

Twickenham & Richmond TRIBUNE

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Berkley Driscoll
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24th March 2023



TickerTape - News in Brief

The Varsity match - Saturday 25 March, Twickenham Stadium

Oxford University and Cambridge University will play their annual Varsity Rugby Matches at Twickenham on Saturday 25 March, 2023. The mens and womens Varsity Matches have traditionally been played on a Thursday in December, but the switch to a Saturday in Spring presents an exciting new opportunity to experience this historic rivalry at the home of rugby. Tickets start at £10.00 for Schools & Minis, £12.50 for students, and £25.00 for Adults, which covers both the women's (12:00 kick off) and men's (15:00 kick off) matches. With two historic fixtures on the same weekend as the boat race, this is bound to be a weekend of electric rugby and rivalry.

Take part in free e-scooter training sessions for residents

This April, Bikeworks are offering two free training sessions, that aim to teach Richmond residents how to use e-scooters.

The sessions have been designed for those new to using an e-scooter and are a fun way to learn how to ride with confidence.

The training sessions will take place at Kew Green, Richmond, TW9 3AA, with two types of levels for complete beginners and confident e-scooter users.

You will gain the opportunity to master key skills such as how to unlock your scooter and start a journey, balancing and steering, signalling, and hazard awareness and avoidance.

The training will be delivered by Tier London and will last up to 2 hours. You must be 18 or over and hold a provisional or full driving licence to take part.

Session details:

- Date: Sunday 16 April 2023
- Times:
 - o Level 1 Training - 10am to 12pm
 - o Level 2 Training - 12.30 to 2.30pm
- Location: Kew Green, Richmond, TW9 3AA

Book your free training session [HERE](#)

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Covid-19

By Teresa Read

IN THE NEWS THIS WEEK

New Scientist: Covid-19 may have started in raccoon dogs, new DNA evidence shows.

New York Times: New Data Links Pandemic's Origins to Raccoon Dogs at Wuhan Market.

Sydney University: "This allowed an independent team of international experts to analyse them. In a startling revelation, they identified large amounts of raccoon dog and other animal DNA in conjunction with SARS-CoV-2. Raccoon dogs can be readily infected with SARS-CoV-2 and can transmit it."

Health Gov Au: COVID-19 outbreaks in Australian residential aged care facilities.

RNZ New Zealand: Covid-19: Healthcare workers doubted their own safety in pandemic's early stages, survey finds.

New Scientist: Have we overlooked a key sign of an unhealthy heart? Inflammation may be just as important as cholesterol in causing heart attacks and strokes.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

update on COVID-19, Data as of 19 March 2023

At the country level, the highest numbers of new 28-day cases were reported from the United States of America, the Russian Federation, China, Japan, and Germany.

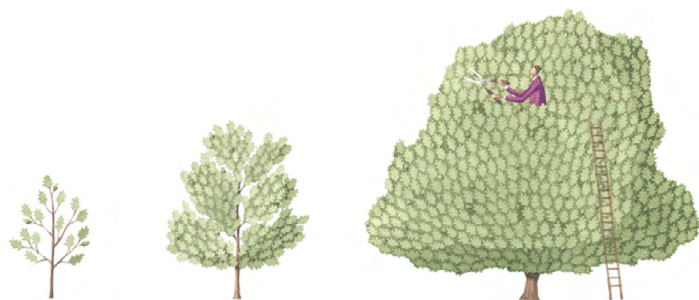
The highest numbers of new 28-day deaths were reported from the United States of America (8,187), the United Kingdom (2,474), Japan (1,898), Brazil (1,587), and China (1,472).

The European Region reported over 1.5 million new cases, a 9% increase as compared to the previous 28-day period.

The highest numbers of new cases were reported from the Russian Federation (339,564), Germany (281,468), and Austria (139,925).

The number of new 28-day deaths in the Region decreased by 15% as compared to the previous 28-day period, with 9,607 new deaths reported.

The highest numbers of new deaths were reported from the United Kingdom (2,474), the Russian Federation (1,035), and Germany (985).



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darryl parkin

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The Tree Agency



Major road closure in Richmond expected to end on Tuesday 11 April

Hill Street in central Richmond has been closed in a northbound direction, between Richmond Bridge and Water Lane, since Wednesday 1 March, for emergency Thames Water works. The expected completion date is Tuesday 11 April.

Thames Water have issued an apology and update to residents.

“We are sorry our work to repair a large pipe in Hill Street has been so delayed. We are getting in touch to explain why and update you on the timescales for completing the work.

Our original plans have been affected by three unexpected delays:

- When our team first dug around the pipe, they found they needed to consult a structural engineer to advise them on a nearby property
- We then found a number of services – including gas mains and old tram lines – were situated awkwardly close to the pipe, which meant they had to dig by hand
- We also discovered a high voltage cable was running directly above the pipe, and needed UK Power Networks to move it so that we could work safely.

These were problems we didn't anticipate when we first planned the repairs.

We are really sorry that this has prolonged our work, and for the impact on local businesses and on drivers using local roads.”

Until Tuesday 11 April, there will continue to be no access to Richmond Town Centre for traffic coming across Richmond Bridge and from Petersham.

Traffic diversions

Traffic coming across Richmond Bridge is diverted down Petersham Road, back up Star and Garter Hill onto Queens Road, onto Sheen Road back to Richmond Town Centre.

