or comment from my mates but, honestly,

nobody was bothered." People find it hard to believe, he says, that he wasn't regarded as this "special, popular kid, but I was walking around with dyed hair and played an evil wizard. It wasn't cool. It did me no favours with the girls." Nor did he go on a wild spending spree (though he did buy a house for his mother); partly because, at the time, he had no idea how long he would be in the job. "We were going to make two [films] initially," he says. "If after the second, the kids still looked young enough, maybe we'd do a third. Then a fourth. It went on like that. We never signed up for 12 years. At some point I just assumed they'd replace us with decent actors, but they never did."

A lesson in manners

Countdown presenter Rachel Riley has realised that there are times when you need to forget the social niceties. Once, she was at a party, playing table tennis with her husband, when a well-known fellow guest – "who shall remain nameless" – put his phone down on the floor, and used it to film up her skirt, she told the *Dirty Mother Pukka* podcast. He then sat down nearby to view the clip on his Apple Watch. Realising what he was doing, Riley's husband picked up the phone and handed it to him with a filthy look. But Riley was "too polite" to say anything. Now, though, she'd act differently. "I would break [his] phone," she says. "I'm going to teach [my daughters] to be rude first and worry about that later."



Sal Khan is the world's most famous maths teacher, says Rachel Sylvester in *The Times*. His not-for-profit learning platform, the Khan Academy, has acquired 135 million users in 190 countries, by making thousands of video tutorials free to anyone with an internet connection. It all started when he was working for a hedge fund in Boston, and his 12-year-old cousin in New Orleans told him she was struggling with maths at school, and asked if he could help. Initially he did so over the phone; then he set up a website, so that he could help 15 young relatives. A friend then suggested he post maths videos on YouTube. "I thought, 'Horrible idea. That's for cats playing piano and dogs on skateboards.' But I took a shot at it anyway." It paid off, and now Khan has set himself a new goal: revolutionising the school system in the same way as Netflix has transformed TV. Why? Because the traditional classroom model, he argues, "doesn't fit our changing needs. It's a fundamentally passive way of learning, while the world requires more and more active processing of information." And like so many Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, Khan is a man with big ideas. "Even though I don't fly around with my own private jet or my own rocket, some of the things I hope to do [...] are on a fairly grandiose scale," he says. "They are on a scale that I believe would rival trying to explore Mars."

Castaway of the week

This week's edition of *Radio 4's Desert Island Discs* featured the presenter and actor Bradley Walsh

- 1 *Life on Mars?* written and performed by David Bowie
- 2 *March of the Mods* by Tony Carr, performed by Joe Loss and His Orchestra
- 3 *Bye Bye Baby* by Bob Crew and Bob Gaudio, performed by the Bay City Rollers
- 4 *I'm Mandy Fly Me* by Eric Stewart, Graham Gouldman and Kevin Godley, performed by 10cc
- 5 *Firefly* by Cy Coleman and Carolyn Leigh, performed by Tony Bennett
- 6 *The Hungry Years* by Neil Sedaka and Howard Greenfield, performed by Neil Sedaka
- 7* *Always and Forever* by Rod Temperton, performed by Heatwave
- 8 *That's Life* by Dean Kay and Kelly Gordon, performed by Frank Sinatra

Book: *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexander Dumas

Luxury: Golf clubs and balls

* Choice if allowed only one record

Viewpoint:**The agony of choice**

"Last week, after just over 20 years, it was announced that the iPod was going to be discontinued. It redefined how music is listened to; the iPod put vast choice in our pockets and made it portable. I keep thinking about that element of choice. It is a luxurious position to be in, I know, but two decades later I often feel stifled by choice, not just when it comes to music but with all entertainment. How can anyone settle on anything when there is so much to choose from, all the time? Like many, I felt nostalgic for the passing of the iPod. I am nostalgic for what might have been the perfect balance of choice: just enough for the possibilities to seem endless, without them actually being so." *Rebecca Nicholson in The Guardian*

Farewell

Teresa Berganza, mezzo-soprano revered for her Carmen, died 13 May, aged 89.

Leonid Kravchuk, first president of an independent Ukraine, died 10 May, aged 88.

Robert "Bud" McFarlane, Reagan's national security adviser, died 12 May, aged 84.

Kay Mellor, trailblazing TV writer, died 15 May, aged 71.

Fred Ward, actor known for *The Right Stuff*, died 8 May, aged 79.



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Nato's renaissance

The world's most powerful military alliance has taken centre stage since the invasion of Ukraine

What is Nato for?

Nato was originally designed, in the words of its first secretary general Hastings Ismay, “to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down”. The North Atlantic Treaty was signed in 1949 as a defensive military alliance between the US, Canada and ten western European states. At the time, the Red Army was by far the strongest force in Europe, and the USSR had control over most of the continent's east. Nato prides itself on having kept the peace in Europe over the 73 years since; but its role has evolved considerably, and controversially, in recent decades – as it has expanded into eastern Europe and the Balkans. Some on the European Left have long regarded it as a organisation whose role is to entrench US hegemony in Europe and beyond. Moscow, more than ever, sees Nato as a project designed to subjugate Russia and reduce its influence.

How does it work?

The cornerstone of the treaty is Article 5, the principle of “collective defence”. It states that an armed attack on one member state is an attack on all the rest, who will jointly take any actions necessary to defend it. (To date, Article 5 has only been invoked once, by the US in the hours after the 9/11 terror attacks.) Its political headquarters are in Brussels, and its governing North Atlantic Council, which reaches all decisions by consensus between all members, meets there. But in practice, Nato member states' forces are placed inside a US-dominated military command structure. In 2021, US spending of more than \$800bn accounted for more than 60% of the combined total spent on defence by all 30 Nato nations; the UK, the next largest contributor, spent £73bn. Nato's top military commander in Europe has always been an American.

In what ways has Nato evolved?

For much of its history, Nato had a clear, well-defined role. But after winning the Cold War without firing a shot, some expected that it might melt away. Instead, eastern European nations, fearful of a Russian resurgence, pushed strongly for membership, and Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush gave their full support. Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary joined in 1999; Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia followed in 2004. Along with the EU, Nato has served as a kind of umbrella guaranteeing the expansion of democracy and free markets in Europe. It has also been used as a vehicle for humanitarian intervention where the UN would not, or could not, act. In 1994 and 1995, it took part in its first military actions, attacking Bosnian Serb forces during Yugoslavia's civil war. In 1999, it launched an 11-week bombing campaign to force Yugoslav president Slobodan Milošević to withdraw his troops from Kosovo.

Has it overreached?

Arguably. Nato has always been a Russian bugbear – the Warsaw Pact was formed in 1955, after West



The “Family Portrait” at a Nato summit in 1957

Germany became part of Nato – and some analysts have warned for years that continuing to expand the most powerful military alliance in history towards Russia's borders would not end well. In 1990, the US secretary of state James Baker gave promises – albeit informal ones – to the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that if Nato admitted a reunified Germany, the alliance would “not shift one inch eastward” after that. When it did advance, many Russians believed that they had been double-crossed. “They cheated us – vehemently, blatantly,” Vladimir Putin said in a recent speech.

In April 2008, at its Bucharest Summit,

Nato welcomed Georgia and Ukraine as potential members – plunging relations with Russia into long-term crisis.

Can Nato justify its expansion?

Nato's line is that decisions about membership “are up to each individual applicant and the 30 Nato allies”. Ukraine, it says, has the sovereign right to choose its own security arrangements. “Russia has no right to intervene and cannot veto such a process.” Eastern European nations clearly believed that only Nato could guarantee their safety, and many say they have been proved right, citing Russia's invasions of Georgia in 2008 and, later, of Ukraine. The Ukraine war, Nato's defenders argue, proves that this policy was necessary: only the credible threat of defensive force has prevented Putin from menacing former Soviet and Warsaw Pact nations from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Has Nato made mistakes?

Its past 20 years have certainly been difficult. Its decision to enter partnerships with Ukraine and Georgia, but not to admit them as full members, left both vulnerable. Its long, costly operation in Afghanistan failed to stabilise the nation. Other “out of area” operations, such as against Colonel Gaddafi's Libya in 2011, have attracted criticism. Until recently, Nato was widely viewed as having lost its sense of purpose. In 2019, Donald Trump called it “obsolete”, and described European allies who were not spending the agreed 2% of GDP on defence as “delinquent”. Doubts

about the US's commitment to the alliance led France's President Macron to say that it was at risk of “brain death”. But the crisis in Ukraine has concentrated minds.

How has Ukraine changed things?

It has given rise to a unity and sense of common purpose that was unthinkable even a few months ago. There are now 40,000 troops under direct Nato control in eastern Europe, up from 4,000 in October last year. Finland and Sweden, two nations on its northeastern flank with large, well-equipped militaries, are applying to join. While avoiding direct involvement, Nato has played a crucial role in the war, and not just because its members have supplied crucial weapons. Nato forces have trained with Ukraine's army for eight years, helping to transform a rigid Soviet-style force into a nimble, tactically adept modern army.

A Nato state of mind

Over its 70 years, Nato has built up its own culture, says Thomas Meaney in *The Guardian*. As its third supreme allied commander Alfred Gruenther once declared: “Nato is a state of mind”, a community of shared values. There are Nato towns across Europe: from Ramstein in Germany to Aviano in Italy and Brunssum in the Netherlands. There are Nato academies where its military curriculum is taught (“smart training for smart defence”); a Nato Defence College in Rome; Nato schools for its employees' children; even an annual International Model Nato for university students. Nato has its own underground pipeline for jet fuel, its own songbook, and its own hymn, composed in 1989 by André Reichling, a Luxembourgian military officer. In 1959, Bing Crosby recorded a Nato ballad marking ten years of the alliance; Hermès has made a Nato silk scarf. In Belgium, there is a Nato golf club and a Nato museum. It doesn't, it's true, have its own military – though its member states can call on a total of 3.5 million personnel. And Allied Command Transformation, its military headquarters in Norfolk, Virginia, oversees training and integration, “coordinating national efforts to ensure coherence and assure interoperability”.

Too many food banks, too few cooks

India Knight

The Sunday Times

“An idiot.” “Crass and cruel.” It’s safe to say that Tory MP Lee Anderson’s recent remarks about food banks – there’s no “massive need” for them; people who know how to cook and budget could make meals for 30p a day – didn’t go down well, says India Knight. From the reaction, you’d guess he was “some languid toff honking on about things he knows nothing about”. Not so. The son of a miner, and until four years ago a lifelong Labour Party member, he has volunteered for Citizens Advice for a decade and has worked in hostels for the homeless. In his Nottinghamshire “red-wall” constituency, he’s involved with a food bank that runs a training scheme on how to cook nutritious meals on a tight budget. And many profess it has indeed helped them cope. It’s hard to talk about “cookery in the context of food poverty without sounding like Marie Antoinette”, but the truth is that cooking is “an essential life skill” that too many in this country lack – and that this carries steep economic and health costs. Anderson could have phrased it more diplomatically, but he’s still onto something.

Don’t let Big Oil explode its carbon bombs

Editorial

The Guardian

Humanity is never going to halt catastrophic climate change. That seems to be the view of the world’s big fossil fuel firms, says *The Guardian*. If they thought otherwise, would they now be investing in no fewer than 195 “carbon bomb” oil and gas projects, each of which will emit at least a billion tonnes of CO₂. Taken together, such projects, 60% of which have already started pumping, would “shatter the target of limiting global heating to 1.5°C”. That these energy firms are nevertheless pressing ahead is “perplexing as well as enraging”. We’re used to seeing such leaders as Donald Trump and Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro disregard climate concerns, but many of these hugely polluting new projects are under the jurisdiction of administrations that have signed up to solving the problem of global warming: the US, Canada and Australia are among those with the biggest expansion plans. This is madness. Global CO₂ emissions need to halve by 2030 if we’re to avert the worst climate change scenarios. “To continue on our current course would be nihilistic. The carbon bomb-makers must be stopped.”

A cunning plan to save the high street? Forget it

Michael Moritz

Financial Times

Charity shops and boarded-up shop fronts; a dearth of local stores. Shopping online has knocked the stuffing out of our high streets, says Michael Moritz, which is why the government is now thinking of introducing an online sales tax. But it’s a mad idea. The truth is that, today, every business is a digital business: even your high-street bookshop or chemist processes payments online for its non-digital services. So every business would be hit by the tax, tech companies most of all. Four years ago my hometown of San Francisco levied its own version of such a tax, and the result was an exodus of tech firms; imagine how an online sales tax would clobber No. 10’s drive to stimulate the rise of new tech firms. Let’s face reality. Protecting high streets from “the forces of progress” is a vain endeavour: they have to change with the times. Far better to look to the example of the thriving high street in Tottenham, in north London, where recording studios, an architectural firm and a fashion training institute now occupy spaces which were once shops. “Embracing tomorrow, rather than pining for yesteryear” is the way to breathe new life into our high streets.

The junk food diet of the fat man of Europe

William Hague

The Times

It’s an unforgivable U-turn, says William Hague. To placate some mutinous MPs, ministers have neutered their anti-obesity drive, dumping plans to ban “Buy One Get One Free” deals and to impose a 9pm watershed on junk food advertising. Why? Britain is now the fattest country in Europe: more than a quarter of us are classed as obese; one in five children become so by the age of 11. As *The National Food Strategy*, published last year, made plain, if we don’t help people escape the “junk food cycle”, then by the mid-2030s we’ll be spending more treating type 2 diabetes than we now spend on all cancer treatments. Yet our leaders, citing the cost-of-living crisis, have nixed the proposed ban on BOGOF promotions. It’s a spurious excuse: research has shown that “multi-buy” promotions leave people worse off by encouraging them to buy more than they need. What really lies behind this U-turn is the blinkered belief of many MPs that there is something “un-Conservative” about introducing regulations to tackle obesity. For No. 10 to defer to these misguided notions is “intellectually shallow, politically weak and morally reprehensible”.

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

A pub in Cornwall received a legal letter from *Vogue* magazine demanding that it change its name or face swift “remedial action”. The *Star Inn* at *Vogue*, which is in the hamlet of the same name near Redruth, was told the name might lead people to infer “a connection” between the two businesses. Landlord Mark Graham said he’d initially assumed “some bugger in the village was having me on”, and that since receiving the letter, he’s been urged to launch “a parish magazine and call it a ‘Vogue magazine’, and have a fashion week and call it ‘Vogue fashion week’.” Condé Nast, *Vogue*’s parent company, has now withdrawn its request.



Police are investigating how a Conservative club in County Durham came to host a wrestling “death match” in front of an audience that included children. The fight in Seaham, advertised to families at a discount, saw two blood-soaked wrestlers attack each other with sticks, glass lighting tubes and even a garden strimmer, as children looked on in shock. One of the wrestlers, Ronnie Thatcher, said that he was “f***ing sick of apologising” but conceded that he and his rival, Blizzard, had gone “overboard”.

A couple in northern India are suing their son and daughter-in-law for not providing them with a grandchild, after six years of marriage. Sanjeev and Sadhana Prasad claim they spent their savings on their son, and now want 50m rupees (£525,000) unless a grandchild is born within a year. “Grandchildren bring joy into people’s lives, but we are being deprived of it,” Prasad said. “We are very unhappy.”

How the Yanks took over the beautiful game

Bill Saporito

The Washington Post

America may not excel at playing soccer, says Bill Saporito, but when it comes to the business side of the game, the US “is Brazil”. No other country can match it for dealmaking. In the latest example of its dominance in football ownership, a group led by US financier Todd Boehly is set to buy Chelsea Football Club in a deal reportedly worth a record £4.25bn. More than 20 American firms or individuals now either own or have a stake in English football teams. Arsenal is owned by Stan Kroenke, who also owns the Los Angeles Rams, the Denver Nuggets and the Colorado Avalanche; Manchester United is owned by the Glazer family, which owns the Tampa Bay Buccaneers; Liverpool is owned by Fenway Sports Group, which owns the Boston Red Sox. And it’s not just the top-tier teams: Jacksonville Jaguars owner Shahid Khan owns Fulham; former Disney boss Michael Eisner owns Portsmouth; the Hollywood star Ryan Reynolds co-owns Wrexham. Gone are the days when England’s football teams were all owned by “local rich guys”. Americans moved quickly to supplant them once they saw the soaring value of clubs’ brands and the Premier League’s broadcasting rights. “The English might have invented this wonderful game, but the Yanks now own it.”

Unfit for office? Let the voters decide

Dick Yarbrough

The Albany Herald

Like many, I find it hard to believe that Marjorie Taylor Greene is a member of Congress, says Dick Yarbrough. This peddler of conspiracy theories once claimed that California wildfires were ignited by a space laser controlled by the Rothschilds; and accused Democrat leaders of unleashing the “Gazpacho police” (she meant the Gestapo). In her one term in office, Green has “made buffoonery an art form”. However, I didn’t support the recent bid by her critics to get her disqualified from next week’s Republican primary in Georgia. They argued that she violated the constitution by engaging in insurrection with her alleged support for the 6 January Capitol riots. The court chose not to intervene – citing a lack of evidence. It was the right decision. Greene was duly elected by the voters of Georgia’s 14th Congressional District. It’s their right to kick her out or, God forbid, give her a second term.



Taylor Greene: buffoonery as an art form

Lessons from the baby formula crisis

Derek Thompson

The Atlantic

It started as a “curious inconvenience”, says Derek Thompson, but America’s shortage of baby formula has now become “a full-blown national crisis”. It’s running low across the US, threatening the health of newborns and leading desperate parents to stockpile supplies. Various factors are to blame. The proximate cause is bacterial contamination at a Michigan factory. Covid-linked disruption to supply chains has also played a part. But perhaps the most important factor is America’s regulatory and trade policy. The truth is that Washington brought this crisis on itself through its desire to keep the US as a captive market for domestic dairy producers. FDA regulation is so stringent that most European formulas are illegal to buy in the US, despite often exceeding our nutritional guidelines. Those that do satisfy all the labelling requirements and other technicalities can attract swingeing import taxes of over 17%. The US also discourages formula imports from Canada. The result? The US formula market is “exquisitely sensitive to existential shocks”. Conservative populists and liberal critics of globalisation sometimes argue the economy would be more resilient if the US made everything at home. The formula shortage shows what a fantasy that is.

Curtailing abortion rights: will Republicans rue their victory?

Are the Republicans “the proverbial dog that caught the car”? For decades, they’ve been working to overturn Roe v. Wade, the 1973 precedent guaranteeing American women the right to abortion, said Alex Shephard in *The New Republic*. But now that the supreme court is poised to deliver this prize, it’s dawning on the party that the move may carry a “devastating” political cost; polls show a clear majority opposes it. Hence the oddly muted response of Donald Trump and many other GOP leaders. It’s one thing to fire up your base by attacking Roe as a symbol of undemocratic judicial overreach, but what the removal of this constitutional right “means in practice – prosecuting women who have had miscarriages, deaths from ectopic pregnancies, a precipitous rise in America’s already abysmal childbirth mortality rates – is far less appealing”. Obstetricians are dreading the “post-Roe nightmares to come”, said Jessica Winter in *The New Yorker*. While abortion pills will enable some women secretly to terminate early pregnancies (though many states are planning to criminalise the distribution of these medications), they won’t help women with later-pregnancy complications. More deaths and injuries are certain.

The Left shouldn’t count on benefitting from an abortion backlash, said Megan McArdle in *The Washington Post*. Recent polls show no sudden swing against the Republicans. Activists

on both sides feel very strongly about the demise of Roe, but most Americans don’t – probably because devolving abortion policies to individual states in any case won’t lead to much of a change for them. In Kentucky, for instance, where 57% of voters want abortion to be illegal in all or most cases, the rules will probably be strict. But abortion is “already relatively uncommon” in the state. By contrast, in Massachusetts, where 74% think abortion should almost always be legal, abortion access will remain unfettered.

It’s hard to predict how this issue will play out, said Jonah Goldberg in the *Los Angeles Times*, because neither party’s official position on abortion currently reflects where most voters are. Only 25% of Americans think abortion should be legal under any circumstances and only 21% think it should be illegal under any circumstances. The tone has been set by “maximalists”, and moderate politicians have played along out of expediency. It’s going to “take a long time to unwind the polarisation caused by Roe and the result will not please the most committed on either side”. The next few years are likely to be “chaotic or worse”, as Republicans and Democrats work out how to keep their electoral bases happy in a post-Roe world where politicians are democratically accountable for their positions on abortion. “The only way out is through.”

The Taliban: rolling back the freedoms of the past 20 years

In Afghanistan, the Taliban's retrograde and "inhumane" assault on women's rights is gathering pace, said [Hasht-e Subh Daily \(Kabul\)](#). Women have already been forced out of most workplaces since the Islamist group returned to power in August. They can no longer travel on planes or by taxi without a male escort; in March, the Taliban reversed a pledge to reopen secondary schools for girls. And last week its supreme leader, Hibatullah Akhundzada, went further, announcing that all women must cover their faces in public, ideally with the head-to-toe burqa. Those who don't could face jail; government employees will be fired on the spot. Ours is now the only country in the world that forces women to cover themselves entirely in public, a decree based on "their harsh reading" of Islam. Our nation is "broken and sick". Yet the Taliban is more interested in legislating about "the length of men's beards and women's robes" than in facing its problems.

When it first regained power, the Taliban sought to present a more enlightened face to the world, said Rafia Zakaria in [Dawn \(Karachi\)](#). This "Taliban-lite" pledged to honour women's rights, and forgive those who fought against them. Yet now, with the country isolated abroad and facing a humanitarian crisis caused



The burqa: all women must cover their faces in public

by sanctions and the withdrawal of foreign aid, its leaders seem to have calculated "that it is better to do what they want and be who they are". The regime faces vast problems, agreed [Tolo News \(Kabul\)](#). Its rival Islamic State terror group has carried out a series of deadly attacks in Afghanistan in recent weeks; and the opposition National Resistance Front claims it is regaining territory in parts of the northeast.

Afghans are paying a high price for the Taliban's incompetence and cruelty, said Sima Samar in [Der Spiegel \(Hamburg\)](#). Hunger is "everywhere";

families are being forced to sell children into marriage just to survive. The burqa decree will perpetuate the imbalance of power between women and men; despite the risks, women's rights activists protested the decision in Kabul. The international community seems powerless to influence the regime, said Lynne O'Donnell in [Foreign Policy \(Washington\)](#). Following March's schooling decision, the World Bank suspended \$600m of aid earmarked for education, health and agriculture in Afghanistan. But the Taliban "haven't budged". The burqa edict suggests the group is determined to roll back the freedoms enjoyed by millions of Afghans over the past 20 years, and to treat women's bodies as "the property of the state".

SRI LANKA

A detested president and a broken nation

[Daily Mirror \(Colombo\)](#)

It will go down as a "Day of Shame in Sri Lanka's postwar history", says the Daily Mirror. On 9 May, the prime minister, Mahinda Rajapaksa, finally resigned in the face of huge anti-government protests fuelled by our worst economic crisis since independence. Yet his supporters didn't go quietly. Instead, his announcement was accompanied by horrifying violence in Colombo which left at least eight dead and 250 injured. Rajapaksa loyalists, bussed in from around the nation, went "on the rampage", attacking unarmed protesters – including Buddhist monks, women and children – with "iron rods and wooden clubs". Infuriated by the brutality they'd faced, many retaliated by turning on ruling party politicians, "setting fire to their homes, shops, business premises and vehicles". Rajapaksa – whose brother, Gotabaya, is still president – was escorted from his home by the military. If Sri Lanka is to have any chance of recovering, our politicians must create a unity government. But opposition parties have made it clear that they cannot do that, as long as President Rajapaksa remains in office. Let's hope he sees sense before a "battered" Sri Lanka "perishes along with all its citizens".

UKRAINE

Britain steps up, but Brussels just dithers

[Politico.eu \(Brussels\)](#)

Judging by the procession of EU leaders descending on Kyiv lately, you'd think Brussels was solely responsible for equipping Ukraine's "brave resistance" against Russia, says Eoin Drea. Yet for all the EU's "grandiose" posturing, it's the Anglosphere, led by Britain and the US, that's really been helping Ukraine save itself. America's initial \$4.4bn package of military support was more than double that offered by all the EU states combined. "Even Britain – yes, unreliable, detached, infuriating Britain – provided Ukraine with more military aid" in the first weeks of the conflict than any EU country. Since then, both the UK and US have stepped up military and intelligence support. The EU, by contrast, "continues to dither". True, the Baltic states and Poland have been disproportionately generous. But support from France remains "largely unmoved"; Berlin has been a reluctant donor; and Italy looks "hopelessly" irrelevant. Even those EU countries that are providing meaningful materiel – Poland, Estonia and Lithuania, for instance – are getting their stock replenished by the US, often with more modern weapons. This crisis has shown just how far the EU has to go until it can properly defend itself. Brussels should show some humility and admit as much.

NORTH KOREA

Covid ravages a country with no vaccines

[Hamburger Abendblatt](#)

North Korea is staring down the barrel of a Covid catastrophe, says Fabian Kretschmer. Until last week, the rogue state had insisted it hadn't recorded a single case since it shut its borders at the start of the pandemic two years ago (albeit having done virtually no testing). Now, officials have admitted that nearly 1.7 million people have "fever" symptoms, and that it's spreading "explosively" across the country. Scores of deaths have been reported; some of the dead have tested positive for the Omicron variant. Leader Kim Jong Un, seen wearing a mask for the first time, declared a "severe emergency", ordering all cities to be cordoned off. He's right to worry. Experts believe almost none of North Korea's 26 million-strong population has been vaccinated, in part thanks to Kim's repeated refusal to accept vaccines from abroad. If the virus is allowed to spread through the malnourished population, its basic healthcare system will soon be overwhelmed. That'd be bad enough in itself; but perhaps the "greatest tragedy" in all of this is that, throughout the pandemic, Kim has continued pouring money into his rocket programme: he's carried out 16 missile tests this year alone, including one this month. Even by his standards, such misuse of his country's "meagre" resources is unforgivable.

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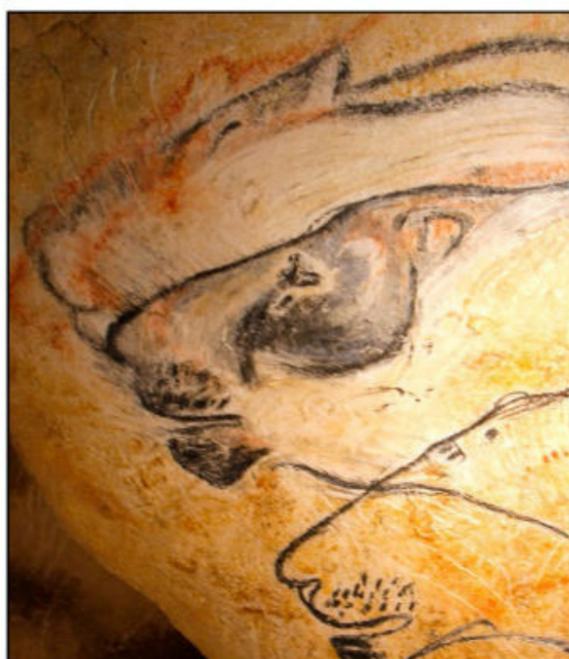
What the scientists are saying...

Spare tyres increase cancer risk

Men who are overweight are at an increased risk of dying from prostate cancer, a new meta analysis has found. For the study, a team from the University of Oxford reviewed data on 2.5 million men from 19 existing studies, with a fresh analysis of data on 200,000 men from the UK Biobank. None of the men had cancer at the start of the studies. Having assessed weight using various measures, they found that every extra 3.9 inches of waist circumference raised the risk of dying from prostate cancer by 7%, while every five points of extra BMI increased the risk by 10%. The researchers calculated that as many as 1,300 prostate cancer deaths could be prevented in the UK each year if men aged 55 to 64 had a healthy BMI – which would mean the average British man losing 2.5 stone. Study author Dr Aurora Perez-Cornago said that more research was needed to determine if the link between body fat and cancer mortality rates was “biologically driven or due to differences in detection”, but added: “The key message is if you are a healthy weight, try to maintain it, and if you are already obese or overweight, try to lose weight.”

Pig virus found in transplant heart

There was much excitement in January when a 57-year-old American became the first person to receive a transplanted heart from a genetically modified pig. David Bennett only survived two months, however, and now the team that pioneered the procedure has disclosed that a virus known to infect pigs was found in the heart he received. The organ had been screened for pathogens, but a latent virus may have “hitched a ride” undetected, said Dr Bartley Griffith, the transplant surgeon. The patient was in relatively good health



A scene from a Stone Age film night?

for the first few weeks after the operation, MIT Technology Review reports; then his heart swelled up with liquid. The University of Maryland team says that the finding raises the possibility that he died because of the infection, and not because of an immune response to the pig heart. If so, it raises hopes that with better screening, pig to human transplants remain a real possibility. On the other hand, news of the virus has stoked fears that xenotransplantations risk causing another pandemic, as in theory, an animal virus could adapt in the patient’s body and then spread in the human population.

Number plates reveal bug decline

A survey of the number of bugs splatted on car number plates has suggested that the number of flying insects in the UK has more than halved since 2004. Drivers have long observed that their windscreens seem to collect fewer moths, aphids, and so on

than they did in the past. There has been little research into the “windscreen phenomenon”, so the charity Buglife teamed up with the Kent Wildlife Trust to investigate. In the summer of 2021, they asked volunteers to clean their number plates before essential car journeys, and to then count the splats on their return; they were also asked to submit photographs of the plates. Those figures were then compared to data from a similar survey in 2004. Researchers found that the number of insects had dropped by 59% between 2004 and 2021. Of the four nations, England suffered the worst decline, with 65% fewer insects in 2021 than in 2004, while Scotland experienced the smallest drop, of 28%.

The Stone Age of animation

One aspect of prehistoric art that makes it particularly remarkable is that much of it must have been drawn by firelight: cave art is often found on walls well away from the cave entrance, says the New Scientist. It has recently been speculated that it was to take advantage of this flickering light that Stone Age artists often etched multiple overlapping images of animals: as the light from their torches bounced on the walls, it would have illuminated one image, then another, creating a basic animation. Now, a team at the University of York has found evidence that these animations were not only produced in caves. They have noted that multiple images were also etched on some small stone slabs (or plaquettes) that were excavated in southern France in the 19th century – and which show clear signs of having been regularly exposed to heat. They speculate that in the evenings, Stone Age people took out these plaquettes, and as they gathered around the hearth, used them to enjoy a Stone Age film night.

The bats that buzz like hornets

It was the 19th century naturalist H.W. Bates who first deduced that some animals had adapted to mimic fiercer species, in an effort to deter predators. He noticed that some flies, for instance, had evolved to look like bees, and that some caterpillars had come to resemble pit vipers. Most of the known examples of Batesian mimicry, as the evolutionary strategy came to be known, involve the animals’ appearance – but now scientists have found a rare example of acoustic mimicry, in a species of bat that buzzes like a hornet, in what appears to be an effort to scare off owls.

Researchers in Italy investigating bats’ echolocation calls noticed that the animals started buzzing wildly whenever they were handled. To see if it was a survival strategy, they recorded the buzzing sounds of both bats and hornets, and played the recordings to wild owls. The birds moved away from the speaker when they heard both types of buzzing, but when bats’ ordinary social calls were played, the owls approached it. “It is just one of the endless examples of the beauty of evolutionary processes,” said co-author Prof Danilo Russo.



Bats: skilled in “Batesian mimicry”

1.5°C warming risk “50/50”

There is a close to 50/50 chance that average global temperatures will exceed the key 1.5°C limit by 2026, a Met Office study has found. The Paris Agreement of 2015 set a target of limiting temperatures to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, deeming this the threshold vital to prevent the worst effects of global warming. To miss that target, temperatures would have to overshoot for a couple of decades; the Met Office’s model only predicts a 48% chance of temperatures exceeding the limit in one of the five years to 2026. However, its scientists said that it shows how close we are to failing to hit the Paris goal. In the five years to 2021, the risk of overshooting the target was only 10%. The Met Office also found there was a 90% chance that one of the next five years will be hotter than the record year of 2016, when global temperatures were 1.1°C over pre-industrial levels.

Pick of the week's Gossip

As president, **Donald Trump** repeatedly asked national security aides if China was using a “hurricane gun” to shoot storms at the United States, it has been claimed. “He asked if China ‘made’ hurricanes to send to us,” a former official told *Rolling Stone* magazine. “One guy in the room responded, ‘Not to my knowledge, sir.’ I kept it together until I got back to my office.” Another recalled: “It was almost too stupid for words... I did not get the sense he was joking at all.”



Katharine Birbalsingh is well-known for the high standards she demands of the pupils at her school in Wembley, where forgetting a pencil can lead to a detention. But this week, a clip from a documentary about Birbalsingh’s methods led some to suggest she should be in detention herself, for misattributing one of the inspirational quotes displayed in a school corridor. The line – “Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it’s the courage that counts” – is attributed to **Winston Churchill**, but it actually comes from an advert for Budweiser beer. Birbalsingh said it was “the essence” of it that mattered.

It’s perhaps just as well that No. 10 did not close during lockdown, as **Boris Johnson** has admitted that he does not get much done at home. “My experience of working from home is you spend an awful lot of time making another cup of coffee and then, you know, getting up, walking very slowly to the fridge, hacking off a small piece of cheese, then walking very slowly back to your laptop,” he told the *Daily Mail* (see page 21).

Wagatha Christie: a case without winners

“There are battles,” said Marina Hyde in *The Guardian*. “There are libel battles.” And then there is... the Wagatha Christie trial. The country has been gripped by the epic High Court clash between Rebekah Vardy and Coleen Rooney. The question being disputed: did Rooney, wife of ex-England captain Wayne, defame Vardy when she publicly accused her of leaking stories from a private Instagram account to the tabloids? Their fallout has given us much voyeuristic merriment. The court was reminded, for instance, that in 2019, Vardy declared: “Arguing with Coleen is like arguing with a pigeon. You can tell it that you are right and it is wrong, but it’s still going to shit in your hair.” There was a time when big libel trials involved patrician politicians battling “equally grandiose media barons”, said Tom Peck on *The Independent*. That two working-class women can now go head to head in the “rarefied” surroundings of the Royal Courts of Justice is a sign of “progress, in a way”.

I’m not sure about that, said Camilla Tominey in *The Daily Telegraph*. “Sleb-spotters” have lapped up the juicy details about Vardy calling someone a “nasty bitch”, and telling the *News of the World* that Peter Andre’s manhood was the size of a chipolata. But it’s depressing that



Vardy: an own goal?

two women have been “willing to squander millions arguing the facts of a matter so trivial” – lawyers have ended up discussing the difference between a “laughing” emoji and a “crying with laughter” one. You can’t blame Rooney for feeling betrayed, when she realised that someone in her inner circle was selling stories about her, said Anita Singh in the same paper. But they were not state secrets: one of the revelations concerned a dent in her Honda. Surely this case could have been settled before it reached this point.

This “bonfire of the vanities” has done nothing for Vardy’s reputation, said Julie Burchill in *The Spectator*. And “to make it even more surreally stupid”, the most in damages she could hope to get is said to be about £40,000 – “barely more than a decent day’s shopping for any self-respecting WAG”. We can only hope this sorry spectacle dissuades other rich people with too much time on their hands from going crying to the courts. “Amazingly, emerging with the least dignity for all this is the UK’s libel law, well established as the nation’s most lucrative high-end tourist attraction,” said Janine Gibson in the *FT*. At a time when there’s an estimated backlog of 41,000 cases, shouldn’t we stop very rich people clogging up the legal system with libel battles fought for “PR purposes”?

Civil servants: facing a jobs cull

“As a matter of basic courtesy”, it would have been better if civil servants had heard it from their bosses, said *The Times*. Instead, when they turned on their radios last Thursday morning, they learnt that the Government plans to cull a fifth of the civil service, or 91,000 jobs, within three years. Ministers have provided few details, beyond saying that they expect the cuts will save £3.5bn a year, enabling them to lower taxes; where the axe will fall is unclear. “The civil service has been told to come up with ideas.” No doubt some branches of the state could be much more efficient: agencies such as the DVLA have become “flabby and intransigent”. And a good number of jobs, such as running the NHS test-and-trace scheme, have been added due to the “temporary demands of the pandemic”; cutting 91,000 would, the Government points out, merely return the civil service to the size it was in 2016. But inevitably, many frontline services will be trimmed. Which ones? The Passport Office and the criminal justice system, for example, are already struggling badly.

Is it really so complicated, asked Richard Littlejohn in the *Daily Mail*. The fact is even this “modest initiative” is too tentative: the corridors of Whitehall need “a hurricane-force hosing down”. It’s blindingly obvious that whole swathes of the civil service are failing. Ministers

should start by tackling the “institutionalised culture of absenteeism”, which is what has caused the “intolerable delays” in the processing of driving licences, passports and tax rebates. Too many staff are sitting at home “munching Hobnobs and gawping at daytime TV”. Perhaps the Government could sack all the civil servants working from home, and “see if anyone really noticed the difference”, said Matthew Lynn in *The Daily Telegraph*. A recent survey found that only 27% of the Department for Work and Pensions and 31% of the Foreign Office, for example, are at their desk on any given day.

The civil service has grown fast in recent years, said William Atkinson on *Conservative Home*. But there are good reasons for that. Brexit, for instance, meant “a huge scaling up of some existing departments to cover duties repatriated from Brussels”. This plan would make sense if it came with a genuine wish to reform Whitehall. It doesn’t. It’s a “knee-jerk” response to the cost-of-living crisis, from a Government that is “fed up with officials”. Boris Johnson loves the idea of a “war with Whitehall”, said Heather Stewart in *The Guardian*. He has been vocal in attacking what he called its “work-from-home *mañana* culture”. Is that sensible? If you really want to reform the civil service, it seems foolish to pit the civil servants against you.

Ukraine: Russian forces in retreat

“It is looking increasingly possible that Ukraine can win its war against Russia,” said The Times. This is not just the view of President Zelensky and the Ukrainian military, who think they can defeat the Russian army by the end of the year, but also of Jens Stoltenberg, the secretary-general of Nato. Ukraine’s soldiers appear to have decisively won the battle for Kharkiv, its second city, just as they won the battle for Kyiv. Russia has wound down its major offensive in the southeastern Donbas region, in favour of a far more limited operation to capture a smaller part of it, in Luhansk. British military intelligence estimates that Russia has lost a third of the ground forces it committed since the start of the invasion. The overall picture is complicated, said Richard Kemp in The Daily Telegraph. The Russians still occupy swathes of the south and east, and they have finally captured Mariupol. “But the theme is clear.” Russia “is losing” – on most, if not all, fronts. Morale is low. Vladimir Putin is running out of time and options. “There are only so many times he can make major errors.”