See [diversion map for traffic coming across Richmond Bridge](#).

Traffic coming from Petersham is diverted over Richmond Bridge, onto St Margarets Road onto the A 316, to Richmond Circus, back into Richmond Town Centre.

See [diversion map for traffic coming from Petersham](#).

Bus diversions

Bus routes over Richmond Bridge follow the traffic diversion - down Petersham Road, back up Star and Garter Hill onto Queens Road, onto Sheen Road back to Richmond Town Centre.

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Happy Easter everyone!



Dear Tribune,

Community Conversations – Any point?

Last week's Tribune articles about empty shops and Richmond Council's Community Conversations reminded me of the one in which I participated on 15 September 2022.

As I spend much of my life in Japan, I put a number of suggestions to that meeting and sent numerous photographs of the delightful streets, wonderful shops, superb displays of goods, and the strict hygiene normal in Japanese food shops but which is noticeably lacking in this country, as is the great community spirit in every part of Japan which encourages people to support their local shops and community.

Soon after that, I was contacted by Richmond Council's 'Community Engagement Officer' who said that she had listened to the meeting and loved my suggestions. We had such an encouraging conversation that I invited her to my home to discuss the points I'd made.

During our discussion she even invited me to join her panel of local residents who occasionally meet to make community suggestions. I agreed as it seemed a good thing to do. She went away full of enthusiasm leaving me pleased that there now seemed at least one person who really wanted to improve our lacklustre high streets.

Since then, I have heard absolutely nothing.

Instead, what I HAVE experienced is huge piles of filthy, unhygienic rubbish left strewn beside pavement café tables in Twickenham, dangerous potholes in our roads, massive black patches worn through the Council's much vaunted but now tatty 'Rainbow Crossing' outside Richmond station the appearance of which embarrassed me in front of the foreign visitors I was entertaining, derelict shops, and constant E-scooters and bicycles illegally on our footways making it dangerous to go out.

So just what is the point of these Community Conversations?

Just like the useless, money-wasting rainbow crossings, they appear to be merely virtue signaling.

After my time-wasting experience, why should anyone bother?

Yours,

Michael Jay
Hampton.

The Importance of Trees – an issue for discussion

By Teresa Read

A recent edition of a popular scientific journal pointed out the importance of very old trees, raising concerns among some readers that trees removed in new developments may result in more damage to the environment than generally acknowledged.

Trees provide habitats for bats, birds, and many invertebrates.



Invertebrates are crucial to the world's ecosystems, for instance the role flying insects play in pollinating plants.

We may be surprised that very old trees, some with heart rot (decay from within) are particularly crucial and should be preserved. It seems that instead of cutting down trees, and sometimes replacing them with young trees, the importance of preserving and looking after mature and ageing trees should be the aim.

We should also consider the important role mature trees play in storing carbon dioxide, released into the atmosphere once a tree is destroyed.

Of course, adapting the care of trees to their existing surroundings, as well as new building plans, should be seriously considered by local councils in their role in maintaining many existing trees as well as their role as local planning authority.



Some residents often have serious concerns regarding trees where they live, or trees affected by new planning proposals, so local authorities should engage in meaningful consultation with residents when trees are an issue as they are important to all of us.

Photographs copyright Teresa Read

Claim free trees in the South East and help the Woodland Trust fight climate change by reaching a magic five-million milestone

The Woodland Trust is urging schools and communities across the South East to join the fight against climate change and nature loss – and reach a remarkable five million free trees planted across the United Kingdom since 2020 – by taking advantage of its latest tree-pack giveaway.

Applications for the charity’s ever-popular free tree-packs scheme are open now and schools and community groups are needed to push up the numbers of trees planted by 800,000 to reach a whopping five million.

Woodland Trust senior project lead Vicki Baddeley said: “We’re so proud of the numbers of free trees we’ve been able to give away, knowing they’ll be planted where they can really make a difference – in school grounds and out in the community.

“We’re in the grip of a climate and nature crisis which can’t be overcome without concerted action, so I’d urge every school or community group who can, to get involved and plant more trees!

“Applying is easy and all saplings are fully funded for those receiving the trees in our autumn delivery in November. All you need is time and a small piece of land to plant on.”

The last round of the Trust’s free tree-packs scheme in the spring of 2023 delivered a total of 540,630 saplings to 3,272 organisations across the UK, including 60,210 trees to 441 schools and community groups in the South East:

- London – 9,915 trees to 119 organisations
- Greater London – 5,655 trees to 51 organisations
- Kent – 20,760 trees to 118 organisations
- Surrey – 8,160 trees to 65 organisations
- Sussex – 15,720 trees to 88 organisations



Trees are one of our strongest defences against the climate and nature crisis. Evidence shows they combat the devastating effects of flooding, pollution and extreme weather and temperatures. They are the ultimate carbon stores. They are essential havens for wildlife and people. And they make the planet a healthier, happier place for everyone.

The Woodland Trust is committed to planting another 50 million native trees across the UK by 2030 and is urging people to get behind our mission to plant more trees and help us create a greener world.

Baddeley added: “In just a few years, your trees will have grown big enough to lock away carbon and be a thriving habitat for wildlife. They’ll offer free shade and shelter and help make the community space or playground, and the people who have access to it, happier and healthier.