This means that the US and allies should be thinking hard about the endgame, said Ross Douthat in The New York Times. Both of the most likely scenarios are fraught with risk.



Ukrainian forces near Kharkiv

Either both sides dig in and the conflict becomes frozen along something like its current lines, in which case a lasting peace deal would involve ceding Ukrainian land to Russia – “a clear reward for its aggression”. Or, alternatively, the Ukrainians really do drive the Russians back, not just to prewar lines but, potentially, out of Ukraine altogether. This, too, could be very dangerous. A total defeat would be a “regime-threatening scenario” for Putin. We should be careful about humiliating a nuclear-armed power in that way.

We’re not at that point yet, said Michael Clarke in The Times. It’s true that if Putin cannot conjure a quick victory in Donbas, his options are poor. He only has what’s left of the 180,000 troops he sent into Ukraine; Kyiv, by contrast, has mobilised its reserves and can field a well-motivated army of 400,000. “Putin’s forces will increasingly find themselves outnumbered”, as well as outgunned by Western weapons, on the ground in Ukraine. But Putin “will not lose gracefully”. His most likely response would be to declare a “significant national mobilisation”, pouring more resources into the war. Ukraine’s military success is very welcome. “But unless it turns Russia’s military and security elite against Putin”, it won’t end the conflict. It will “propel the next phase in this war”.

Eurovision: a double victory

For years, sceptics have predicted Eurovision’s imminent demise, said The Sunday Times. In Britain especially, it has been dismissed as an outdated festival of camp, as silly as it is glitzy. But this year the song contest, with its many ballads and daft costumes, not only “vigorously reasserted life after the pandemic”, but was more than usually freighted with political drama. Representing Ukraine, the members of the folk-rap Kalush Orchestra – who’d received special permission to leave the country for the event in Turin – put on a spirited performance which they ended with a plea to “help Ukraine, help Mariupol, help Azovstal”. This moved so many TV voters that the band rose in the rankings from fifth place, based on national jury scores, to a “resounding first”. The win, though widely predicted, provided a joyous boost to Ukrainian morale. But the night was the UK’s too: its entry came first in the juries’ vote, and second overall.

Sam Ryder’s near victory was quite a turnaround for the UK, said Mark Brown in The Guardian. For the past 20 years, we’d languished in the lower half of the table, and twice the UK entry



Sam Ryder: a TikTok star

has won the dread *nul points*. This was widely blamed on everyone hating us: in 2003, the UK’s zero score was put down to anger about its role in the war in Iraq; in 2021, there was talk of the Brexit effect. But Eurovision watchers say that Ryder’s score shows that it was never about the politics; we just needed a decent song.

Well, up to a point, said James Hall in The Daily Telegraph. Even this year, politics played a part: the Ukraine jury gave us *douze points*; Boris Johnson “must have been punching the air”. However, it is true that the British entrant was well chosen. Ryder was already a huge star on TikTok, with 12 million followers, and his “elastic vocals” and charismatic performance style made him a good fit for Eurovision, too. His song, *Space Man*, co-written by Grammy Award-winner Amy Wadge, sounded like a hit; and before the event, the Essex-born former juice bar owner had spent weeks performing “street sessions” in European cities to promote it. It paid off: even France gave it full marks. Eurovision may be a cheesy contest, but Sam Ryder has demonstrated that if you want to win it, you have to take it seriously.

Wit & Wisdom

“Tell people there’s an invisible man in the sky who created the universe, and the vast majority will believe you. Tell them the paint is wet, and they have to touch it to be sure.”

George Carlin, quoted on Next Draft

“No one has ever doubted that truth and politics are on rather bad terms with each other.”

Hannah Arendt, quoted in The Washington Post

“A romantic relationship is a sort of delusion between two people.”

Sheila Heti, quoted in The Paris Review

“There are two tax systems: one for the informed and one for the uninformed. Both are legal.”

US judge Learned Hand, quoted on The Browser

“Just about anybody can face a crisis. It’s everyday living that wears you out.”

From George Seaton’s The Country Girl, quoted in The Guardian

“If you loan someone \$20 and you never see them again because they are avoiding paying you back, that makes it worth \$20.”

Kevin Kelly, quoted in the Financial Times

“Americans are like a rich father who wishes he knew how to give his sons the hardships that made him rich.”

Robert Frost, quoted in Forbes

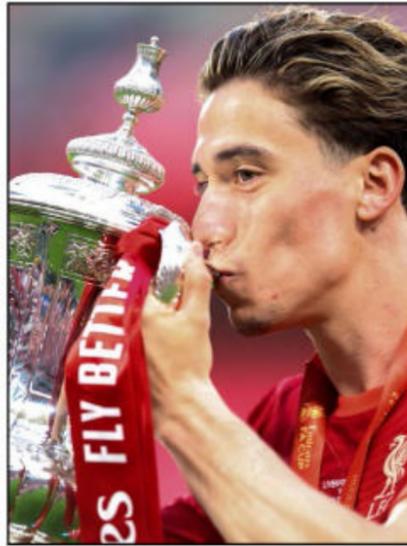
Statistics of the week

Almost four in ten graduates were awarded first class degrees last summer, up from three in ten a decade ago. The Times

In the week to 7 May, there were an estimated 1.5 million people in private households in the UK with Covid-19, down from two million the week before, and the lowest level since before Christmas. London Evening Standard

The FA Cup final: victory for the “mentality monsters”

A hallmark of Liverpool FC during this “never-to-be-forgotten season” for the club, is that even their more unheralded players produce the goods when they really need to, said David Hytner in *The Observer*. And so it proved in Saturday’s FA Cup final against Chelsea. This time it was the turn of the Reds’ back-up left-back, Kostas Tsimikas, to make his mark. The 26-year-old, who joined from Olympiacos in the summer of 2020 for £11.6m, was brought on as a substitute late in extra time, with the scores locked on 0-0. And in the ensuing penalty shoot-out, it was he who ultimately “made the difference” when he coolly slotted his spot kick – Liverpool’s seventh – past the Chelsea goalkeeper, Édouard Mendy, moments after Alisson had produced an “outstanding save to his left” to deny Mason Mount. Thanks to the Greek international’s composure, Liverpool had won their first FA Cup since 2006, and kept their quadruple ambitions alive. No wonder Tsimikas was mobbed by his teammates.



Tsimikas: making the difference

There was a certain inevitability about this match ending in a protracted penalty shoot-out following 120 minutes of goalless open play, said Jonathan Northcroft in *The Sunday Times*. For this was the exact same scenario that had unfolded in February, when the two sides met in the Carabao Cup final. And once again, it was the Reds who triumphed – while the Blues were left “gut-punched and heartbroken”. Chelsea undoubtedly came agonisingly close to winning, but even so there’s a very good

reason that Liverpool keep edging them in these kinds of games, said Henry Winter in *The Times*. In his time at Anfield, Jürgen Klopp has instilled a mindset similar to that possessed by the great Bob Paisley sides of the late 1970s and early 1980s: a “winning mentality, a togetherness and an ability to find a way through adversity”. He talks of his team being “mentality monsters”, but they are so in large part due to the scientific rigour of Klopp’s approach – evident, for instance, in the way he brought in German neuroscientists to “assist in the art of penalty-taking”.

For Chelsea, this latest defeat marks a “miserable end” to a difficult season, said Oliver Holt in *The Mail on Sunday*. Not only do they finish without silverware, but also without their owner, Roman Abramovich, whose deep pockets have laid the foundation for so much of their success over the past two decades. Prospective buyer Todd Boehly was at Wembley for Saturday’s final – and will have doubtless concluded that there is much “work to be done to breathe new life into the club”. Not that the weekend was all doom and gloom for the Blues, said Luke Edwards in *The Daily Telegraph*. On Sunday, Chelsea’s women completed a “league and cup double for the second successive year” by beating Manchester City 3-2 in the Women’s FA Cup final. Chelsea’s men could perhaps learn a thing or two from their women, who even when they are not at their best – as was the case on Sunday – almost always manage to “get the job done”.

Golf: the downfall of America’s “apple pie” champion

A year ago, Phil Mickelson wrote himself into the record books by becoming the oldest golfer to win a major title, said Ewan Murray in *The Observer*. The then 50-year-old, long one of America’s most admired players, was “mobbed” by adoring fans after triumphing in the US PGA Championship. It’s not a scene you can imagine happening today, said Daniel Zeqiri in *The Daily Telegraph*. For in the past 12 months, the player known as “Phil the Thrill” has suffered a “spectacular decline in popularity”. His problems began in February, when it was revealed that he was considering joining a Saudi-backed rebel tour, led by the former Australian champion Greg Norman. The comments Mickelson made about the scheme made him appear insincere and duplicitous: he insisted it was worth taking seriously as it presented a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity” to reshape how the sport was run, yet at the same time described the Saudis as “scary motherf*****s”.



“Phil the Thrill”: tarnished

Since then, Mickelson’s “apple pie” reputation has been further tarnished by revelations about the extent of his alleged gambling addiction: according to a new biography, he has frittered away \$40m with it.

All this means that the 2022 US PGA Championship opens this week with the sport in a state resembling “civil war”, said Derek Lawrenson in *The Mail on Sunday*. Most younger players – “happy with the amounts they make on the long-established PGA Tour” – want to maintain the status quo. Ranged against them are a few “grumpy old rebels” who are ready to “forsake their principles in favour of the easy millions on offer from the sportswashing Saudis”. Mickelson, who hasn’t played since January, won’t be in Oklahoma to defend his title, but other players linked to the Saudi scheme, including Sergio García, Ian Poulter and Lee Westwood, will be. It will make for a “sulphurous atmosphere”.

Australia mourns another lost icon

Just two months after the death of Shane Warne, Australian cricket has lost another of its heroes, said Nick Hault in *The Daily Telegraph*. Warne’s former teammate and fellow “larrikin”, Andrew Symonds, was killed in a car accident in Queensland last week, aged just 46. The all-rounder, who was born in Birmingham and taken to Australia by his adoptive parents, represented Australia in 26 Tests and 198 one-day internationals between 1998 and 2009. The finest moment of his career was probably the 2003 World Cup, when he contributed 326 runs to Australia’s victorious campaign.



Symonds: “ahead of his time”

Symonds was a player “ahead of his time”, said Mike Atherton in *The Times*. He was a prototype of the modern one-day player – an intensely physical batsman who could hit sixes seemingly at will. As a bowler, he could do “pretty much whatever the captain wanted”, and he was also a brilliant all-round fielder. Like Warne, he “played the game in unaffected fashion and revelled in the mateship of the dressing room above all”. This year has seen the deaths of Rod Marsh – another former Test great – Shane Warne and now Andrew Symonds. What a “dreadful” few months this has been for Australian cricket.

Sporting headlines

Football Blackpool forward Jake Daniels has come out as gay. The 17-year-old is the first male UK footballer to do so while playing since Justin Fashanu in 1990.

Tennis Novak Djokovic won the Italian Open, beating Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-0, 7-6 in the final in Rome. World No. 1 Iga Świątek won the women’s event, defeating Tunisia’s Ons Jabeur 6-2, 6-2.

Football Liverpool beat Southampton 2-1, with the Premier League title to be decided in the final matches this weekend.

Pick of the week's correspondence

A new majority in Belfast

To The Guardian

A lot of attention has been given to Sinn Féin becoming the largest party in the Northern Ireland Assembly as a result of last week's election. More significantly, the parties supporting the Northern Ireland Protocol received 53.5% of first preference votes, compared with 40.1% for those parties against, resulting in 52 members in favour to 35 against. Of course, not everyone voted with the Protocol in mind, and there were some small parties not in these figures. But it does indicate that those against the Protocol are a minority.

Obviously, this does not mean that the opinions of those against do not matter. Their concerns should be addressed – but only in ways which take into account the views of the majority in favour of the protocol. And, democratically, they do not justify obstructing the establishing of a new NI executive, as the DUP is doing. **Clem McCartney, Limavady, Co. Londonderry**

From one Palace...

To The Times

Clare Foges is right to insist that Parliament should vacate the Palace of Westminster while it is being restored, but where to? One solution would be to build a ship capable of accommodating MPs and their spouses, cruising around the UK. Debates could be held in suitable local buildings, and parliamentarians could eat in restaurants to give local economies a boost. When in Portsmouth, for example, MPs could debate in Guildhall; when in Liverpool, one of the cathedrals. The ship could also spend time in Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh, strengthening ties between the nations. **Chris Partridge, Fishbourne, West Sussex**

...to another

To The Times

Why not move Parliament to Buckingham Palace while the repairs are being done? Neither the Queen nor Prince Charles wants to live there and it would maintain the dignity of Parliament that having a concrete and glass

Exchange of the week

A question of protocol

To The Times

Bruno Waterfield is right in his analysis that "If Britain moves to unilaterally override EU regulations... that would be tantamount to an act of aggression, as well as a breach of a treaty that was negotiated and ratified by Britain only a few years ago." *Pacta sunt servanda* – treaties must be observed – is a golden rule in all international negotiations.

The DUP regards the Good Friday Agreement as a "capitulation" and wants a return to a border sealing the six UK counties of Ulster from the rest of Ireland. They have a right to that position, but the people of Northern Ireland, as we saw in the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, do not share that minority view. For more than a century, the extremist tail of Ulster anti-Dublin nationalism has wagged the dog of wider British interests. It is time the Prime Minister told the DUP that it can no longer impose its hard line on the rest of the people who live in the British Isles.

Denis Macshane, former Europe minister, London

To The Daily Telegraph

Simon Coveney, Ireland's foreign minister, says the Northern Ireland Protocol was "freely chosen and jointly designed by the British Government and the EU". He then disingenuously suggests that if the UK disappplied any part of it, this would be "breaking international law". He disregards the fact that the very same Protocol allows for either side unilaterally to suspend parts of it, if it is leading to the kinds of serious practical problems we see today. Mr Coveney also seems to overlook the part of the Protocol which requires both sides to act in good faith. There is a strong argument that, by insisting on the letter rather than the spirit of the agreement – for example, by refusing to remove checks on own-brand items destined for supermarkets that do not even have stores in the Republic of Ireland – the EU has itself already breached the Protocol.

Mark Lichfield, Blandford Forum, Dorset

building would lose. It could also save billions of pounds. **Philippa Evans, Hambledon, Surrey**

To cook a meal for 30p...

To The Guardian

Over 30 years ago, when I was the chef/proprietor of a small hotel in Somerset, I was asked to help prepare a lunch for a local volunteer-run day centre for pensioners. Our budget then (1990-91) was 50p per person per lunch. I managed to provide a shepherd's pie, vegetables and an apple crumble, but only by leaning on my regular meat and veg suppliers for a discount. Quite how Lee Anderson (*see page 12*) thinks he can make a meal for 30p in 2022 is beyond me. Gruel anyone? **Tony Rhodes, Ottery St Mary, Devon**

...you have to be trained

To The Guardian

Perhaps if the Tories hadn't removed all practical life skills

such as cookery and home economics from the school curriculum, there would be a modicum of justification for Lee Anderson's remarks. **Peter Fellows, Bradford**

Putin is self-deceiving...

To The Daily Telegraph

In March 1938, Sir Nevile Henderson, the British ambassador in Berlin, obtained a long-awaited interview with Adolf Hitler. Afterwards, the ambassador left thoroughly discouraged. In his report he lamented that Hitler's "sense of values is so abnormal that argument seems powerless... His capacity for self-deception and his incapacity to see any point which does not meet his own case are fantastic, and no perversion of the truth seems too great for him to accept." Vladimir Putin fits exactly into this mould, which should perhaps influence how Western democracies deal with him. **John McCammon, Coleraine, Co. Londonderry**

...but he knows it's over

To the Financial Times

Jonathan Powell repeats what has become a cliché among Western diplomats: we should "not box Putin into a corner". Russia-watchers often refer to Vladimir Putin's account of how as a child he cornered a rat only to find that it attacked him as he tried to run away. He claimed this experience taught him the dangers of cornering others. However, he chose to ignore his own lesson when he started his war with Ukraine. Pushed into a corner, Ukraine fought back with unexpected strength and determination. As a result, Putin has cornered himself. The logical outcome is not that he will use a nuclear weapon to avoid defeat, but rather that others will remove him from power and end the disastrous misadventure in Ukraine to save Russia from further humiliation. Use of a tactical nuclear weapon would be a sure way to draw in Nato to end the war.

John Lough, Redbourn, Hertfordshire

Now where was I?

To The Times

Boris Johnson says that he finds working from home inefficient, because he finds himself regularly stopping work to walk very slowly to the fridge to cut off a small piece of cheese, then walks very slowly back to his laptop and forgets what he was working on. Surely this says more about the Prime Minister's attention span and work ethic than it does about the downside of home-working. **Ian Aunger, Peterborough**



"Food prices are soaring, but I managed to catch these eggs before they hit the statue of Lady Thatcher"

© MATT/THE TELEGRAPH

Summer's biggest line-up



There's an
ocado
just for you

Review of reviews: Books

Book of the week

The Premonitions Bureau

by Sam Knight

Faber 256pp £14.99

The Week Bookshop £11.99

In October 1966, a ten-year-old Welsh girl named Eryl Mai Jones told her mother of a disturbing dream, in which “something black” had covered her school, said Steven Poole in *The Daily Telegraph*. The next day, she was one of 144 people killed in the Aberfan disaster – caused when a coal-slurry tip on top of a hill collapsed and buried the mining village below (pictured). In the wake of the tragedy, a “maverick psychiatrist” named John Barker visited Aberfan and discovered that Eryl Mai wasn’t alone in having foreseen it: several other people had had similar premonitions. To Barker, it seemed that psychic “precognition might be as common in the general population as left-handedness” – and this belief led him to found a “bureau” to solicit premonitions from the public. Sam Knight first wrote about Barker in a 2019 *New Yorker* article. Now he has expanded that piece into “a short book which is long on period atmosphere and enjoyably gratuitous detail”.

Opened in January 1967, the Premonitions Bureau was a collaboration between Barker and Peter Fairley, the science editor



closure: Barker’s death, from an aneurysm, in August 1968.

The goal behind the Premonitions Bureau was to use the nation’s “dreams and visions” to create a “warning service analogous to a government seismology or meteorology bureau”, said Mike Jay in *Literary Review*. Such an aim, Knight shows, was never realistic, not least because of the “Jonah quandary” – the fact that a prophecy ceases to be accurate if the event in question is prevented from occurring. While this is a “story of failure”, Knight relates it with “wit and intelligence”. And wisely, he doesn’t sneer at Barker, but treats him as a “questing intellect” deserving of respect, said Anthony Cummins in *The Observer*. Fizzing with ideas and “doggedly chased-down detail”, this is an “endlessly readable” book.

In Search of One Last Song

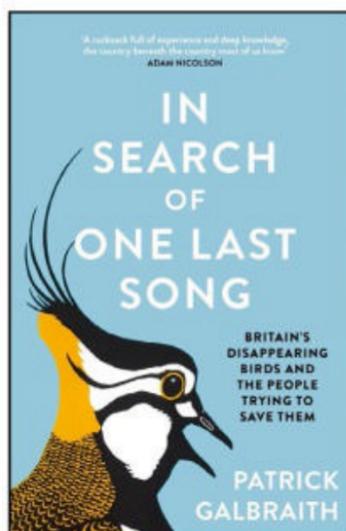
by Patrick Galbraith

William Collins 320pp £18.99

The Week Bookshop £14.99

Patrick Galbraith was in a pub toilet when it dawned on him that if he didn’t hear a nightingale, a turtle dove or a capercaillie soon, he “probably never would”, said Jamie Blackett in *Country Life*. “This type of random epiphany probably occurs to most people, although few of us bother to do anything about it.” Galbraith, however, “is different”. A precociously talented young journalist (he was appointed editor of the *Shooting Times* aged just 23), Galbraith resolved to find out as much as he could about the decline of birds in Britain – and to seek out some of the most threatened species. Accordingly, he set out on a journey to some of Britain’s “remotest places”, in search of species such as the black grouse, the kittiwake and the corncrake. It’s a journey he triumphantly describes in this “thought-provoking” and “entertaining” book.

Like all the best nature writers, Galbraith combines an ability to write lyrically with a formidable grasp of his subject, said Ethan Croft in *The Times*. His book is full of “shock statistics”, such as the fact that turtle dove numbers have fallen by 94% in the past three decades. Yet he also makes it clear that centuries of mismanagement are to blame for the current plight of Britain’s birds – going all the way back to the 1630s, when Charles I’s draining of the East Anglian fens spelled “doom for the long-beaked bittern”. As well as being a superb ornithologist, Galbraith is also an accomplished people-watcher, said Roger Cox in *The Scotsman*. He records many encounters with colourfully eccentric conservationists – such as a “clubbing and birding enthusiast” who enjoys watching lapwings while high on acid. This book is a “hugely impressive achievement, and it will be fascinating to see where Galbraith goes from here”.



Fiction of the week

You Have a Friend in 10A

by Maggie Shipstead

Doubleday 288pp £16.99

The Week Bookshop £13.99

Maggie Shipstead’s “thrilling” historical epic, *Great Circle*, not only earned her a place on last year’s Booker shortlist, but also “proved a huge hit with readers”, said Lucy Scholes in the *Financial Times*. So it’s “savvy” of her publisher to bring out this collection of her short stories, written over the past 13 years. The tales vary widely in tone and setting – they transport us “from the catacombs of Paris, via an Olympic Village, to a guano island in the middle of the Pacific” – but taken together, they forcefully illustrate the “remarkable scope of Shipstead’s imagination and talent”.

While one or two of these stories seem a bit “too self-conscious”, most are superb, said Lizzy Harding in *The New York Times*. In the “sure standout”, “La Moretta”, a young couple’s honeymoon in Romania “transforms into folk horror à la *The Wicker Man*”. Shipstead has an “unnerving ability to capture a character’s inner life in a few choice phrases”, said Stephanie Merritt in *The Observer*. “It’s a rare writer who can create a world as convincingly over a few pages as in a 600-page novel.”

THE WEEK Bookshop

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

Podcasts: war reporters, hard news and big interviews

“I am going to die now, and I wonder if it’s going to hurt.” That was the thought that ran through Stuart Ramsay’s head in early March, as the Sky News correspondent came under heavy fire from Russian forces in Ukraine. He did not die, but he was shot in the back, and he discusses this experience – which took place when the car he was travelling in was ambushed at a checkpoint – in a riveting episode of **The Line of Fire**, said Fiona Sturges in the Financial Times. A new podcast about the lives of war reporters, it is hosted by the British-Iranian journalist Ramita Navai, whose “own experience in the field means she is able to ask blunt questions without seeming ghoulish”. It’s not just about close shaves with death, though. It’s also “about how war reporters cope with working in such dangerous conditions, what they have learnt about humanity in the face of astonishing cruelty, and why they do what they do”. Another of Navai’s guests is CNN’s Clarissa Ward, who talks with illuminating candour about the complicated mixed emotions that she has on “leaving conflict zones and returning to a comfortable life back home”.

Even those of us not in war zones can feel overwhelmed by the “relentless” cycle of “destruction and killing” that dominates the news, said Miranda Sawyer in The Observer. “For some, the answer is to switch off; for others, there is comfort in trying to



Clarissa Ward reporting from Irpin, Ukraine

go swimmingly for those switching to the more informal medium. In his *The Lock In* podcast, Jeremy Paxman found a “slightly awkward place between chatty and confrontational”, even with the likes of the *QI* elf Andrew Hunter Murray, who “did not need to be urgently held to account for anything at all”. By contrast, Neil – in a series billed as conversations with “the people in power and those trying to influence them” – makes “no concessions” to the looser format. Interviewing General David Petraeus, the former director of the CIA and commander of the US army in Iraq, Neil remains in “big media beast mode: tenacious, brusque and intimidatingly well-briefed”. The result is a podcast that is “unlike anything else out there. An old-school, grown-up conversation about geopolitics, Ukraine and the changing nature of war. This could catch on.”

understand.” A great place to start is **The Ezra Klein Show**. This twice-weekly podcast by a US political journalist has been running since 2015, and was taken under the New York Times umbrella last year. Of late, the show has been focused on Ukraine and the geopolitical fallout. But it covers a wide range of issues, from the climate crisis to cryptocurrencies.

With his new weekly Tortoise Media show **The Backstory**, Andrew Neil becomes the latest “legacy media silverback” to try podcasting, said James Marriott in The Times. It doesn’t always

Albums of the week: three new releases

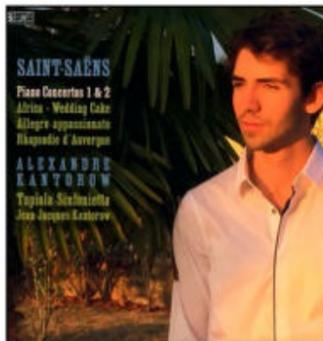
Kendrick Lamar: Mr. Morale & The Big Steppers
PGLang/TDE/
Aftermath/
Interscope



Kendrick Lamar’s last album, *Damn*, was the first non-classical or jazz album to win the Pulitzer. After a five-year hiatus – during which he has started a family – Lamar has returned with another triumph, said Alexis Petridis in The Guardian: an “exhilarating epic” consisting of 18 tracks, and not a “moment of padding”. In these musically adventurous songs – with lyrics that range from “deeply troubled to lovestruck, and from furious to laugh-out-loud funny” – Lamar’s “prodigious” lyrical skill leaves the listener “almost punch-drunk”.

Rap may primarily be a “word form driven by rhythm”, said Will Hodgkinson in The Times. But Lamar’s music is “so rich and varied, so exploratory yet also filled with hooks and melodies, that even people who thought they hated rap can get pulled in”. Here, the most shattering track is the closer, *Mother I Sober*, a plaintive piano ballad on which Beth Gibbons of Portishead “provides the most delicate vocal delivery ever found on a rap album, ever. It’s beautiful.” And the album’s a “masterpiece”.

Saint-Saëns: Piano Concertos 1 & 2
(Alexandre Kantorow)
BIS
£13.50



“Phenomenal, tremendous, incandescent, compelling, a true artist.” These were among the words used to describe the 24-year-old pianist Alexandre Kantorow following his recital in London in January, said Geoff Brown in The Times. His programme then had included pieces by “heavyweights” including Liszt and Scriabin. So it’s wonderful to find that the French prodigy is an equally brilliant performer of simpler, or lighter fare, such as the two Saint-Saëns piano concertos on this album. The “dancing clarity of [his] fingerwork” is a joy; and he “gives the more serious side” of Saint-Saëns its due.

Kantorow previously recorded a “superb” disc of Concertos Nos. 3, 4 and 5 with the same orchestra, the Tapiola Sinfonietta, and conductor, his father Jean-Jacques Kantorow, said Jeremy Nicholas in Gramophone. Here, the first movement of Concerto No. 2 is taken rather too “ponderously”, but it’s still a terrific disc, exuberant, full of joy – and a “feather in the cap” of all concerned.

Florence and the Machine: Dance Fever
Polydor
£10.99



When an album’s called *Dance Fever*, you might expect “glitter balls, Spandex and disco anthems”, said Neil McCormick in The Daily Telegraph. But this “magical” album is from Florence Welch, Britain’s “most artily cerebral pop diva”, and the title refers not to disco, but to the dance fever that gripped the German town of Aachen in the late 14th century, in what seems to have been a form of mass hysteria. *Choreomania* is the title of a “whirling dervish” of a song here – and its boldness is typical of a “lush” record on which the sound “shifts sinuously between the delicate and the huge” in “a baroque blend of epic Gothic pop and melodic folk”.

In its “commitment to euphoria”, this is an album “that looks forward to the release of all the pandemic’s pent-up energy at this summer’s festivals”, said Helen Brown on The Independent. On one track, Welch sings: “Have I learnt restraint?/ Am I quiet enough for you yet?” Ha! I hope that this “most dependably thrilling” of musicians “never learns to keep a lid on her wonderful wildness”.

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



Everything Everywhere All at Once

2hrs 19mins (15)

The multiverse is back in this divisive cult hit

★★★

In the US and elsewhere, the critics have swooned over *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. So it was “disconcerting” to find it a bit of a dud – “frantically hyperactive” and also rather dull, said Peter Bradshaw in *The Guardian*. The veteran action star Michelle Yeoh plays Evelyn, a downtrodden Chinese immigrant to the US who runs a “scuzzy” laundromat with her dopey husband (Ke Huy Quan). But just as a tax audit threatens to make her life yet tougher, she discovers that there are a host of alternate realities in which her life has turned out better: in one of the worlds she visits, she is a martial arts expert; in another she’s a movie star. The entire multiverse is in peril, however, and only Evelyn can save it. It sounds fun and there are some “nice gags”, but the film boils down to a “mad succession of consequence-free events”, which goes at such a clip you never care about the characters. I found it “a formless splurge of Nothing Nowhere Over a Long Period of Time”.

It’s not perfect, said Tom Shone in *The Sunday Times*. It does feel messy, “overstuffed and a trifle exhausting” – but it’s also “exhilarating, funny and moving”. Admittedly, the multiverse idea is hardly new: it was taken for a spin in Marvel’s most recent *Dr Strange* movie; but this film has “a gajillion times” more warmth and wit, and is made by two writer-directors who seem to be fizzing with creativity, at a time when cinema feels “starved of fresh ideas”. “You could keep tallying the pros and cons” of this sci-fi comedy all day, said Tim Robey in *The Daily Telegraph*. The fact is, I have rarely felt more “impaled on the fence by a film” because, “exactly as promised, it’s everything at once – good and not good; fresh yet still a formula; cramped, strenuous, full to the brim”.



The Quiet Girl

1hr 34mins (12A)

Moving coming-of-age film set in 1980s Ireland

★★★★

“If you are the sort of filmgoer who only ventures into arthouse territory a couple of times a year”, make this Irish “gem” one of the films you see, said Matthew Bond in *The Mail on Sunday*. Based on a novella by Claire Keegan, the film follows Cáit (Catherine Clinch), a girl growing up on an impoverished smallholding in rural Ireland in the 1980s. Barely ten, with a careworn mother and a perpetually hungover father, Cáit is bullied and miserable, until she’s sent to live with her mother’s cousin (Carrie Crowley) and her husband (Andrew Bennett). Under their care, her life is “transformed” – but it’s unclear how long she will be able to stay with her new family. Clinch is brilliant, as is Crowley as her surrogate mother, who soon becomes closer to her than her own mother has ever been. In all, it’s a “deeply moving” film about “innocence and loneliness”, which has a power that lingers long after the credits have rolled.

It seems initially to be a modest little story, said Wendy Ide in *The Observer*, but it “plays on the heartstrings like a harp”. First-time feature director Colm Bairéad has a knack for “telling us everything we need to know without words”: a stand-off over some sticks of rhubarb, for example, “is more eloquent than pages of dialogue could ever be”. The film arrives in cinemas “on unprecedented waves” of acclaim, said Donald Clarke in *The Irish Times*, but there’s no danger that the “weight of expectation will crush this delicately beautiful gossamer construction”: it deserves the hype. Although there is “a pervasive sense of unspoken menace lurking just outside the frame”, the film is also a “celebration of uncomplicated human kindness”. The result is an “unqualified success”.



Vortex

2hrs 22mins (15)

Harrowing drama about old age and death

★★★★

The Argentine provocateur Gaspar Noé has long used his films “to shock and to disturb”, said Kevin Maher in *The Times*. So far, he’s done “gross-out violence” (*I Stand Alone*), explicit sex (*Love*) and also sexual violence (*Irreversible*). This film contains not a single “shot of excess”, and yet it might well be the director’s “most disturbing” yet. Françoise Lebrun and the Italian director Dario Argento play an elderly couple – identified simply as Lui and Elle – who are stumbling “painfully” towards the end of their lives in their poky flat in Paris. He is a writer with heart problems, and she is a psychiatrist who may have dementia. Sitting somewhere between *Amour* and *The Father*, the film is a “brilliantly executed” meditation on “the fate that awaits us all – decrepitude and death”.

“It makes sense” that Noé, that inveterate taboo-buster, should have ended up probing a subject that few of us “willingly contemplate”, said Danny Leigh in *The Financial Times*. “In the end, our exits are solitary”, and Noé underscores this point by “making the whole film in split screen” so that the two characters are separated at all times by a black vertical line. This sounds gimmicky, but it gradually delivers “huge emotional power”. Still, this “mournful” film is “a conundrum: so wrenching it feels hard to ask an audience to give it their time, so honest it demands they do”. Powerful as it is, there are some missteps, said Charlotte O’Sullivan in *The London Evening Standard*, such as a “contrived” plot line revolving around “the siren call of drugs”; and the whole thing “moves at the pace of an especially sleepy snail”. But it does offer “a fresh angle on human frailty”.

Conversations with Friends: a disappointing adaptation of Sally Rooney’s novel

“*Normal People* was a lockdown TV hit that made stars of Daisy Edgar-Jones, Paul Mescal and neck chains,” said Ben Dowell in *The Times*. Now Sally Rooney’s first novel, *Conversations with Friends*, has been brought to the screen, with its story about a “love square” between four millennials, who inhabit arty circles in Dublin. The book is dialogue heavy, but the TV adaptation is remarkably visual: emotions are conveyed via long silences and “snatched looks”, and whether you can hack all 12 episodes will depend “on your appetite for earnest and extremely slow drama”. For those “happy to hop aboard”, however, it carries “an addictive pull”.

I found this adaptation “dramatically superior” to *Normal People*, said Ed Power in *The Irish*



Alwyn and Jemima Kirke

Times – with one main reservation. Joe Alwyn, playing diffident actor Nick, speaks in a “wonky” accent that starts Irish, but ends up English, and his “lack of charisma” creates a void at the heart of the series that no amount of intelligent direction from Lenny Abrahamson can plug.

“Slow, solipsistic, and self-satisfied” as this show undeniably is, said Nick Hilton on *The Independent*, it does have an “ambient appeal”. This is TV designed to be watched “while scrolling through Instagram, peering in at strangers on two screens simultaneously”. And if you’re not excited by the prospect of watching the lives of entitled millennials unravel “at a pace closer to Captain Tom than Mo Farah”, there are “plenty of close-ups of beautiful people kissing to keep you distracted”.

Exhibition of the week **Inspiring Walt Disney**

Wallace Collection, London W1 (020-7563 9500, wallacecollection.org). Until 16 October

In 1918, a 16-year-old Walt Disney made the first of many visits to France, said Rachel Campbell-Johnston in *The Times*. The trip would have a pivotal effect on his career: he had come to work as a Red Cross driver, but left as a devotee of the country's decorative arts. He found a "huge influence" in the creations of the rococo movement, an exceptionally theatrical and ornamental late

Baroque style, to which some of his studio's best-loved films owe an immense debt. This idiosyncratic exhibition pairs original drawings from Disney's animations with rococo works from the Wallace Collection, taking in everything from paintings to "candlesticks, clocks and teapots". It demonstrates how Disney's drawings took their "main creative cues" from rococo artists and designers. Like them, Disney sought to "create an illusion of movement" in his work; and just like them, he was "a pioneering artist who brought superlative draughtsmanship and emerging technologies together". It makes a "fascinating" show.

Disney's fantasies seem "without precedent", said Laura Cumming in *The Observer*: "pink castles, talking sofas, a butler based on a golden candlestick, mirrored ballrooms that stretch into an infinity of twinkling reflections". Yet they all have their sources in French 18th century art and design. Objects from elaborate rococo clocks to "outlandish turreted vases in



Rapunzel from Disney's *Tangled* (2010) and Fragonard's *The Swing*

pistachio and gold" seem to have sprung straight out of one of the impresario's films. "A home movie shows Walt and his brother Roy wandering, enchanted, around Versailles. Very rapidly, you start to see the origins of *Cinderella*." Originally, the opening of *Beauty and the Beast* was based on the most famous rococo painting of all, which hangs in the Wallace

Collection – Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *The Swing*. It was cut in the end, but scenes based on the painting made it into the later Disney productions *Tangled* and *Frozen*.

"Disney buffs" will love this show, said Waldemar Januszczak in *The Sunday Times*. The Wallace fills an entire wall with 24 drawings created for Cinderella's "miraculous transformation" from "shabby kitchen urchin" to "radiant princess". Incredibly, they account for just one second of animation. Yet, for me, the real revelation is that "it prompts a new understanding of the decorative arts of the rococo period". Disney understood that rococo craftsmanship was "fiercely animated and full of delightful transformations. When a Disney table starts to dance or a teapot starts to sing it's because French rococo tables do, indeed, appear ready to dance and French rococo teapots do, indeed, have an operatic presence." This is an "inventive" and "scholarly" show that raises the stakes for museum curators everywhere.



Where to buy...

The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery

Andreas Gursky

at *White Cube Bermondsey*

The vast panoramas of German photographer Andreas Gursky (b.1955) deploy technical wizardry to achieve the unsettling illusion of total focus, turning unlikely settings – a Chicago trading floor, a vast Italian port facility – into epic meditations on modern industrial society. This show of recent pictures contains a few that stay true to this doomy template, notably one of a

cruise liner cropped at its ends so as to resemble a floating housing block.

Elsewhere, proceedings are more painterly: a winter scene of ice skaters (above) draws inevitable comparisons to Bruegel; the messy blue tracks and red railings of a ski run are weirdly reminiscent of Cy Twombly. There's even humour, of sorts: in one nocturnal scene, the Eiffel Tower pokes out from behind an unidentifiable golden monolith. We might think that we know what we're looking at, but Gursky has the last laugh. As the title informs us, this is not the Parisian landmark, but a monumental replica in Las Vegas. Prices on demand, but likely very high. 144-152 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 (020-7930 5373). Until 26 June

Warhol's record-breaker

In under four minutes of bidding, *Shot Sage Blue Marilyn*, Andy Warhol's 1964 silkscreen of the actress's face, sold for \$195m to an unknown buyer at Christie's in New York last week. It



was the highest price for any US work of art at auction, and the highest for any 20th century work of art. Warhol's Marilyn is "the most iconic face of pop art", said Jonathan Jones in *The Guardian*. His first Marylins were made in 1962, after Monroe died by suicide; he cropped a still from her film *Niagara*, and had "a silkscreen mesh made so he could print it on canvas as many times as he liked, adding hand-painted colours". In 1964, a new series was commissioned, said Blake Gopnik in *The New York Times*. The "retreads", of which there are five, are "bigger and brighter" than the originals, and became more famous. The name is an error: in 1964, the performance artist Dorothy Podber shot a stack of four new Marylins. But not this one: "no bullet ever pierced" *Shot Sage Blue Marilyn*.