“It would be incredible if we can reach a total of five million since 2020 this year – what an achievement and contribution that would be. There’s no time like the present, so sign up and take advantage of the scheme.”

The Woodland Trust’s tree packs have been generously funded by lead partners Sainsbury’s, Lloyds Bank, OVO Energy, Bank of Scotland and Sofology.

The UK’s largest woodland conservation charity has given away 13.9m trees since 2010. And if schools and communities can rise to the challenge and claim 800,000 saplings in the current round, that figure will be approaching a staggering 15m, an average of more than 1m every year.



Richmond Council invites local input to develop future flood risk management work

Richmond Council is updating its Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and looking for input from residents and community organisations, to ensure plans to protect the borough from flood risk best reflect local needs and priorities.

As Richmond upon Thames is the only London borough to span both sides of the River Thames, and with residents and businesses already feeling the impact of flooding, preparing the borough for flooding and flood risk is a key priority for the Council.

The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) identifies various flood risks and how these are managed, as well as a clear outline of the roles and responsibilities of risk management authorities.

Cllr Julia Neden-Watts, Chair of the Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Committee at Richmond Council, said: *“Some of our most important work at the Council is continuing to prepare and adapt our borough to a changing climate. As the Lead Local Flood Authority under the Flood and Water Management Act—and because so much of our borough lies in proximity to the Thames, the River Crane and the Beverley Brook, and is widely affected by surface water issues—a crucial aspect of this work is flood management. The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy has been developed to identify and manage all aspects of flood risk, including surface water flood risks, and to implement sustainable drainage. By working together with local partners on projects to increase flood resilience in areas of priority, like the Beverley Brook catchment area, and getting input from our residents on these important strategies, our aim is to modernise flood risk management, increase community preparedness and help to restore a more natural watercourse to our urban environment.”*



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An original version of the strategy was published in 2015 and is updated on a six-year cycle to capture all progress made and ensure it's up to date with industry policy and local need.

Each version of the strategy needs to consider a wide variety of perspectives on flood risk and experiences of flooding, so it is very important that members of the public are able to comment on how they think flood risk management should be delivered within the borough.

People who live and work in the borough are encouraged to have their say through this strategy survey, which will be open until 3 May 2023. On this consultation page, they will be able to read through the strategy's key objectives and action plans to help inform feedback. A summary of the strategy's key objectives is included below.

If anyone needs help completing the survey or would like a paper copy or different format, they can email flooding@richmond.gov.uk or call 020 8891 1411.

QGC AMBASSADOR SIR DAVID ATTENBOROUGH PLANTS A TREE FOR A NEW WOODLAND IN RICHMOND PARK TO HONOUR THE LATE QUEEN ELIZABETH II

QGC Ambassador Sir David Attenborough has planted an English oak tree to officially open the Platinum Jubilee Woodland in Richmond Park planted in honour of the late Queen Elizabeth as part of The Queen's Green Canopy. Sir David was joined by a group of QGC Junior Foresters from schools in London.

The woodland has been planted to celebrate and honour the late Queen Elizabeth II's lifetime of service.

The tree, chosen by Sir David, is one of the final few to be planted as part of The Queen's Green Canopy initiative which concludes on 31 March – the end of the planting season in the UK. The project invited people from across the nation to plant trees in honour of Queen Elizabeth II to mark the Platinum Jubilee and benefit future generations.

In all, 70 young, broadleaved trees have been planted in the woodland, with help from volunteers and people from the local community, to represent each year of Her Late Majesty's reign. They include oak, Dutch elm disease-resistant elm, small-leaved lime, and sweet chestnut trees. They are planted around a focal point which will later incorporate a seating area for rest and reflection. These larger canopy trees are complemented by smaller native trees and hedging such as hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, elder and dogwood.

The woodland provides respite for visitors and creates new habitats to support wildlife, including the endangered white-letter hairstreak butterfly and the cardinal click beetle. The shrubs will also provide shelter and a food source for small mammals and invertebrates.

The woodland was funded by The Royal Parks charity which manages Richmond Park, alongside generous support from The Friends of Richmond Park who funded the trees, and players of People's Postcode Lottery, all through a project called 'Help Nature Thrive'.

Sir David Attenborough, Patron of The Friends of Richmond Park charity and Queen's Green Canopy Ambassador, said:

"I am thrilled to be opening this new woodland to honour and celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee and life of service. The late Queen was very fond of The Royal Parks and was a great lover of trees, so this is a fitting tribute to her memory. Its creation also marks the continuing conservation of this protected landscape, and the wonderful wildlife within, so that it can be enjoyed by many generations to come.

"The Queen's Green Canopy has created an invaluable national legacy for our children, future generations and the planet itself."

Paul Richards, Richmond Park Manager, added:

"This tranquil new woodland marks 70 years of Queen Elizabeth II's reign by providing a welcoming community space for all. We hope that by enhancing the rich diversity of wildlife within this important National Nature Reserve, the woodland will inspire discovery and enjoyment of the natural environment for future generations - and that our youngest visitors especially will enjoy returning over the decades to notice the changes in the woodland as the trees mature."