Best books... Emma Kennedy

The author, screenwriter and broadcaster chooses her six favourite books. Her new memoir, *Letters from Brenda* (Hodder £16.99) – a bittersweet exploration of her relationship with her mother – is out now

Swimming Home by Deborah Levy, 2011 (And Other Stories £8.99). Levy is my favourite modern writer – her work is forever fresh and beautiful. This novel is a masterclass in character, with a story that pulls the rug out from under your feet. Made me gasp it was so brilliant.

Delicacy: A Memoir about Cake and Death by Katy Wix, 2021 (Headline £9.99). I read this just after I'd finished *Letters From Brenda* and found it mesmerising and comforting in equal measure; 21 moments in a life that define love, trauma, darkness and hope.

Reasons to be Cheerful by Nina Stibbe, 2019 (Penguin

£8.99). Stibbe is one of our greatest comic novelists and I absolutely loved this third part of her Lizzie Vogel trilogy, a novel about love, lust and social angst set against the backdrop of a dental surgery. Her eye for detail is unmatched and there's one chapter where I thought I was going to be sick I was laughing so much.

My Mess is a Bit of a Life by Georgia Pritchett, 2021 (Faber £9.99). From the writer of *Succession*, a memoir like no other, rammed with anecdotes that will leave you breathless with laughter one minute, then wiping away tears the next. She has managed to turn living with anxiety into an absolute riot.

The End of the Affair by Graham Greene, 1951 (Vintage £8.99). I'm re-reading all of Greene's novels and it's astounding how efficiently written they are. This one is the best, I think, brimming with pain and rage. If you ever have aspirations to write a novel, read Greene. He's the perfect writer's writer.

The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1943 (Wordsworth £2.99). Two things that always floor me: loneliness and kindness. I can cope with neither, but this beautiful novella, of the lonely prince visiting planets, is one of the greatest books you'll ever read about friendship, love and loss. A masterpiece.

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The Week's guide to what's worth seeing

Showing now

The “playful, questioning” work of the British artist **Cornelia Parker** is brought together under one roof for a major new exhibition featuring many of her most celebrated installations (FT). Until 16 October, Tate Britain, London SW1 (tate.org.uk).

The month-long, city-wide **Brighton Festival** enters its final week with The Lord Chamberlain's Men staging an authentically Elizabethan production of *As You Like It*, and *Smoosh!*, a high-energy music and dance parade from composer Charles Hazlewood and Paraorchestra. Until 29 May, various venues, Brighton (brightonfestival.org).

A “revelatory production” of the classic stage musical **Oklahoma!** sees it stripped back and its score “brilliantly reinterpreted” (Daily Telegraph). Until 25 June, Young Vic, London SE1 (youngvic.org).

Book now

Tickets have just gone on sale for this year's **BBC Proms**, consisting of 84 concerts over eight



Parker's *Cold Dark Matter: An Exploded View*

weeks. Highlights include performances by the newly formed Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra and a special tribute to the great soul star Aretha Franklin. 15 July-10 September, Royal Albert Hall, London SW7 (royalalberthall.com).

Game of Thrones fans will flock to see Emilia Clarke make her West End debut in Chekhov's **The Seagull**, directed by Jamie Lloyd. 29 June-10 September, Harold Pinter Theatre, London SW1 (haroldpintertheatre.co.uk).

Television

Programmes

Britain's Strictest Headmistress Katharine Birbalsingh reveals how she ensures the smooth running of a culturally diverse school in one of London's most deprived boroughs. Sun 22 May, ITV1 22:15 (60mins).

Silent Witness Return of the long-running crime drama about forensic pathologists. The team are recruited to investigate the murder of the health secretary. Mon 23 and Tue 24 May, BBC1 21:00 (60mins each).

Troy Deeney: Where's My History? The footballer, who has long campaigned for the history of Britain's ethnic minorities to be taught in schools, examines why progress is so slow. Mon 23 May, C4 22:00 (65mins).

State of the Union Season two of Nick Hornby and Stephen Frears' comedy about a married couple dealing with their woes, in ten-minute episodes. Brendan Gleeson and Patricia Clarkson star. Tue 24 May, BBC2 22:00, 22:10 and 22:20 (10mins each).

The Hermit of Treig Shot over ten years, this thoughtful film documents the life of Ken Smith, who lives in a log cabin in the wilds of Scotland. Wed 25 May, BBC4 21:00 (60mins).

Films

Film Stars Don't Die in Liverpool (2017) Moving drama based on the real-life relationship between an ageing Hollywood star and a young Liverpool actor. Sun 22 May, BBC2 23:20 (100mins)

Odette (1950) Anna Neagle stars in this stirring WW2 biopic about the French spy Odette Sansom. Fri 27 May, BBC2 13:00 (120mins).

Coming up for auction

The **London Original Print Fair** will be at Somerset House for four days, with 48 galleries and dealers. Pieces range from works by the likes of Rembrandt and Matisse to those of emerging artists. Alongside the physical fair will be the digital **Platform for Prints**, for online sales. 26-29 May, Somerset House, London WC2 (londonoriginalprintfair.com).

The Archers: what happened last week

It's the opening match of the Ambridge Veterans against Darrington. Downcast Tracy is a no-show until Pat convinces her that the team needs her, and Ambridge wins. Inspired by using the wrong ingredients in a quiche, Fallon decides to hold a competition for a “Jubilee” dish. At the shop, Stella and Jim exchange views about the slurry plan. With Alistair's mediation, they reconcile, and Jim agrees to take the matter to the parish council. Tracy reluctantly shares her money worries with Chelsea. Jazzer likes his new telesales job, but Lily points out he's not pulling in customers. Coming to his rescue, Alistair makes an appointment with a sales rep and nearly ends up buying a new kitchen. Meanwhile, Chelsea got the job Tracy was going for at the Orangery and promises the wages to her mum. Freddie faces his first management challenge at Lower Loxley. Fallon decides to make children the judges in the pudding competition, but Ed's annoyed when she makes Henry the chair instead of Keira – it's blatant favouritism and Fallon hasn't heard the last of it.

Dreamy Italian properties under €1m



▲ **Umbria:** Citta di Castello. A delightful farmhouse built around an old watch tower. Currently serving as a B&B, the property is flanked by cypress trees. It has retained all its rustic features: old terracotta floors, wooden beams, stone walls and a brick vault. 5 beds, 5 baths, open-plan kitchen/breakfast room, dining room, recep, pool, garden. €888,481; Engel & Völkers (+39 339 665 5159).



▼ **Tuscany:** Licciana, Nardi. This beautiful and secluded 17th century castle is set in 5.44 acres of woods and gardens. 6 beds, 6 baths, kitchen, dining room, pool, garden with olive groves. €890,000; Knight Frank (020-3967 7126).

▲ **Umbria:** Lago Trasimeno, Panicale Castle. A unique 15th century fortification with a rich history. Includes the old stables, which have been converted into an art exhibition space. 7 beds, 5 baths, kitchen, 2 receps, attic. €990,000; Engel & Völkers (+39 075 509 3286).



► **Umbria:** Città Della Pieve, Monteleone d'Orvieto. Overlooking one of the most beautiful villages in Umbria, this delightful farmhouse comes with 3.7 acres of land. The property is made up of three separate self-contained apartments. Main suite, 5 further beds (3 en suite), 2 baths, 3 kitchens, 3 receps, laundry room, garden, garage. €990,000; Engel & Völkers (+39 075 948 6265).





▲ **Piedmont:** Zoverallo, Verbania. This villa enjoys commanding views over Lake Maggiore and is only a short drive to its famous beaches. 4 beds, family bath, kitchen, open-plan dining/living room, 2-storey outbuilding in need of conversion, garage. €900,000; Streza (+39 0323 025 243).

◀ **Umbria:** Casa Country. Part of a small medieval village built on the ruins of a Roman site, this property comes with a private chapel and includes a large garden. It is surrounded by the Parco Fluviale del Tevere, between Umbria's green hills and the River Tiber. 5 suites, 6 baths, kitchen, living/dining room, 1 recep, gardens. €750,000; Casa Italia (+39 074 322 0122).



◀ **Puglia:** Trullo Asfodelo, Valle d'Itria. These conical trulli buildings typical of the region are set in an elevated position with views of the Itria Valley, and include gardens with olive trees and a vineyard. 2 suites, 1 further bed, shower room, 2 kitchenettes, dining room, pool. €600,000; Raro Realty (+39 0831 188 2283).

▶ **Liguria:** Monterosso Al Mare, Cinque Terre. Perched high up on the west promontory of Monterosso, the house comes with glorious views of the Mediterranean. Master suite, 3 further beds, 2 baths, kitchen, dining room, recep, courtyard, gardens, garage. €850,000; IB International real estate (+39 347 023 7502).



▲ **Tuscany:** Monte San Savino, Province of Arezzo. Enjoying panoramic views of Monte San Savino Cortona and Val di Chiana, this charming stone farmhouse also comes with an olive grove and an annexe in need of restoration. 4 beds, 3 baths, kitchen, dining room, 2 receps, garden, double garage. €890,000; Terragente Real Estate (+39 069 318 8751).

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Food-themed festivals to visit this summer

Vegan Camp Out Held at Stanford Hall in Leicestershire, this would “make a great first festival for anyone new to veganism”, says Natalie Paris in *The Daily Telegraph*. As well as showcasing what it claims is the “largest selection of vegan food” in UK history, it “aims to equip revellers with the skills needed to whip up ethical, but nutritious plates of food at home”. Plus there’s music, talks, yoga workshops and a children’s area (15-18 July; vegancampout.co.uk).

Locally Sauced Festival Held in Haywards Heath, this event promotes “sustainable Sussex produce, from food to fashion”, says Rachel Dixon in *The Guardian*. Foodie treats include a pop-up Egyptian restaurant, a range of cookery demos and an artisan market. Local bands play during the day (23-24 July; locallysaucedfestival.com).

Heaton Park Food & Drink Festival This new “two-day extravaganza” in Manchester is brought to you by the team behind the award-winning North Leeds Food Festival, says Rachel Dixon. They promise international street food, no fewer than eight independent bars, a live cookery theatre and a market where you can pick up local products. It’s not just about food, however: there are “lots of kids’ activities”, and an “eclectic music



The “legendary” Abergavenny Food Festival

line-up” featuring local acts (20-21 August; heatonparkfoodfestival.com).

The Big Festival Set on Blur bassist Alex James’s farm, and well attended by the fashionable Cotswolds set, this is the “ultimate feel-good festival”, says Ellie Smith in *Country & Town House* magazine. It’s no surprise that the music is high quality – The Human League and Stereophonics headline this year – but there are also ample feasting opportunities, plus demos from the likes of Michelin three-starred chef Clare Smyth (26-28 August; thebigfestival.com).

Meatopia “If the sight of great hunks of meat being licked by flames gets you going”, then Meatopia is for you, says

Natalie Paris. At this annual festival on London’s Tobacco Dock, fire-cooking is “elevated to an art form”. More than 70 chefs will be in attendance this year, serving up dishes tested in advance. But the organisers stress that “Meatopia is not about gluttony”: there’s a focus on imparting knowledge, and on ethical, sustainable ingredients (2-4 September; meatopia.co.uk).

Scottish Wild Food Festival Visitors to this festival, on the edge of the Trossachs National Park, north of Glasgow, are invited to “take part in hands-on foraging, folklore walks, craft workshops and wild food demos”, says Ellie Smith. There are classes on wild cocktail-making and fermentation, and there is a daily banquet served at long tables. N.B. no camping on site (17-18 September; scottishwildfoodfestival.co.uk).

Abergavenny Food Festival Founded by two farmers in 1999, this festival has become “one of Britain’s leading food events”, said Natasha Goodfellow in *Countryfile* magazine. Some 30,000 people flock to the Welsh town each year for a programme of talks, workshops and tutored tastings. And there’s a “legendary” party held on the Saturday night, in the grounds of Abergavenny Castle (17-18 September; abergavennyfoodfestival.com).

Recipe of the week: sweet scones

Good food is key to diplomacy: it helps smooth the path to the resolution of conflict, says Ameer Kotecha. And its role is celebrated in *The Platinum Jubilee Cookbook*, a collection of recipes from Britain’s diplomatic outposts. These are the scones served at Wilton Park in Sussex, an agency of the UK Foreign Office which is used to host summits and other diplomatic events.

Makes 10

350g self-raising flour, plus extra for rolling a generous pinch of salt 1 tsp baking powder 85g unsalted butter, plus extra for greasing
3 tbsp caster sugar 175ml whole milk 85g sultanas (optional) 1 egg, beaten, to glaze
To serve: Devonshire or Cornish clotted cream English strawberry jam

- Preheat the oven to 220°C/200°C fan and put a lightly greased baking tray inside to heat up at the same time.
- Tip the self-raising flour into a large bowl with the salt and baking powder, and mix to combine. Add the butter, and rub it in with your fingertips until the mixture resembles fine crumbs (you can do this in a food processor, but take care not to over-process the mixture). Stir in the caster sugar.
- Make a well in the centre of the dry mixture, then add the milk and combine it quickly with a fork until you have a sticky dough.
- Lightly flour your work surface and tip out the dough. Sprinkle some more flour over the dough and, using floured hands, knead the dough very lightly. Work in the sultanas, if you like – to make fruit scones. Roll out the dough



- to a rough rectangle about 3cm thick. Dust a 5cm round pastry cutter with a little flour and cut out as many circles as you can, re-rolling the trimmings as necessary until you have used up all the dough and have 10 scones.
- Brush the top of each scone with a little beaten egg, trying not to let it drip down the sides (which can stop the scones rising evenly). Then, place the scones on the hot baking tray in the oven. Bake them for 12-14 minutes, until they are risen and a pale, golden brown colour. Remove the scones from the oven and transfer them to a wire rack to cool.
- Eat the scones either just warm or fully cool, but as soon as possible. There is only one way to serve them: split in half and served with lashings of clotted cream and strawberry jam.

Recipe contributed by Tony Franklin. Taken from *The Platinum Jubilee Cookbook* by Ameer Kotecha, published by Jon Croft Editions at £30. To buy from *The Week Bookshop* for £23.99 (incl. p&p), call 020-3176 3835 or visit theweekbookshop.co.uk.



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The best... jubilee paraphernalia



▲ **Street Party Cushion** This appliquéd and hand-embroidered cushion is made from navy wool felt and includes a feather pad. 58cm x 42cm (£140; janconstantine.com).

▶ **Vintage Style Union Jack Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebration Card Bunting**

Handmade by a small business, this bunting features 12 laser-printed flags (£6.50; etsy.com/uk/shop/cushncraft).



◀ **Jubilee Queen Placement Frill Tote**

Made from 100% cotton, this limited-edition tote features a handpainted portrait of the Queen. It has an inner pocket and a zip fastening (£45; cathkidston.com).



◀ **Fortnum's Platinum Jubilee Mini Musical Biscuit Tin**

Made in Lancashire, this mini biscuit tin is filled with dark chocolate and macadamia nut biscuits and plays a rendition of *God Save the Queen* (£15; fortnumandmason.com).



◀ **Disposable 2-Tier Paper Reversible Cake Stand**

You can choose either the Union Jack or the royal coat of arms on this 30cm cake stand. It can be recycled, or wiped clean and reused (£12.50; amazon.co.uk).



▶ **Ulster Weavers Queens Platinum Jubilee Linen Tea Towel**

This commemorative tea towel from Ulster Weavers is made from 100% machine-washable linen (£15; davidshuttle.com).



▲ **Union Jack Merino Picnic Blanket**

Made in one of the UK's last remaining vertical woollen mills, this blanket measures 200cm x 135cm (£170; annabeljames.co.uk).

▶ **Silken Favours Jubilee Silk Print Scarf**

Crafted exclusively for Fortnum & Mason, this silk scarf is 90cm x 90cm (£150; fortnumandmason.com).



◀ **Queen's Platinum Jubilee Mug**

A traditional fine bone china 275ml souvenir mug featuring an illustration of the young Queen on her Accession Day (£13.50; sophieallport.com).



Tips of the week... how to grow ginger at home

- Ginger is easy to grow as a house plant. Look for a piece that is roughly 10cm long, with plenty of nodules, as these will become shoots. Supermarket ginger may be treated with a growth regulator to stop shoots, so you'll need to wash it ASAP.
- Find a warm spot, such as a sunny kitchen windowsill. Half-bury the ginger in a seed tray with peat-free compost mixed with grit for drainage. As it grows, allow the top half of the root to be exposed to the light.
- Ginger is a thirsty plant, but doesn't like sitting in a puddle: it likes a warm, humid environment. Water frequently, particularly in summer, but let the water drain away.
- As green shoots emerge and the plant gets bigger, replant it in a larger, deeper pot, roughly 20cm in diameter. Mist it a few times a week to maintain humidity and feed it once a week with seaweed fertiliser.
- You should have harvestable ginger by autumn. The leaves will die down as light levels and temperatures drop.

SOURCE: THE OBSERVER

And for those who have everything...



Made from sustainable marquetry woods, with turquoise and mother of pearl pieces, this backgammon set is a collaboration between Alexandra Llewellyn and Net-a-Porter. It features the Malayan tree nymph butterfly and is 77 x 60 x 5cm when open.

Price £13,500.

Contact: alexandrallewellyn.com

SOURCE: LONDON EVENING STANDARD

Apps... to help master a musical instrument

Fender Play helps you learn the basics of guitar from scratch, by playing popular songs. It has bite-sized step-by-step video tutorials, with feedback (free; Android/iOS). **Yousician** is similar to Fender Play, but feels more like a video game, with lessons for guitar, piano, bass, ukelele and singing. You play in time to notes and chords that move across the screen. Play time is limited in the free version (free; Android/iOS). With **Flowkey** you can learn the piano by playing the songs you love. It tracks your efforts via mic input, gives instant feedback and can wait for you to play the right note before it continues (free; Android/iOS). **EarMaster** builds music theory skills for all musicians. It trains you to recognise melodies, scales and chords, improves your sight-singing skills and can evaluate your pitch and accuracy (free; Android/iOS). **Chord ai** gives you the chords and beats of any song instantly from mic input, YouTube videos and audio files. With the paid version you can edit files (free; Android/iOS).

SOURCE: STUFF

SOURCES: PERIOD LIVING/THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH/LONDON EVENING STANDARD/HELLO MAGAZINE

This week's dream: at home on a ranch in Costa Rica

There can be few better ways for children to “get in touch with the living world” than a visit to Hacienda Montezuma, says Lydia Bell in *Condé Nast Traveller*. This country estate in Costa Rica started taking guests seven years ago, and its recent shift from traditional ranching to sustainable cattle farming offers a lesson in “the power of conservation”. Its owners, the Acosta family, aim to give their visitors a taste of “traditional Costa Rican country living” – which means the chance to participate in the life of the family and the finca. You can choose between two casas on the farm, both of which are the Acostas’ own homes, and daily activities range from riding and fishing to helping to tag endangered tapirs.

The farm lies in the northern province of Guanacaste, and its 3,700 acres straddle the continental divide, attracting both Caribbean and Pacific birds, from trogons and oropendolas to six kinds of toucan. Indeed, its rainforest species read “like a Who’s



Sabaneros, or cowboys, are a staple of local culture

Who of Costa Rican wildlife”, including jaguars, pumas, armadillos, sloths and plenty of monkeys. Bird-watching expeditions and rainforest walks are led by an expert biologist, but for equine adventures, the estate offers a different kind of guide. The image of the *sabanero*, or cowboy, is much the same here as in the American west, and looms equally large in the local culture. Those at Hacienda Montezuma will take you hacking and – if you’re a good enough rider – they will even let you help muster cattle.