Roger Hillyer, Chair of the Friends of Richmond Park, said:

"The Friends of Richmond Park are delighted to support the creation of this new woodland as a legacy in honour of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Today's planting by Sir David and school children from the Friends Discoverers educational programme will enhance the diversity of this much-loved National Nature Reserve."

Charlotte Cass, Help Nature Thrive Project Manager, said:

"It was wonderful to see so many local people from across the generations making a positive difference to Richmond Park on our Queen's Green Canopy planting day. We're grateful to players of People's Postcode Lottery, and everyone involved, for bringing together local communities to plant woodland that they can watch grow for years to come."



THE QUEEN'S GREEN CANOPY

THE PLATINUM JUBILEE 2022

New enterprise and innovation hub coming to Twickenham

A new community-focused enterprise and innovation hub is coming to central Twickenham, as Richmond Council announces that [Patch Places Ltd](#) will be bringing the “neighbourhood workspace” to 42 York Street.

Cllr Gareth Roberts, Leader of Richmond Council and Chair of the South London Partnership, said: *“In our 2022 manifesto, we promised residents that we would deliver an affordable shared workspace in Twickenham. I am delighted that we are able to announce that Patch will deliver this, in the heart of the town centre.*

“We are committed to the future of Twickenham, with long-term development plans to make it a vibrant and inclusive centre for residents, businesses and residents. Alongside the Twickenham Riverside redevelopment, this enterprise and innovation hub will bring new opportunities and innovation to the high street and will be a great community asset for many years to come. We look forward to welcoming businesses, entrepreneurs and residents from across our borough and beyond to Patch, and to Twickenham.”



42 York Street is a Council-owned building, originally the headquarters of the South Eastern Electricity Board and currently home to Achieving for Children. Patch will have public access space on the ground floor, including a locally-run café, an events studio and a podcast studio. The space will also be used to host a variety of events, from inspiring talks, to supper clubs, business workshops, networking events and crafts classes.

There will be a workspace on the upper floors, open to everyone from freelancers and home-workers, to SMEs and larger businesses. Memberships fees will start at £24 a month and Patch plans to give scholarships to local students to give them access to the workspace and foster partnerships with local universities and colleges.

The project is part funded by BIG South London, a programme led by the South London Partnership (SLP), that supports innovation-led economic growth by helping local businesses to grow and improve their productivity through support from and engagement with the six South London Universities. BIG South London, supported by Richmond Council’s Economic Development Office, successfully bid for London-wide funding to support seven innovation and start-up hubs across the SLP boroughs.

Freddie Fforde, Founder and CEO of Patch, said: *“We’re so excited to open a Patch space in Twickenham and provide a dynamic venue right in the heart of the community where everyone can work, collaborate, connect, and participate.*

“This will bring the best of both worlds - allowing people to balance their work and home life by reducing time spent commuting to the office, whilst also offering new and enhanced opportunities for people to connect to their community and discover brilliant local businesses and events.”

Achieving for Children will be moving into the Council’s Civic Centre at 44 York Street.

The Camp on Hounslow Heath

As the account of one royal 'spare' continues to rock the establishment, so a timely new book by local author and historian Ed Harris looks back 300 years to another younger royal sibling who came up trumps. James Stuart as Duke of York was the younger brother of King Charles II who regained the throne 21 years after the execution of their father, King Charles I. On the death of Charles II and with no heir, James became king.

James II, as Britain's last Catholic king, however, has traditionally been cast as a cruel absolutist who oversaw a level of tyranny representing an aberration in British history. More recent history, however, has been kinder. There were other sides to this misunderstood monarch. He was a gifted publicist and showman ahead of his time, propagating his cause by means of the greatest displays of military force ever assembled on British soil in peacetime.

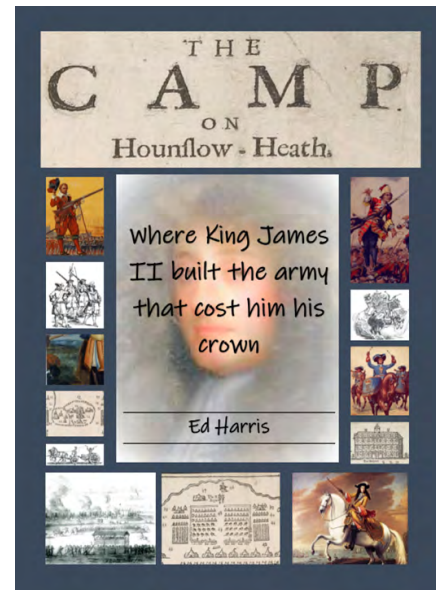
Located halfway between the royal power houses of London, Windsor and Hampton Court, half of Hounslow Heath survives as something resembling its natural form as a nature reserve in the London Borough of Hounslow. The other half lies scattered amongst the urban sprawl that is Heathfield in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames where James looked to build the citadel that eventually came about a century after his death as Hounslow Cavalry Barracks for use in times of civil unrest.

All that James managed to achieve on this front during his brief reign was an impressive hospital designed by Sir Christopher Wren marked only in name today by the roundabout serving Hospital Bridge Road and the A316 Great Chertsey Road. Associated permanent buildings took the form of a huge grain barn, now the site of Twickenham School, and an industrial scale bake house close to Whitton Corner Health and Social Centre. All else serving the encampment was dismantled and packed away at the end of each season.