On other days, you might harvest malanga from the vegetable garden, visit a nearby rescue centre to meet recent arrivals (ocelots and the like), or

laze by a lake, swimming and picnicking. And in the evenings, the riches of the farm and neighbouring estates (including cacao for mousses and ice creams) are put to use in kitchen suppers and “firepit feasts”. *Plan South America (plansouthamerica.com) has one week from £5,517 per person, excluding flights.*

Holiday let of the week



Clifftops Dorset

Linked by a narrow spit to the mainland, the Isle of Portland in Dorset has a “lonely, ragged beauty” – and these five lodges recently built into its coastal cliffs complement it beautifully, says Helen Barrett in the FT. Intended to be “craggy and unobtrusive”, like hermit dwellings, they are constructed from Portland stone and weathered copper, sit 50 metres above a pebbly cove and offer “dramatic” sea views through glass walls. Each has an outdoor cooking range, a clifftop hot tub, and two bedrooms with “high-end” mattresses. Outside, there are peaceful walking trails that lead to good birdwatching sites.

Each lodge sleeps four, from £1,050 per week (low season) to £2,082 (high season); thepennestate.co.uk.

Getting the flavour of...

A watersports holiday for all

For families with disabled children, creating holidays that work for everyone can be a challenge – so thank heavens for the Children’s Sailing Trust, says David Hutt in *The Sunday Times*. This charity has a watersports centre and six “super-stylish” self-catering holiday lets next to Trevassack Lake on Cornwall’s Lizard peninsula. The newest, Clare Milne House, has a wooden deck with a hot tub, and the living room has big sliding doors, so children feel connected to the action outside even on rainy days.

There are “amazing” volunteer supervisors, lifts to all facilities, and equipment for all needs, including personal hoists, double kayaks, oversized paddleboards and even a “floating classroom” for wheelchairs. Being on water can be magical, and chances are the whole family will find a stay here “liberating” and “rewarding”. *From £735 for three nights, excluding activities (childrenssailingtrust.org.uk).*

A Spanish seafood spectacular

It gets crowded with Spanish holidaymakers in high summer, but the “slightly shabby” Andalusian seaside town of Barbate is a delight from April to June, during the almadraba tuna season, says Annie Bennett in *The Daily Telegraph*. Perched on the Costa de la Luz – the region’s Atlantic coast – it has splendid beaches that are good for sunbathing

from April (unless the “vicious” Levante wind is up), and sits beside a nature reserve that is great for hiking, riding and so on. But the biggest treats are gastronomic. Caught in tunnels of nets – the traditional almadraba method – Barbate’s strictly regulated quota of bluefin shows up in wonderful tapas and tasting menus all over town. El Campero is “astounding” – but trying various places is “one of the best ways to spend a weekend” here. *El Hotel Madreselva (califavejer.com) has double rooms from £60 b&b.*

Switzerland’s extraordinary railways

Switzerland has the most spectacular network of mountain railways in the world – and Great Rail Journeys’ “Mountaintops of Switzerland” group tour is a sociable way to explore it, says Adrian Bridge in *The Sunday Telegraph*. This nine-day adventure includes the two “biggies” – the Bernina Express (which includes the highest rail summit in the Alps, the Ospizio Bernina, at 7,290ft), and the Glacier Express, connecting Zermatt and St Moritz via the “stunning” Rhine Gorge. But woven between them are other journeys, each with its own magic – Brienz to Rothorn by steam, for instance. Seats are all in First Class, and there are extra treats in the form of funicular ascents to three of the elegant hotels on the itinerary. *The tour costs from £2,795pp including Eurostar tickets (greatrail.com).*

Last-minute offers from top travel companies

Lake District retreat

Set in Cumbria within the Eden Valley, the 4-star Appleby Manor Country House Hotel is offering 3 nights from £199pp b&b. 01768-351571, applebymanor.co.uk. Arrive 21 September.

Luxurious Mauritius resort

Stay 6 nights at the 5-star The Residence Mauritius, set along a stretch of powder white sand, from £1,491pp half-board (including London flights). 0800-540 4103, awayholidays.co.uk. Depart 7 July.

Traditional Moroccan hotel

Stay 7 nights at the Riad Zahra, a short walk from the beach and 20 minutes from the medina & souks, from £382pp b&b including Manchester flights). 020-8974 7200, travelrepublic.co.uk. Depart 4 July.

The ideal country escape

Stay 2 nights at The Lodges at Feldon Valley, nestled on the wood line of the golf course and amazing Cotswolds scenery, from £155pp b&b. 01608-685633, feldonvalley.co.uk. Arrive 16 August.

Covid-19: please check government websites for testing and quarantine requirements, and the rules surrounding children (gov.uk).

Manchester police chief who became known as “God’s cop”

**James Anderton
1932-2022**

James Anderton was just 44 when he became the chief constable of Greater Manchester Police –

England’s largest provincial police force – with 7,000 officers under his command. He was Britain’s youngest chief constable and served in that role for 15 years; and yet it is as “God’s cop” that he will be remembered, said *The Guardian*. A one-time Methodist lay preacher who later converted to Catholicism, Anderton claimed to be on a divine mission; and at the height of the Aids crisis in 1986, his remarks about gay people “swirling around in a cesspit of their own making” made him “the most controversial police officer in Britain”. Such pronouncements caused consternation at the Home Office. And yet Anderton made no effort to temper his words, said *The Times*. He dismissed his critics as “moral lepers” and “subversives”; and called for violent offenders to be flogged until they “beg for mercy”. He implied in a radio interview that he had a hotline to God; and on another occasion, when facing hostile questions from local councillors, he paused for effect, then said: “I’m beginning to feel what Christ must have felt before his crucifixion.”

Cyril James Anderton was born in Wigan, and brought up in a two-up, two-down pit cottage with a shared outside lavatory. His father was a coal miner and his mother worked in a factory. “Religion was the dominant force in the Anderton household”; there were Bible readings every day at home, and Sundays were a “procession of church services”. Anderton won a scholarship to Wigan Grammar School, said *The Daily Telegraph*, where he was bullied for refusing to discuss girls or indulge in illegal smoking. Leaving school, he worked for the National Coal Board before doing National Service with the Royal Military Police. He was picked on there, too – dragged under a shower fully dressed, and stripped and covered in boot polish (his nickname



James Anderton: controversial

was Spit, short for “spit and polish”). Anderton, however, regarded these events as tests of his faith, and continued to pray morning and night in the barrack room.

Having left the Army with the remarkably high rank of company sergeant-major, he joined the Manchester police aged 21, and spent four years walking the beat in Moss Side – an area then rife with prostitution and illegal gambling dens. His colleagues called him “Bible Jim”. When he became chief constable in 1976, one of his first campaigns was a crackdown on pornography that led to thousands of magazines being seized from newsagents and bookshops. He warned rugby teams not to play on the sabbath, claiming that it was a violation of the Sunday Observance Act; he had a prayer room installed next to his office, in which he regularly asked God to give him the strength “to smite the devil from the streets”; and he made sure the members of his personal staff shared his moral outlook. “You won’t find any heathens or libertines there,” noted one officer.

There were those who questioned whether he was capable of objective policing, but Margaret Thatcher backed him. He was popular with the rank and file; and in Manchester, his robust methods had some public support. Yet many of his admirers were dismayed by his role in the Stalker affair. John Stalker, his deputy, had been asked to lead an inquiry into allegations that the British Army and the RUC had adopted a “shoot to kill” policy in Northern Ireland – but just as he seemed to be getting somewhere, Stalker was suddenly suspended from duty, and put under investigation over his links to a Manchester businessman, said *The Guardian*. It was widely believed that Anderton had treated him “shabbily”. In retirement, Anderton gave his time to numerous youth clubs and other charities. He also wrote poetry. He had married his wife Joan in 1955; she and their daughter survive him.

Celebrity photographer who stalked Jacqueline Onassis

**Ron Galella
1931-2022**

“My idea of a good picture is one that’s in focus and of a famous person doing something unfamous,”

wrote Andy Warhol in 1979. “It’s being in the right place at the wrong time. That’s why my favourite photographer is Ron Galella.” Galella, who has died aged 91, was known as the godfather of American paparazzi. He photographed Warhol many times, along with countless other public figures, from the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and Robert Redford to Mick Jagger, Tom Cruise and Paris Hilton. Yet he was most closely associated with Jacqueline Onassis, said *The New Yorker*, whom he stalked so relentlessly in the 1970s that she took out a restraining order against him. She was, he admitted, his “obsession”.

Galella’s methods were controversial, and in many ways, he anticipated the generation of ruthless celebrity photographers who would pursue the likes of Diana, Princess of Wales and Britney Spears. Yet his “determination to capture the natural, unpremeditated aspects of his subjects made his work pulse with a startling sense of life”; and several of his pictures are now in fine art collections. “The point of taking a photograph, for me, is to capture a feeling,” he said. “Henri Cartier-Bresson talked about



Galella in pursuit of Onassis

the decisive moment, and that is what I have tried to capture my whole career.”

Galella was born in the Bronx in 1931 to Italian immigrant parents. His father made coffins and pianos; his mother was a dressmaker. It was while serving in the US air force in Korea that he started taking photographs; later, he used the GI Bill to study photojournalism at an art school in Los Angeles. In the late 1950s, he started taking pictures of film stars at movie premieres, and selling them to magazines. Then he had the idea of following celebrities to parties and galas.

In his efforts to catch them off their guard, he would jump out from behind bushes, and snap them leaning out of taxi windows. On one occasion, he so pestered Marlon Brando that the actor punched him in the face, breaking his jaw (after that, Galella put on a helmet before approaching him). Yet his work did much to illuminate America’s love-hate relationship with fame, said *The New York Times*, and some celebrities admired it. In the foreword to one of his many books, Diane Keaton argued that he was the photographer who best captured the fleeting beauty and sheer magnetism of that era’s Hollywood stars. “In Galella’s photographs,” she wrote, “Marlon Brando is still the most beautiful man I’ve ever seen.”



AFGHAN CRISIS APPEAL



'Please don't let the people of Afghanistan be forgotten'



REBECCA FERGUSON,
MSF NURSE,
EMERGENCY ROOM,
HERAT

"We are treating a lot of patients and at times we've been close to being overwhelmed. In the intensive care unit, we've had up to three children in each bed. That's 50 extremely sick children in a space intended for 20.

We've seen a lot of malnourished children, but the biggest problem we're facing at the moment is measles. This year the whole of Afghanistan, not just our project in Herat, has seen a huge increase in cases. We're currently seeing more than 200 cases a week, mostly

children under five years old – 60 per cent of whom need to be admitted and need extra care.

Measles is easily preventable by vaccination, but the crisis in Afghanistan means that there aren't enough vaccines here. Not enough children are being vaccinated.

One little girl was brought to us who was about three months old. She was tiny, had a red, blotchy rash spreading down her body and was struggling to breathe. We rushed her to the resuscitation table, but her breathing got worse. She had measles and pneumonia and she was exhausted. We'd all seen this before, when a child's body runs out of energy, runs out of fight.

In intensive care we see such sick, sick kids. And there are some days when you just think: 'Everyone is so sick, how is this going to get better?'

But we weren't ready to give up on her. As a team, we worked to treat

her and keep her alive. Her mother was with us the whole time, talking to her baby, stroking her hair. We worked for so long and tried so many things and eventually her breathing began to improve, and she slowly came back to us.

Ever since then, we've been busy. We've opened a new 60-bed unit for measles patients and we're hopeful that we'll be able to save even more lives.

Much of the world's attention is focused on Ukraine at the moment. But even with so many terrible things happening in the world, I hope the people of Afghanistan will not be forgotten. The situation here is very hard and people still desperately need our help."

Above: MSF doctor Solveig Kåbe with Nyayesh, eight months old. Nyayesh was severely malnourished and had pneumonia when she was admitted to the intensive care unit of the MSF-supported paediatric department of Herat Regional Hospital. Photograph © MSF

WHAT IS MSF DOING IN AFGHANISTAN?

Right now, our teams in five locations across the country are providing lifesaving medical care, including treating malnourished children, providing emergency surgery and helping women give birth safely.

£40 could provide lifesaving measles vaccinations for 160 children

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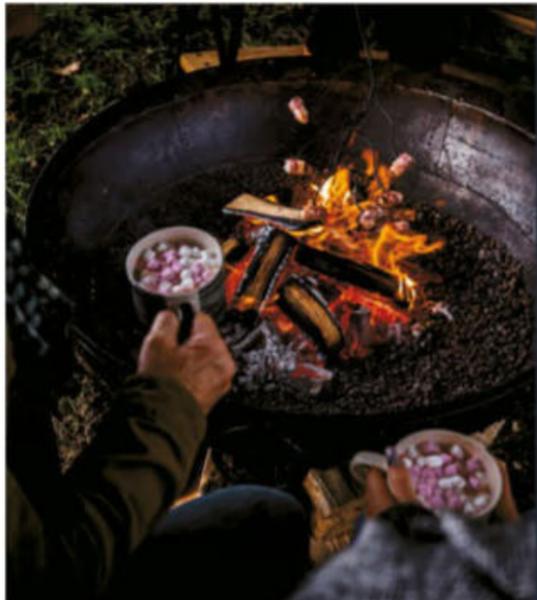
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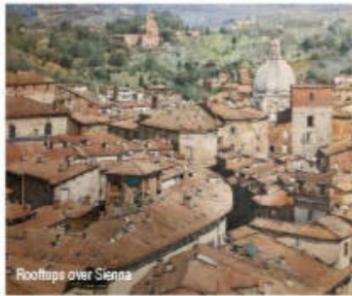
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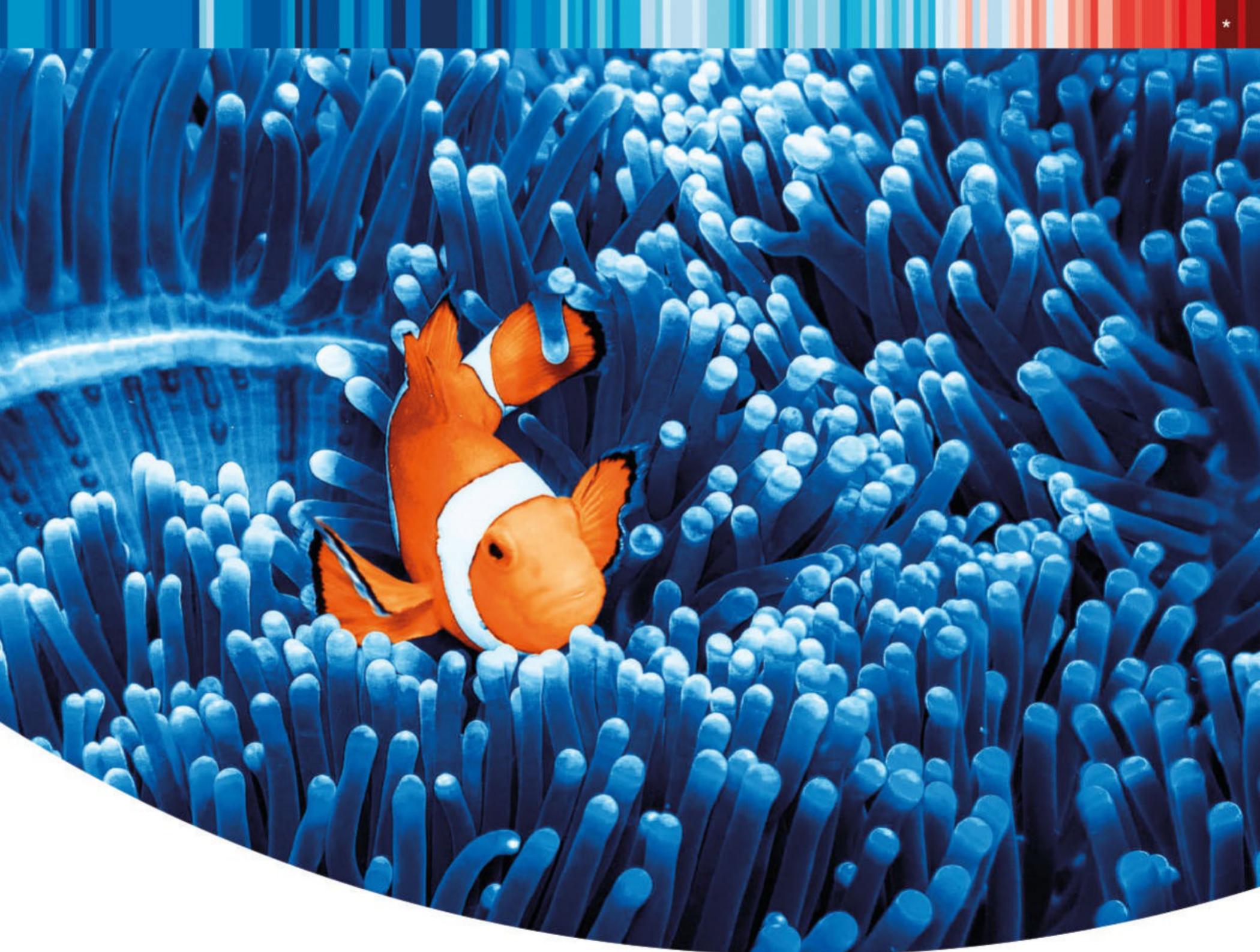
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Companies in the news ...and how they were assessed



Seven days in the Square Mile

UK inflation hit a 40-year high of 9% in the year to April – up from 7% in March and far exceeding the Bank of England's target of 2%. The main driver was an unprecedented £700-a-year increase in household energy costs when the energy price cap was raised on 1 April. Called to explain the jump to MPs, BoE Governor Andrew Bailey said there was "not a lot" the Bank could do about 80% of the rise, which he blamed on rising global energy and food prices, exacerbated by the Ukraine war. He warned that the nation faced an "apocalyptic" rise in food prices – a remark later dismissed by a government source as "ridiculous and frankly irresponsible".

There was better news on the jobs front: the ONS reported that **UK unemployment** fell to its lowest level in almost 50 years in the first quarter, with fewer people seeking work than job vacancies for the first time since records began. Wages fell 1.2% in real terms as inflation eroded the value of a 4.2% rise in weekly earnings.

Announcing a £300m loss for 2021-22, **Ryanair** CEO Michael O'Leary claimed he would welcome the economic downturn because it would boost his business against rivals. Shares in **Made.com**, the online furniture-seller which floated last year, fell following its second profit warning in six months. An investigation by The Sunday Times revealed accounting "chaos" inside Sir Martin Sorrell's **S4 Capital** advertising empire.

Twitter/Musk: tweet-by-tweet negotiation

"Chocolate milk is insanely good. Just had some," tweeted Elon Musk last Monday in what would be the social media site's third most popular post for the week. Less heartening for Twitter was a later post in which the Tesla boss declared he had put his \$44bn takeover "on hold", due to concerns about the high number of fake accounts (or "bots") on the platform, said The Daily Telegraph. Despite a follow-up tweet in which Musk claimed he is "still committed to acquisition", Twitter's shares promptly dropped 10%, valuing the company at just over \$31bn. Cynics reckon Musk is using the bots issue to soften up Twitter's management and negotiate a lower offer, said The Washington Post. If so, it was a neat trick. Shares in Tesla – which have fallen steeply since its major stakeholder "committed billions of dollars of his personal wealth towards funding the deal" – promptly shot up, allowing Musk "to recoup some of his net worth, while also reducing the market value of the company he is seeking to buy". Still, he should tread carefully: a "manoeuvre" like that could easily "draw regulatory scrutiny". Indeed, some legal experts reckon that Musk, who has a history of flouting rules, might have already laid himself open to the SEC's "nuclear option", said the FT: complete suspension or disqualification from being a director of a public company.