Walking the three mile extent of the site from the direction of Twickenham involves taking the two routes. The peri-urban route through Heathfield crosses Hanworth Road for Hounslow Heath Nature Reserve. Using Simpson Road as the entry point to the heath is to consider the site of the Queen's opulent Perspective House overlooking the full splendour of the entire British army 'in battalia,' a view now absorbed by Richmond's largest public housing estate located at the furthest extent of the borough.

Taking the riverside route out of Crane Park onto Hanworth Road is to negotiate Pevensey Park Nature Reserve flanking the Southwest Middlesex Crematorium, and thereafter hugging the River Crane as far as ancient Baber Bridge on the old Roman Staines Road. Following the precariously narrow pavement towards the junction with Green Lane are two points of historical interest that have lain hidden in plain sight for centuries. The first is the lavish King's Quarters set out within a corral of re-planted mature trees now echoed in the footprint of a bustling recycling yard. Opposite is a 21st century golf driving range perched atop of a rubbish mound that was originally a hill constructed by James in 1687 to stage The Great Siege of Buda in a demonstration of Papal power.

The Camp on Hounslow Heath is a long overdue examination of a much neglected local landscape, an overlooked passage in the history of the British army and an underreported chapter in the Royal House of Stuart. This 209 page illustrated history will be available for sale at the Borough of Twickenham Local History Society meeting at St Mary's Hall's, Church Street, Twickenham, Monday 3rd April (non-members welcome). It is available to buy online: <http://botlhs.co.uk/portfolio/107-the-camp-on-hounslow-heath/> or direct from The Twickenham Museum, 23 The Embankment, Twickenham www.twickenham-museum.org.uk. Bookshops: ISBN 9781911 145073. Price £9.00.



CRACKING CHOCOLATE AND EASTER EGGS!

Whether you believe in pushing the boat out for Easter, or just buying a few token eggs, I've done some research for you as to those which I think are worth considering - and there's something here for all budgets.

I like to fill a glass bowl with an assortment of mini eggs as a centrepiece for the Easter lunch table. It looks cheerful and spring-like, and a small vase of daffs in the middle makes it a cheerful addition. And just to make us all have to shift a bit more excess weight afterwards, I hear that **Cadbury** now sells a **1kg XL Cadbury Mini Eggs Bag!** £10 from Waitrose



But what if you or another family member is vegan or lactose intolerant? I've discovered some really good vegan mini eggs from **Moo Free**, a highly ethical and sustainable chocolate producer, with a great value range of products. Their **caramel mini eggs** are excellent (£3 Tesco), and the company also has a very reasonably priced **Easter Egg Hunt Box** (£4 Waitrose)



Still on the theme of Easter egg hunts, **Joe & Seph's**, those wonderful folk who make the most delicious chocolate popcorn, have a Gourmet Easter Egg hunt for four. It includes two chocolate popcorn mini egg pouches, three limited-edition Easter popcorn snack packs, four popcorn Easter baskets and an Easter egg hunt clue sheet. Price £25 available online [here](https://www.joeandsephs.co.uk). The company has also produced packs of chocolate popcorn mini eggs and a whole host of other yummy popcorn products for Easter - check out [joeandsephs.co.uk](https://www.joeandsephs.co.uk)



Galaxy Enchanted Eggs are good value and widely available at around £1 for an 80g bag. And there is also a hollow milk chocolate egg with crunchy caramel rolled in rose gold and filled with Galaxy enchanted eggs. Great value at £3 from Sainsbury's Asda, Iceland, Tesco and Morrisons.

Another big treat for fans of **Twix** would be this Extra Large hollow chocolate egg with Twix Xtra bars from Tesco and Iceland. It was good value at £5, but is just £3.50 at the moment for Tesco Clubcard holders!



As a child, I lived in Malta, where there was a strong Italian influence at Easter and the eggs were always quite spectacular. The nearest thing to this that I've seen here in the UK that hasn't cost a fortune, is this wonderful looking **Ferrero Rocher Golden Easter Milk Chocolate Egg**. It's a hazelnut and milk chocolate egg and three Ferrero Rocher - and only costs £8 from Tesco.

Moving up the price range, I was really taken by these beautifully crafted artisan chocolate quail eggs from **Choc on Choc**. Made from top notch Belgian dark and white chocolate,



(but produced here in the UK by a family run business) and beautifully decorated with a butterfly design, they not only look fab, but taste amazing too! The company also makes Caramel Filled Drippy Quail's Eggs - both are £12 for a pack of 12 mini eggs. Do check out the [website](#), you'll be amazed at the incredibly life-like chocolate sculptures.



Are you a fan of liquorice? Then I'd urge you to try these stupendously delicious 'EGG's from Danish confectioner [LAKRIDS BY BÜLOW](#). This year, the company has introduced a new, third flavour - Crunchy Toffee - to join the Original and Crispy Caramel. LAKRIDS BY BÜLOW is on a mission to make the world love liquorice and it's certainly worked with me! These eggs combine soft liquorice with a creamy milk chocolate coating, dusted in liquorice powder. They are rather addictive, I warn you! LAKRIDS

BY BÜLOW is available from £9 in prestigious UK stores including Selfridges, Fenwick, Harvey Nichols and now also St Pancras. The eggs featured are £24 for 480g

I love the range by **Farhi** - the products are always beautifully presented and are great value for money for top quality. This fabulous, colourful collection of jewel-like foiled chocolate eggs is packed in neat rainbow stripes with each one filled with a crunchy hazelnut praline, will be very gratefully received. £17.50 for a 375g pack of 48 mini eggs, online [here](#) or also available in Harrods (£20) and John Lewis.