Saudi Aramco: king of the heap

Saudi Arabia's oil and gas behemoth "has a new crown", which is sure to please the country's de facto ruler, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, said Lauren Silva Laughlin on Reuters Breakingviews. The \$2.4trn fossil fuel giant, which listed in 2019, has overtaken Apple as the world's largest company by market value. Aramco has clearly benefited from Russia's invasion of Ukraine – "it is a key player plugging holes in the European energy market". Still, you might argue "it's not that Saudi has gained a crown, so much as that Silicon Valley has lost one". This latest changing of the guard is a sign of "the old economy reasserting itself" in the current turmoil, said Graeme Wearden in The Guardian. Apple anticipates it could take a revenue hit of between \$4bn-\$8bn this quarter. By contrast, Aramco has been raking it in on the back of the high oil price (up by more than 45% this year), and it has boosted production, said Bloomberg. Net income rose to almost \$40bn in Q1, up 82% from a year earlier. Bigger oil, indeed.

Executive pay: back to the bad old days?

It's not a great look for Tesco, said Sarah Butler in The Guardian. "As families struggle with rising food costs", the supermarket's executives are making off with bumper salaries. CEO Ken Murphy's £4.75m package last year included a £3.21m bonus (the highest paid by Tesco since 2016), and he could earn up to £10.7m this year if he hits set targets. Tesco isn't the only FTSE company under fire. The latest to feel the heat is Greggs. The high-street baker has been castigated by investment adviser Pirc for paying its outgoing boss, Roger Whiteside, a total package of £1.9m – or "79 times" the pay of a regular employee. Given the acute labour shortage, perhaps some of this largesse will trickle down. Don't count on it, said Tracey Boles in The Times. In its latest quarterly survey, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development found that "barely a quarter of employers will offer pay rises to their workers".

McDonald's/Unilever/Renault: Russian roulette

McDonald's Russian restaurants had an element of exoticism missing from some Western branches, said the Financial Times. Local specialities included "Beef a la Russe burger on a black bread bun". But now they are shutting for good. Two months after temporarily closing 850 outlets, the US fast-food chain is selling its Russian business.

The company hopes to find a local buyer to hire employees, but nonetheless expects to write off a non-cash charge of up to \$1.4bn "in its first exit from a large market". The move marks a symbolic retreat, 32 years after McDonald's opened its first outlet on Moscow's Pushkin Square. Having "embodied the very notion of glasnost", said CEO Chris Kempczinski, "the Golden Arches will shine no more".

Kempczinski stated that remaining is not "consistent with McDonald's values" amidst "the humanitarian crisis" of the Ukraine war. Its exit will put pressure on others, said Nils Pratley



A symbolic retreat

in The Guardian. Unilever says that it is remaining in the country, at no profit to itself, so that it can continue supplying "essential goods" (Wall's ice cream anyone?) to the Russian people, and to support employees. "Nobody should deny the complexities, but Unilever looks increasingly isolated."

In one of the most significant retreats yet, Renault is selling its whole operation, including its 67.7% stake in Lada-maker Avtovaz, to Russian state entities for a "token" two roubles, said Lex in the FT. The €2.2bn write-down means that the French carmaker, shaved of its Russian assets, is now worth barely more than its large shareholding in the Japanese group Nissan. The quality of Russian-made cars has improved greatly since Lada's Soviet heyday. "Jokes about rusty old clunkers now apply more pertinently to Renault than they do to Lada cars."

Issue of the week: luna's death spiral

A vicious crash has shaken confidence in the entire crypto ecosystem

In January, Mike Novogratz – a former “hedge fund rockstar turned crypto heavy-hitter” – tweeted a picture of a sizeable new tattoo on his left shoulder, said the FT. In homage to his favourite cryptocurrency, luna, it featured an image of a wolf howling at the Moon. “I’m officially a Lunatic!!!” he added. Back then, luna was trading at around \$78; by the start of April, it had hit \$116. But last week its value slid to “zero” after terraUSD – a sister “stablecoin” that was supposedly pegged to the US dollar – collapsed in value. In all, some \$41bn was wiped out, said The Guardian, marking “the largest destruction of wealth” in crypto’s history, according to the analytics firm CryptoCompare.



Do Kwon: banking on a not-so-stable stablecoin

Do Kwon, using a complex “algorithmic” arrangement in which its dollar peg would be maintained via the fluctuations of its sister coin, luna, said James Titcomb in The Sunday Telegraph. Many were not surprised when it collapsed, but were shocked when “supposedly more secure coins” backed by cash reserves also wavered.

“Crashes are always painful in the short run,” said Jonathan Levin on Bloomberg, but they have a function. A dot-com-like shakeout for digital currencies might “root out the wannabes and set the stage for true innovation”. Yet with the viability of stablecoins now in question, “the entire crypto market is uneasy”, said

The shock had a seismic effect across the sector, knocking 15-25% off the value of rival currencies and whacking the already fragile share price of the market’s main exchange, Coinbase. Stablecoins were hit particularly hard, causing the largest, tether, to break its one-to-one link with the dollar on consecutive days. That caused near “panic”, said Simon Freeman in The Times. Unlike more speculative crypto tokens, stablecoins – as the name suggests – are supposed “to bring a measure of stability” to volatile crypto markets, because they’re underpinned by real-world assets. TerraUSD was designed by the Korean entrepreneur

the FT. It doesn’t help that tether, which supposedly has \$80bn of dollar assets backing its 80 billion coins in circulation, won’t reveal details of them – claiming that would give away its “secret sauce”. “If armchair investors lose their shirts and a few crypto bros see their egos deflated, the reaction may be a shrug of the shoulders.” But if tether faces a wave of redemptions, and is forced to sell assets, “the sheer size of such moves could make already jittery financial markets even more volatile”. Politicians must stop dithering and heed the warnings. “Stablecoins can prompt bank-like runs”, yet they “enjoy the scant regulation of the cryptosphere. Real-world rules are needed.”

Trading currencies: what the experts think

● Euro-parity?

Prepare for a big shake-up in the currency stakes, said Alice Gledhill on Bloomberg. For the first time in two decades, the euro “is on the verge of US dollar parity”. The EU’s common currency hit a five-year low of near \$1.03 last week – “buckling from a rush into the greenback as a haven from market turmoil”. And plenty of analysts predict the two currencies will hit parity in 2022. “Hedge funds are already betting on it”: they’ve piled \$7bn into “options wagers on parity” in the past month alone.



The greenback is on the rise

● Nasty cocktail

Although the euro’s plight is largely “a function of dollar strength” – which has been “supercharged” as the US Fed presses on with big interest-rate hikes – the “darkening outlook for the European economy” doesn’t help. Not everyone is negative. Roberto Mialich of UniCredit expects the euro to climb back above \$1.10 next year as the Fed’s hiking cycle tails off. But that looks a long shot. The European Central Bank “is walking a tightrope”, said Alice Gledhill, attempting to balance the need “to tame record inflation” against “the economic damage

that could cause” – especially in the bloc’s most indebted member states, such as Italy. “We find it hard to see a silver lining for the single currency at this stage,” noted HSBC, pointing to downward revisions to growth forecasts and upward revisions for inflation. “This is a nasty cocktail for any currency to try to digest.”

● The pound’s “doom loop”

We know all about that in Britain, said Liam Halligan in The Sunday Telegraph. The pound has lost a tenth of its value against the dollar this year, as the cost-of-living crisis has escalated. It is “now close to the psychologically important \$1.20 benchmark”. Could it also be heading for dollar parity? Given the speed of the recent falls, it can’t be ruled out. “Sterling is now at risk of falling into ‘a doom loop’ – in which a lower pound results in more expensive imports, adding to upward price pressure. The resulting rise in inflation then pushes the pound down even more, creating a downward spiral.” The Bank of England claims it can’t do much about the global energy and food prices. “But if decisive rate rises help prevent sterling’s fall, they would help hugely in efforts to rein in rampant inflation.”

Apocalypse chow

Food prices have been soaring, but we should prepare for “more shocks”, said Jessica Beard in The Daily Telegraph. The Bank of England Governor Andrew Bailey has warned of “apocalyptic” price rises in the months ahead. Wheat prices jumped by almost 6% on Monday after India banned exports – adding to the pressure caused by supply falls from Russia and Ukraine. Fertiliser prices, meanwhile, have soared by more than 400% since sanctions were imposed on Russia, the world’s biggest exporter. Which foods have already gone up the most this year?

Cooking oils Prices of rapeseed oil and coconut oil are up by more than 40%; sunflower and vegetable oil by 39%, according to supermarket tracker trolley.co.uk.

Dairy and meat Semi-skimmed milk is up by 15.3%, butter by nearly 14%, and the price of eggs and poultry has rocketed “in part because of bird flu restrictions”. The cost of some brands of chicken fillets has leapt by nearly 40%.

Everyday staples Pasta is up by 16.2%; toilet roll by more than 11% (more for the quilted variety). Mustard has experienced some of the largest price jumps, with some brands up by more than 60%. But the prize for the most exorbitant price hike goes to Morrisons’ apple crumble, which has nearly quadrupled – up by 341% to £1.50.

How Andrew Bailey let a tiger loose

Patrick Hosking

The Times

Fifteen months ago, when UK inflation was a mere 0.7%, the Bank of England's then chief economist, Andy Haldane, gave "one of the most prescient speeches in the history of British economics", says Patrick Hosking. He warned of complacency about the "tiger" of inflation which, if unleashed, would prove hard to tame. "Like Cassandra, Haldane was destined not to be believed." Governor Andrew Bailey would persist with "his sunny claim that inflation would be mild and transitory", and that the Bank's "super-stimulative position" was correct. He now stands accused by MPs of being "asleep at the wheel". Why were Haldane's concerns ignored? Partly because they went against the herd and "backward-looking official data". But also, worryingly, because "the Bank may not be as independent from its political masters" as it should be. QE, after all, has helped "the Treasury borrow on the cheap", and inflation erodes government debt in real terms. In his previous role at the FCA, Bailey had "form" in trying to please ministers. Perhaps we should factor that in too. Either way, the tiger is now "uncaged and untamed".

Could Russian cash rebuild Ukraine?

Pierre Briançon

Reuters Breakingviews

Western powers, including the EU, US and G7, are reportedly discussing whether to seize the frozen foreign assets of the Russian central bank to finance the reconstruction of Ukraine, says Pierre Briançon. The idea has a certain "symmetrical financial appeal" (the rebuild could cost at least as much as Russia's \$300bn forex reserves) and would provide a degree of "moral comfort" – but it is fraught with political hazard. Legally, seizing assets is a good deal more complicated than freezing them. But even if "a workaround" is found (say, by passing new laws), "confiscation would be wrongheaded". It would deprive Western powers of "a key source of leverage over Russia", and "could even push President Vladimir Putin into more desperate and aggressive acts". Moreover, once seized, the reserves "would be open to claims" from individuals or organisations citing private losses. Perhaps most importantly, confiscation "would imply that Europe and the US have given up hope of a future Russia ever rejoining the international system". What sounds like a good idea on paper could in practice prove disastrous.

Fund bosses should stay out of politics

Matthew Lynn

The Sunday Telegraph

The world's major investors have embarked on a long overdue scaling back of their "political activism", says Matthew Lynn. BlackRock, the \$8trn US giant, has said it won't demand so many "prescriptive" environmental goals; Sweden's SEB is lifting its ban on defence companies; and Barclays has said – "shock horror" – that it is willing to back oil and gas exploration again. It isn't hard to see why this is happening now. Many of the ESG causes espoused with such enthusiasm by these investors "are looking remarkably idiotic" in the current economic climate and, in the case of defence, "worryingly naive". But there's a bigger point: these organisations should never have strayed into the "woke" zone in the first place – not least because their political judgement is so terrible. It's time asset managers dropped the politics and focused on backing firms that make a decent product at a fair price, treat staff and suppliers well, and earn a good return for their shareholders. It's what they were meant to be doing in the first place. "Heck, they might even turn out to be quite good at it."

The UK's fatal disdain for business

Adrian Wooldridge

Bloomberg

"The British public is in danger of being crushed under an avalanche of political gossip," says Adrian Wooldridge. Our obsession with political tittle-tattle is massively detrimental to the nation. How can we focus on things that really matter – such as China or inflation or productivity – "when we are bombarded with news about Keir Starmer's chicken korma"? Business is "changing the world at breakneck speed", whether through new technologies or the rising corporate empires of Asia. But coverage is invariably relegated to the back of the mainstream British press, "along with sport and horoscopes". Americans, by contrast, have access to "a never-ending flow of information" from "well-informed business pundits" and magazines "for every niche". Britain has a "lopsided view of the world" rooted in an "ancestral disdain" for business as "something that civilised people don't talk about, let alone indulge in". This briefly shifted during the governments of Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair, but is now back with a vengeance. The nation is a good deal poorer for it.

City profile

Dr Swati Dhingra

"From an economic perspective, the best policy would be to cancel Brexit," wrote Swati Dhingra before the parliamentary vote to leave the EU single market and customs union in December 2019. She was writing as a London School of Economics academic, specialising in trade, said Phillip Inman in *The Guardian*. But now the "prominent Brexit critic" has a chance to influence policy. Dhingra has been appointed by the Chancellor to join the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee as one of its four external members. Her research into the UK's trade links with China and the Far East will doubtless come in handy as Britain "searches for new export markets". But her views may "prove controversial" with some Tory MPs.



Dhingra, who was born in India and studied for a PhD in the US before moving to Britain, arrives at a testing time. With inflation heading above 10%, the Bank "faces its biggest challenge since it gained independence in 1997", said Delphine Strauss in the FT. The first Asian woman to serve on the nine-strong committee (bringing the number of women to three), Dhingra will replace one of its "more hawkish members", Michael Saunders, who argued for "rapid action" against inflation. While her own views on monetary policy aren't known, "she has been blunt about the scale of the task". She once poured scorn on Boris Johnson's claim to be fostering a "high wage, high productivity economy" – arguing that the UK's structural problems made this "unrealistic, even without the added pressures from Covid and Brexit".

Who's tipping what

The week's best shares

FD Technologies*Investors' Chronicle*

A "welcome ray of light" amid the battered tech sector, FD's KX software platform, which provides real-time performance data, has seen a 148% rise in subscriptions. A Microsoft partnership should boost margins. Buy. £24.80.

Grainger*The Times*

The private rental landlord intends to double net income rental by adding 4,000 homes to an existing portfolio of around 7,400 properties. Occupancy is at a record 98% and divs are forecast to grow. Buy. 281p.

Oakley Capital Investments*The Mail on Sunday*

This private equity firm, founded by an entrepreneur, helps business owners develop and grow their companies. Focused on online, digital and "quirky" firms, including a German golf ball-maker and Globe-Trotter luggage. Undervalued. Buy. 415p.

Next*The Daily Telegraph*

The retailer has been hit by the cost-of-living crisis, but is lowly valued and set to generate surplus cash – handy for special divs, or to acquire stakes in third-party brands for its online "Total Platform". Buy. £60.52.

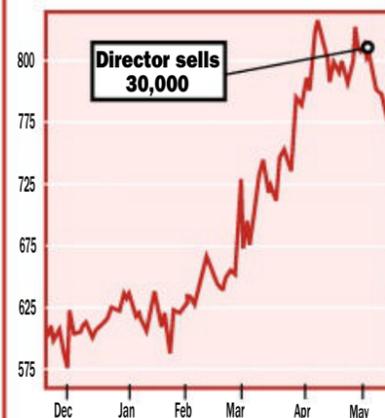
Serco Group*The Sunday Times*

The outsourcer, which runs prisons and detention centres, cleans hospitals and empties bins, has big new contracts and a mighty £9.9bn pipeline. Margins have improved and there's a £90m buyback scheme. Buy. 148p.

Watches of Switzerland*Investors' Chronicle*

The luxury watch retailer is expanding into Europe and the US. Wealthy customers and "super high demand" for Rolex and Patek Philippe brands are strong hedges against a tough retail outlook. Shares have fallen. Buy. 931p.

Directors' dealings

Drax Group

Shares in the renewable power generator have almost doubled, thanks to surging prices and investor-pleasing moves – such as the sale of a gas turbine business. CEO Will Gardiner has taken advantage, selling shares worth £242,550.

SOURCE: INVESTORS' CHRONICLE

...and some to hold, avoid or sell

Airtel Africa*The Mail on Sunday*

Airtel provides smartphones and mobile money services across Africa. Profits are up 37% and shares have risen more than 200% in two years. Cautious investors should take profits, but there's plenty more potential. Hold. 138p.

Antofagasta*The Daily Telegraph*

The copper-focused miner is on track to meet production guidance. Shares are volatile, but high demand from environmental infrastructure and EVs, coupled with constrained supply, is promising. Hold. £13.40.

British American Tobacco*The Daily Telegraph*

"Consumer staples" such as tobacco are an "ideal investment" as inflation spirals. Not without regulatory challenges, but BAT has reduced debt by £10bn from 2017 and is passing on price rises to customers. Yields 6.3%. Hold. £33.02.

ITV*The Times*

Shares are down 40% this year as ad revenue slows. The launch of streaming service ITVX is "fraught with risk" and could damage profitability, and the Studios business is low margin. Avoid. 68.62p.

Mondi*The Sunday Telegraph*

The short-term outlook for the innovative packaging specialist is tough, but it has a vertically integrated business model and ticks ESG boxes with mostly reusable, recyclable or compostable products. Yields 3.6%. Hold. £15.64.

Telecom Plus*The Daily Telegraph*

This provider of "everyday essential home services" has made strong customer additions from defunct energy firms, but the valuation looks "very full". Shares are up 35% since December 2016, take profits. Sell. £15.62.

Form guide

Shares tipped 12 weeks ago

Best tip

Mirriad Advertising
The Sunday Times
up 25% to 20.5p

Worst tip

The Walt Disney Co.
The Times
down 29.17% to \$107.21

Market view

"A new bear factor has come into play, namely the collapse of cryptocurrencies. Investors are getting wiped out... and the question is: are those investors also involved in equities?"