And last, but by no means least, for a really stylish chocolate Easter gift, the range from **Pierre Marcolini of Brussels** is superb. This lovely egg-shaped box contains a dozen little praline eggs in three different flavour combinations: almond praline with sesame nougatine in a white chocolate shell; praline with pecan nougatine in a milk chocolate shell and praline with hazelnut nougatine and caramel pieces in a dark chocolate shell. £16.90

And for a real show-stopper, how about this stunning chocolate flower from **Pierre Marcolini** (to be assembled before enjoying)? A water lily on a slab of delicious hazelnut praline milk chocolate and a selection of petals in dark and milk is something to be enjoyed by everyone at the table after Easter lunch. Both are available online

[here](#) or from the Pierre Marcolini boutiques in Marylebone High Street, Selfridges and Harrods £55 for the lily.



And totally away from chocolate, **Joe & Seph's** also produces a wonderful jar of Easter deliciousness with their Hot Cross Bun Spread. Not terribly sweet, but deliciously rich, you can spread it on warm toast or crumpets (or even a hot cross bun!) for added caramel indulgence! Made with fresh double cream and infused with real raisins and citrus peel. I'm going to try making an Easter bread & butter pudding with it spread on the bread... yum! £4.30 from Ocado or [online](#) from Joe & Seph's

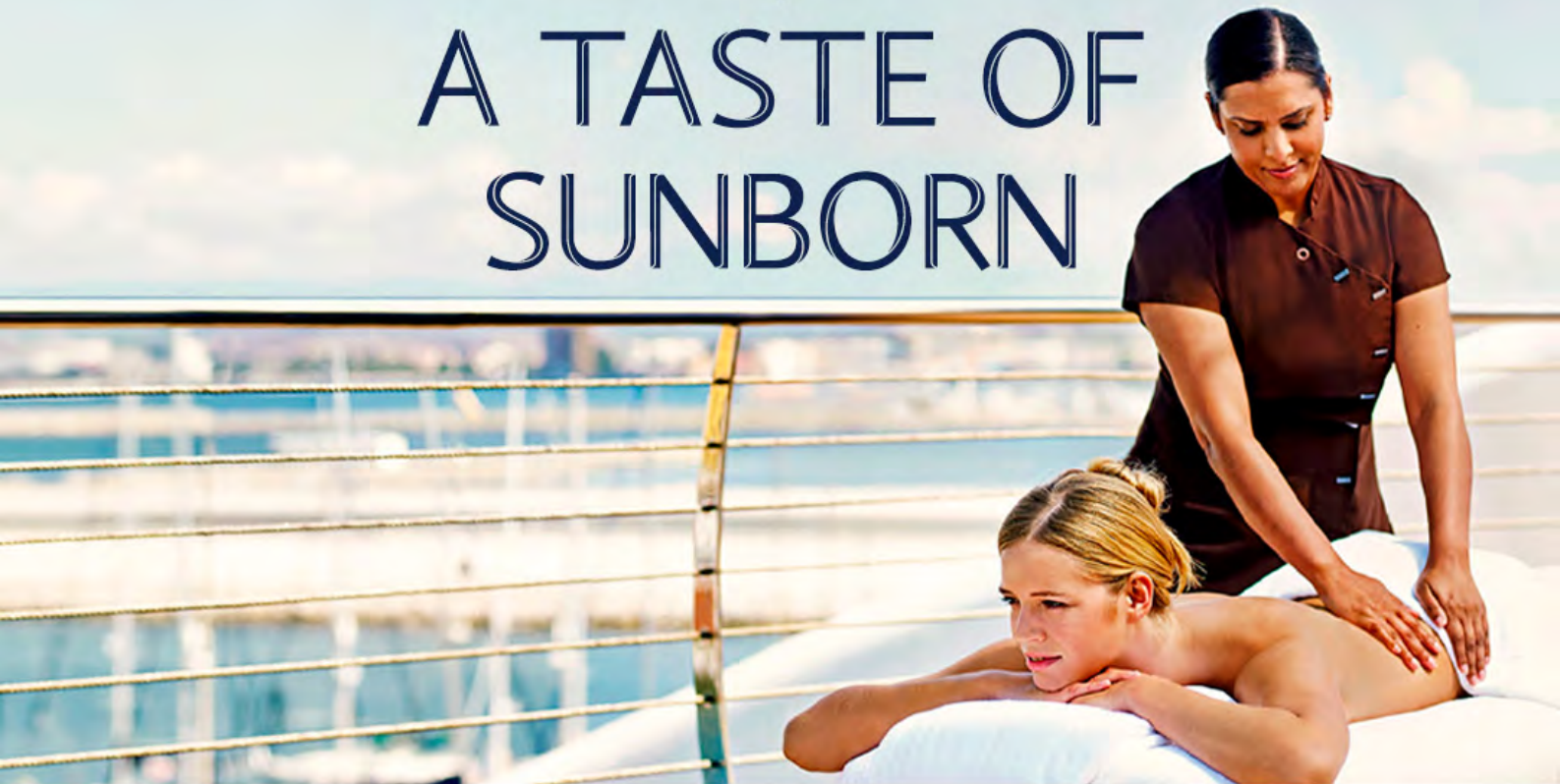
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WIZ Tales: The Oceans

Teresa Read



This week I was reminded of the World InfoZone project sections on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, particularly known in my family because of a connection with Cunard.

I was interested to find out that there had been a news report that the Royal Navy was faced with a multi-million pound bill for repairs to HMS Prince of Wales because of issues with the starboard propeller. It seems that the coupling joining two propeller shafts had failed, apparently an unusual fault.

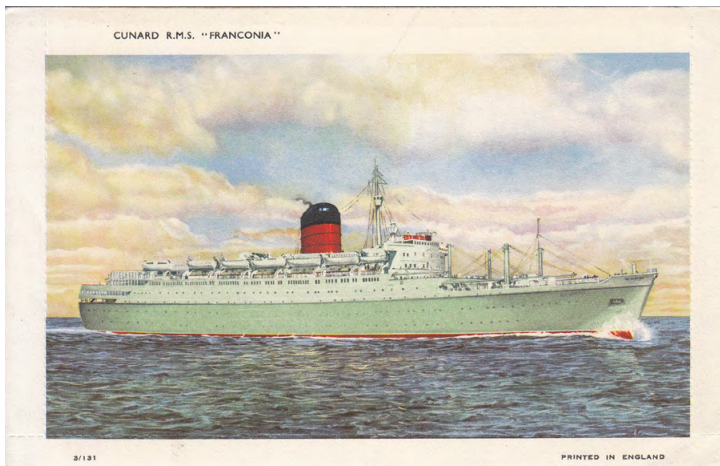
However, a ship's propeller fault is known within the history of my family affecting a passenger ship near Tangiers on Christmas Eve and during Ramadan.

My father-in-law Captain P.A. Read, one time captain of the Queen Mary, came across this fault in the 22,000 ton passenger liner, RMS Franconia. The ship sprang a leak and Captain Read, despite being 57, donned his diving gear eventually fixing a problem in the stern gland propeller.

The repair to the Franconia propeller took fifty-five minutes leaving a reported five minutes of oxygen to allow Captain Read to return to the surface.

Being interviewed about saving the ship at his age Captain Read said that he was the only person with the experience to do the job saying that he still felt a young man adding "you are as old as you feel".

Captain Read whose family home was in Newcastle served during the Second World War and was a well-known Cunard captain. He spent his career at sea sailing the world's largest oceans.



The Atlantic Ocean <https://worldinfozone.com/oceans.php?country=Atlantic&type=facts>

The Pacific Ocean <https://worldinfozone.com/oceans.php?country=Pacific&type=facts>

What does your biscuit say about you?

By Deep Patel

~ Through the Eyes of a Twickenham Shopkeeper ~

This week, I have been inspired to write about what the biscuit that you choose says about you...I have noticed certain trends in customers purchasing behaviours that correspond to their personalities or indeed what they seek in life...it sounds bizarre... but it's true...I have tested it! So you are probably thinking, where is he going with this...

Well, grab yourself a cuppa and your favourite biscuit...and read on...

So what's your type?...a big old reliable digestive...perhaps you are seeking stability, safety and guaranteed satisfaction...not much of a risk taker, like things organized and wholesome? Or are you a coconut ring kind of person?...likes to be a bit different...not afraid of adventures, doesn't feel pressured to "follow the crowd"...and live life a little loopy? Perhaps you are a Rich- Tea kind of person?...plain and simple...what you see is what you get...like to keep things simple...don't like over the top people...prefer to live a safe and steady, routine based life? You may well be a Jammy Dodger (no I don't mean in that way)...like a bit of fun...a kindred spirit at heart...gets bored easily and loves a little variety...isn't afraid to be who they are?



You may think I have gone insane (my family will tell you that happened years ago) but in all honesty, I have picked up these trends from observing the customer biscuit purchasing habits in my shop and cross referencing this with particular personality traits and the general persona of an individual...so next time you go to buy your favourite biscuits...stop for a second and think about what they say about you! A biscuit is never just a biscuit...

Those who follow my articles will know, what I am about to say about kindness towards little lives... but just in case you are a first-time reader, I always like to share these little good-karma gems, helping each other and all the life forms on this beautiful planet we call home. We are not the only inhabitants of this beautiful planet and there is a kind way for everything...If you have rodent issues, consider live capture traps where you can catch the rodents alive and release them in woodland or parkland areas far from homes. Try electronic high-frequency sound deterrents (check online for ones with good reviews and ones that are safe for your pets if you have any). Put empty jam jar lids filled with white vinegar all around areas where you don't want them to stop them without harming them (they HATE the smell of white vinegar). This also works for foxes, squirrels, mice and rabbits. Just picking up a slug off a pavement with a leaf and moving it over a wall counts as a good deed... choosing a kind way to stop ants (like talcum powder around where they come but not on them) counts as a good deed. Avoid sweeping/washing the garden patio too often to help save countless tiny almost invisible little lives that live there (particularly under large pots in the garden, hence I say gently lift the pots if you need to move them rather than dragging them to avoid crushing little lives). As I always say, the true key to our own happiness lies in the happiness of other life forms...until the next time...have a lovely week ahead and look after the smaller life forms and the universe will look after you. For further tips, check out my Facebook page "Kind World". As always...Peace, love and good karma to all xx

Remember...