Malcolm Freeman
of Kingdom Futures.
Quoted on Bloomberg

Market summary

Key numbers for investors

| | 17 May 2022 | Week before | Change (%) |
|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| FTSE 100 | 7518.35 | 7243.22 | 3.80% |
| FTSE All-share UK | 4149.88 | 4002.22 | 3.69% |
| Dow Jones | 32460.65 | 32095.78 | 1.14% |
| NASDAQ | 11886.27 | 11647.42 | 2.05% |
| Nikkei 225 | 26659.33 | 26167.10 | 1.88% |
| Hang Seng | 20602.52 | 19633.69 | 4.93% |
| Gold | 1809.50 | 1860.90 | -2.76% |
| Brent Crude Oil | 113.84 | 102.90 | 10.63% |
| DIVIDEND YIELD (FTSE 100) | 3.69% | 3.82% | |
| UK 10-year gilts yield | 1.86 | 1.84 | |
| US 10-year Treasuries | 2.97 | 2.95 | |
| UK ECONOMIC DATA | | | |
| Latest CPI (yoy) | 9.0% (Apr) | 7.0% (Mar) | |
| Latest RPI (yoy) | 11.1% (Apr) | 9.0% (Mar) | |
| Halifax house price (yoy) | 10.8% (Apr) | 11.0% (Mar) | |
| £1 STERLING: | \$1.242 | €1.181 | ¥160.474 |
| | | | Bitcoin \$29,740 |

Best and worst performing shares

WEEK'S CHANGE, FTSE 100 STOCKS

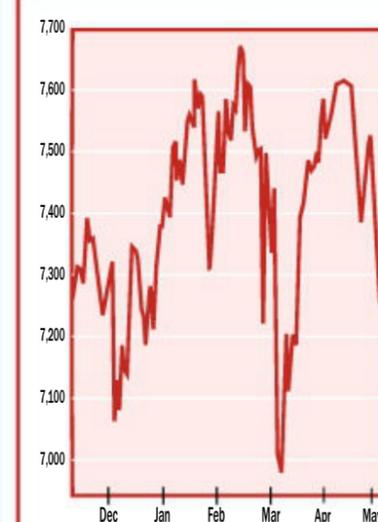
| RISES | Price | % change |
|--------------------------------|---------|----------|
| Prudential | 1016.50 | +15.12 |
| Coca-Cola HBC | 1790.00 | +13.69 |
| JD Sports Fashion | 131.85 | +12.74 |
| Compass Group | 1772.50 | +12.36 |
| Entain | 1372.50 | +11.22 |
| FALLS | | |
| Endeavour Mining (Lon) | 1840.00 | -3.92 |
| Smurfit Kappa Gp. (Lon) | 3225.00 | -1.91 |
| Smith (DS) | 311.00 | -1.68 |
| Mondi | 1561.50 | -1.36 |
| Unilever (UK) | 3666.00 | -0.93 |

FTSE 250 RISER & FALLER

| | | |
|----------------------|--------|--------|
| Contourglobal | 257.00 | +36.00 |
| Marshalls | 535.00 | -9.20 |

Source: Datastream/FT (not adjusted for dividends). Prices on 17 May

Following the Footsie



6-month movement in the FTSE 100 index



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The fine art of serving court papers

Serving court documents is a critical part of any civil legal claim, but some oligarchs and criminals will go to great lengths to avoid having the papers served on them. How do the experts track down their targets? Lou Stoppard reports

The afternoon of 4 October 2014 was too fine to be stood for hours sweating in a navy wool suit, but Paul Austin likes to look smart when he delivers the blow. Serving someone legal papers likely means “you are ruining that person’s day, quite badly”, he tells me. A certain formality, looking more like a business associate than “a heavy”, can help make the medicine – a bitter thing to swallow for the oligarchs and wayward globetrotters Austin deals with – go down easier.

The target that day was Leonid Mikhelson, a Russian-Israeli gas magnate once reported to be Russia’s richest man and, as of last month, one of the oligarchs sanctioned by the UK. Austin had chased Mikhelson for months, but had never come close. He hadn’t even come within miles of close. Mikhelson, who has a thick slab of grey hair and enjoyably expressive eyebrows, landed in London the night before on a chartered flight from Moscow. He likes to fritter his billions on art and, in 2009, started the V-A-C Foundation – named after his daughter, Victoria – which has given large sums to some of the UK’s top art institutions, including the Tate.

Now, Mikhelson was en route to another beneficiary, the Whitechapel Gallery in east London, for the opening of an exhibition. He was accompanied by Victoria – groomed, blonde – just in from New York, where she was studying art history. That morning, Austin and half a dozen colleagues had convened to discuss their plan and its potential pitfalls. What if Mikhelson arrived with security? What if he didn’t show? After months of work, this felt like their one chance. The endeavour had been expensive for their client, a businessman living in Israel who alleged Mikhelson had breached a 2007 real-estate agreement.

Come mid-afternoon, Austin was waiting near the gallery’s entrance, envelope in hand. Another colleague, Darren Harber, stood nearby with a duplicate envelope. Their goal was simple: hand Mikhelson the papers; tell him, clearly and firmly, he had been served; walk away. Nearby, a group of curators and fundraisers smoothed their finery and fixed their smiles, unaware of the other welcome party lying in wait. Mikhelson arrived in a chauffeured car at 6.20pm. Austin approached him and extended his hand with the document. Mikhelson, smiling at the suited man standing in front of him, reached for it and, for a moment, Austin felt a flood of relief. Briefly, both men held the envelope simultaneously. Austin began his spiel – “I’m here to serve you papers as part of a High Court claim” – but then Mikhelson started pulling away, his face ashen. The transaction was faltering; the envelope remained with Austin.



Leonid Mikhelson: it took months of work to find him

“Speak only Russian,” Mikhelson barked in English, before hurrying inside. Austin and his colleague followed him into the lobby. Again the papers were proffered and dodged. Harber tried to stuff his envelope between Mikhelson’s body and his arm, where it balanced for a split second before dropping to the ground. It was “pandemonium”, says Austin. He knew Mikhelson’s daughter spoke fluent English, but his pleas that she tell her father to accept the service went ignored. When the papers were placed on her handbag, she let them fall away. “Everyone was doing that very English thing of just standing there thinking, God this is really awful but I’m not going to do anything or say anything,” Austin says. “The gallery staff were just horrified at us.”

Finally, Mikhelson marched into the gallery, where he could be swaddled in the safety and deference patronage affords. As he walked away, Austin made one last-ditch attempt, hurling the document over the gaggle towards the Russian’s back. But the door swung closed too quickly and the envelope landed on the floor, where it remained for a while, guests scanning it with distaste. Austin picked it up and left. What a mess, he thought. Austin called his client to tell him the job was done. As hard as

Mikhelson had tried to dodge it, he had clearly been served. The case could proceed. Then, three weeks later, a notice came through: Mikhelson was mounting a challenge. He didn’t take the envelope, didn’t know what was in it, and didn’t even speak English, he claimed. He had absolutely not, he said, been served.

“Right now in London, says Paul Austin, someone will be being served. There is always someone to serve”

In February, I met Austin, who is 42, at the Royal Automobile Club in Pall Mall. He suggested the venue, which he tells me is rumoured to be the spot where the Soviet agents Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean had one of their last lunches before fleeing the UK. “Right now, in London, someone will be being served,” Austin says. “There is always someone to serve.” Austin worked in intelligence for the Government, visiting Afghanistan twice, and later set up his own company, before training as a lawyer. He is intensely likeable, and yet, facially, instantly forgettable. Back at my desk after our first meeting, I tried to jot a few things down about his appearance and simply couldn’t. Glasses? Sandy hair? A... nose? The only thing I recalled clearly was that he had worn cufflinks in the shape of tortoises. This may be a blessing, given his profession. His mannerisms are more memorable. He is so amusingly English – polite, fumbling, partial to boarding school-style slang – that at points it feels as if he is in character as the archetypal MI6 bureaucrat in a Bond movie.

Serving is “an art”, Austin tells me. It’s the point at which the minutiae of law, the endless paperwork, is rewarded with the

spectacle of a “gotcha” moment. It is, he says, “the way that justice begins”. Serving is required in civil proceedings, such as divorce or business disputes. In the popular imagination, serving tends to be a high-stakes yet vaguely comedic affair: recall, in 2013, papers being passed up to the American singer Ciara, as she performed on stage. Such theatrical episodes eclipse how mundane much of the profession can be, however. Many law firms, Austin tells me, pass it on to junior staff; a lawyer friend of mine refers to the process as “a piece of piss”.



Ciara was served papers on stage in 2013

Appalling really that he was trying to evade justice, to hide behind – quite literally – a castle wall.”

The Prince Andrew service was performed by Cesar Sepulveda of GCW-Intelligence. Sepulveda, who is 36, trained as a criminologist and is also, he tells me, a facial “super recogniser”. He has the build of a bodyguard and the face of someone you’d think carefully about disagreeing with. When we meet, he is wearing a pale pink V-neck jumper under a suit, with a Burberry scarf and a large watch. I immediately picture him in any number of situations: hosting ropey flat viewings as an estate agent, reclining in the VIP lounge at the Monaco Grand Prix. He says he’s been to gyms and exercised next

This attitude may work out fine if the target is someone who is traceable online, Austin says, but with criminals or “professional obfuscators”, expertise is required. He knows this too well. Back in 2005, when he was a twentysomething newcomer to the game, he was dispatched to Costa Rica. He hadn’t been briefed – “nothing”, he says. He landed, drove “literally ten hours, went over a mountain, through the jungle”. There’s a photo of him on the beach in a full suit, which illustrates how ill-equipped he was for the trip. When he finally served the papers, the target looked baffled. Austin returned to London, triumphant, only to find he’d served the wrong person. “Just some random bloke in the jungle, wrong address, wrong everything. Pathetic,” he says. “I got absolutely bollocked.”

to targets, and even served on Christmas Eve, at a client’s request, taking the papers to a family dinner. (“Everyone involved was there; very awkward.”)

Sepulveda first tried to serve Prince Andrew in August 2021, by driving to the gates of the Royal Lodge in Windsor. No luck. Police advised that officers “had been told not to accept service of any court process”. Sepulveda went back the next morning. This time, he asked to meet with the prince directly. He was rebuffed but stood his ground, saying he’d wait it out. Eventually, worn down, one of the guards allowed him to leave the summons, promising “this matter would then be forwarded to the legal team”. That was enough.

Still, Austin liked the chase. Now a veteran, his servings are usually the result of months, sometimes years of intelligence-gathering. The process begins with what’s in the public realm – company records, social media posts. Typically, he finds nothing. So, he turns to “human intelligence”: a former nanny who might talk, maitre-d’s, chauffeurs. There is also, Austin tells me, a pool of expert tipsters he can rely on. “Your Russia guys. Your Africa guys. Your art world people. Your mining guys.” Austin has had colleagues tell him being a woman with a child, or at least a pram, is helpful, as few suspect you to be a threat. And middle-aged female associates have told him they feel perfectly suited to surveillance as, to many people, they are “invisible”. Austin confirms this is not a good industry for the striking: strikingly beautiful, strikingly short or tall. You need to blend in, and you need to notice everything. Because your target will slip up eventually. Invariably it’s “vanity” that lets them down, he says – an event they won’t miss, an invitation they can’t resist.

“When serving legal papers it helps to be a woman with a child, or at least with a pram, as few suspect you to be a threat”

Like Austin, Sepulveda says targets always slip up eventually. “Maybe they win a chess competition, and it’s in the public domain.” I thought of a case Austin had told me about, an asset trace during which he

finally managed to connect a dodgy magnate to a property because his daughter posted a poolside picture on Facebook: the target’s name was tiled along the bottom of the pool.

In 2015, the judge in the Mikhelson case dismissed the oligarch’s claim that he had no idea what the papers were about. His determined avoidance, the judge argued, actually revealed his understanding of what they were. The ruling ended up in legal textbooks, something of which Austin is proud. And yet, towards the middle of our first meeting, Austin grew, for a moment, somewhat melancholic. For all his aspirations of facilitating justice, sometimes “it’s just moving money from oligarch to oligarch”. He sees morality in a vaguely nihilistic way: once you cross to the dark side, you never go back. An oligarch steals money in a business transaction and avoids repercussions. “You’ll keep going back to that behaviour, partly because you can.”

The next time I meet Austin it’s spring, and we’re back at the Whitechapel Gallery. Plenty has changed since our first meeting; Putin invaded Ukraine, Russian yachts are being seized, UK companies, lawyers and accountants are scrambling to cut ties. “Everyone is chasing oligarchs again,” Austin says. He points to the doors through which Mikhelson disappeared eight years earlier. “It was just here,” he says. For a long time, the Russian had smartly made a point of avoiding the UK. This made trying to serve him again near impossible. The breakthrough came thanks to an announcement from the Whitechapel Gallery that V-A-C would be funding a series of projects. Austin figured Mikhelson would be at the opening. “You’d want the fawning. To turn up, Mr Moneybags, and be lauded.” His instinct was correct, and the shock on the oligarch’s face when he was finally served was “amazing”, Austin says. “He knew he’d been busted.”

The more I dug into Austin’s world, the more I understood his point of view. I thought a lot about a story he told me during our first phone call about trying to serve someone in the South of France. He’d chased the man and his female companion from casino to club, club to casino, before he realised the target was being chased by someone else as well, a gang connected to his new girlfriend. As with many of the stories Austin told me, I struggled to work out who I was supposed to root for; who were the good guys and, if there were good guys, how did they differ from the bad? The only guarantee seemed to be the tap on the shoulder. Because, if your case crosses Austin’s desk or Sepulveda’s, that tap will come. “If you’re a good investigator, you’ll always find them, you always will,” Austin told me. And I believed him.

The attitude that one can wriggle out of anything bothers Austin. It’s part of the reason he does his job. A certain type of person thinks they’re above it, he explains. “They act like they occupy a parallel morality,” he says. “I guess it’s like Prince Andrew.

A longer version of this article appeared in the Financial Times
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THE WEEK CROSSWORD 1312

An **Ettinger shoe horn** and two **Connell Guides** will be given to the sender of the first correct solution to the crossword and the clue of the week opened on Monday 30 May. Send it to The Week Crossword 1312, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR, or email the completed grid or listed solutions to crossword@theweek.co.uk. **Tim Moorey** (timmoorey.com)



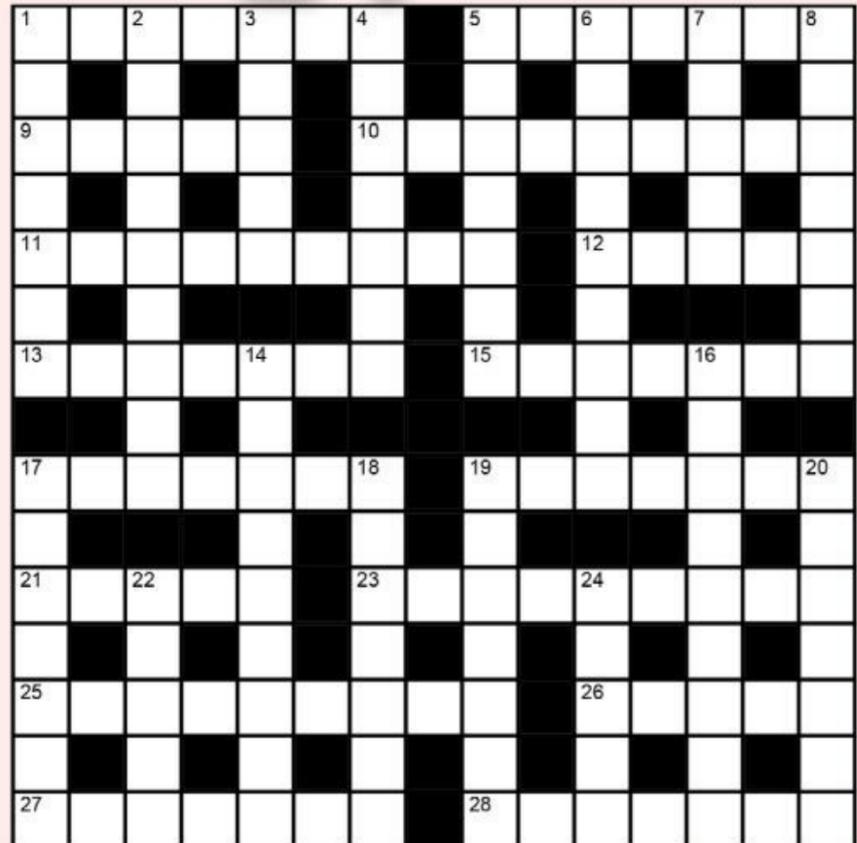
This week's winner will receive an Ettinger (ettinger.co.uk) Bridle Hide travel shoehorn in black, which retails at £75, and two Connell Guides (connellguides.com).

ACROSS

- 1 Prize-winning sheep in new type of business (5-2)
- 5 Chuck meets Kitty in boozier (7)
- 9 Where Russians gather in political alliance, not Conservative (5)
- 10 Rubbish disposal around right sides of motorway (4-5)
- 11 Nancy's noodles brought about a conversation (4-1-4)
- 12 Sort of rice in shallow pan one's taken out (5)
- 13 Competitive rider from Dutch city, not the back of beyond (7)
- 15 Disease in resort – here perhaps (7)
- 17 Take out more on court briefly (7)
- 19 Weapon not seen at the front? (7)
- 21 Large shows for former seamen (5)
- 23 Corrupt statesmen getting financial investigation (5,4)
- 25 Sounds like a school scandal in Yorkshire town (9)
- 26 Publicity in a post office gets agreement (5)
- 27 Suspect millions irate about ending of bus conductors (7)
- 28 More than one range of Ford cars (7)

DOWN

- 1 Clever person, 27 needing a change (7)
- 2 Newspaper supporting a new tax on security system (9)
- 3 A tart served up in US city (5)
- 4 Chemist from history, European (7)
- 5 Place to go set out after hard work (7)
- 6 Tip from police supporting fight (9)
- 7 Organise time for factory (5)
- 8 Opera the French represented in proportion (2,5)
- 14 Aroused mates left for a foursome? (4,5)
- 16 Cross entire map off (2,1,6)
- 17 The first lady actor coming from town on the Avon (7)
- 18 What can give me awful pain? Noisy instruments (7)
- 19 Electric gear for young lads (7)
- 20 Poet's proposals (7)
- 22 Untainted boxing is for prize money (5)
- 24 Nato's supreme HQ design (5)



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

Clue of the week: Pamper Spooner's dog-sitter (11, first two letters MO)
The Independent, Silvanus

Solution to Crossword 1310

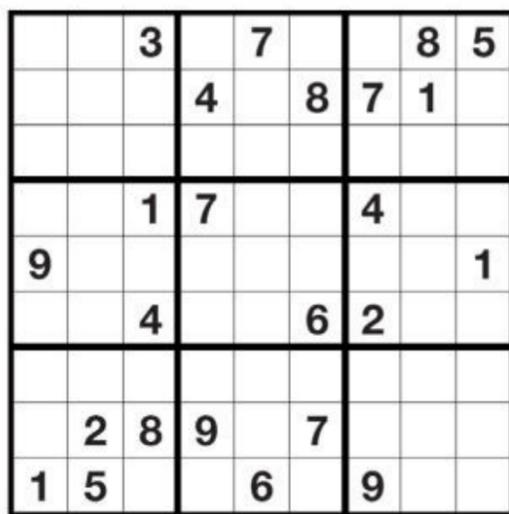
ACROSS: 7 Republic 9 Osages 10 Jade 11 Demitasses 12 Used to 14 Reformer 15 Moonlight sonata 18 Lion's den 20 Rasher 22 Have a fling 23 Shaw 24 Active 25 Editress

DOWN: 1 Le Mans 2 Duke 3 Gladioli 4 Sort of 5 Hamstrings 6 Severest 8 Comprehensive 13 Dinanderie 16 Oligarch 17 Seraglio 19 Duffel 21 Elapse 23 Sark

Clue of the week: European losing final in ping pong (4)
Solution: REEK (Greek = European less G, last letter of ping)

The winner of 1310 is Angus Bell from Northallerton

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Sudoku 854 (very difficult)

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

Solution to Sudoku 853

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



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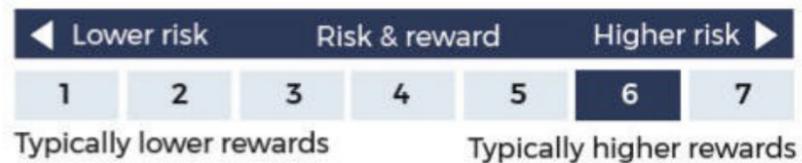
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