"Your choice of biscuit says more about you than you will ever know..."

Charlotte and Theodore

by Ryan Craig

Theatre Royal Bath at Richmond Theatre until 25th March, then on tour until 1st April

The wryly witty *Charlotte and Theodore* has echoes of *Educating Rita*, being a two-hander set in the world of academia. The poignant tale tracks Teddy and Lotty's relationship through a series of flashbacks. It starts with Lotty about to jet off to Chicago, leaving house-husband Teddy looking after the kids. We then skip back to their first encounter, with eager young student Lotty applying to become research assistant to Teddy, a celebrated philosophy professor. Craig's plot then traces her rise and his fall, until an epilogue which leaps back to happier times and their first date.



It's formulaic, but still both fun and, as it hits its stride, thought-provoking, dealing with the knotty issues of freedom of speech and 'cancel culture'. It's not long before one realises which way the wind is blowing, especially as Teddy seems bent on self-destruction and Lotty is clearly capable and ambitious.



There is good chemistry between Kris Marshall and Eve Ponsonby, who both deliver quick-fire, overlapping dialogue with vigour and relish, and director Terry Johnson maintains a decent pace, so the play does not outstay its welcome. There are also some lovely set piece speeches, including a very funny one from Teddy about a toe-curlingly embarrassing wine tasting.

Indeed, Marshall's Teddy gets most of the best lines, and has certainly the more interesting character and journey, moving, swiftly and inevitably, from guru to outcast. Ponsonby has the harder role, just as Lotty herself hardens as reward comes her way. From research assistant to Head of Faculty (winning the job sought by Teddy) to globe-trotting adviser to the UN and the US

Congress, she has captured the zeitgeist, while her husband fights against the cultural tide.

Craig uses a neat analogy, describing Teddy and Lotty as like counterpoint: two musical themes trying not to collide but working their way around each other. Ultimately though their attempts are doomed to failure, as she embraces change while he refuses to "genuflect to the new orthodoxy". Sadly, the romantic epilogue only serves to hammer home that Teddy and Lotty's future is far from harmonious.

Read Daniel Wain's review at www.markaspen.com/2023/03/22/charlotte-theodore

Photography by Alastair Muir

Wyrd Sisters

by Stephen Briggs, adapted from the novel by Terry Pratchett

Richmond Shakespeare Society at the Mary Wallace Theatre until 25th March

“When shall we three meet again? Well, I can make next Tuesday” sums up this collision between the fantasy world of Terry Pratchett’s vivid imagination and the works of Shakespeare, a play that revolves around the story of ... I’ve got to say it ... (ouch) *Macbeth!*

Wyrd Sisters, part of Pratchett’s *Discworld* series, certainly went down well with an enthusiastic audience. Not being a Pratchett aficionado, it was hard to be won over. However, the energy of the company and a comic script littered with Shakespearean asides, warmed me to the concept.



The play centres on the three infamous witches. Lyn Randall, in a stalwart performance as the dominant self-opinionated Granny Weatherwax was, with her steely gaze, perfect for the role. Elinor Quick, as the jovial and mischievous Nanny Ogg, made a deliciously bawdy witch. The third, a trainee witch still learning her craft, was played full of wide-eyed innocence by Trine Taraldsvik, displaying some nicely timed humour.

With an ensemble of ten actors playing some thirty different roles, versatility was key, personified by Simon Bickerstaffe, who brought comic timing and wonderful gestures to his five characters. Particularly enjoyable was Charlotte Horobin’s jester-clad Fool, full of wry observations such as “fooling is a serious business”. The love interest between the Fool and the young witch were amusingly observed. In another twist, we observe a young Shakespeare, played by Dan Edwards, who aspires to be a writer of plays that are more than just “stabbing and shouting”.

Given all the complexity of plot, characters and references, director Cath Messum’s firm hand brought a sense of believability into Pratchett’s world; and once settled in, the action picked-up and fully engaged the audience.

The set, designed by Trine Taraldsvik, was simple and elegantly dressed in flowing drapes. Miriam King’s costume design was first class. *Wyrd Sisters* gave an interesting night of theatre, with some good performances, bringing an insight into the complex fantasy of *Discworld*.



Read Steve Mackrell’s review at www.markaspen.com/2023/03/22/wyrd-siS/

Photography courtesy of Richmond Shakespeare Society

Murder on the Nile

by Agatha Christie

The Questors at the Judi Dench Playhouse, Ealing until 25th March

For the first time in its ninety years, Questors stages an Agatha Christie whodunit, *Murder on the Nile*. Christie adapted the play from her book *Death on the Nile*, but missing out the detective work of Hercule Poirot.

Its singular location is the observation deck of the paddle steamer Lotus as it cruises down the Nile. The set design is impeccable, with sandy beige tones reflecting the sweeping vistas of Egypt and the riverside (presumably the Grand Union Canal transformed). The cream and bleached linen costumes are perfectly tailored to these surroundings and to the era.



Various passengers embark on the cruise, all having slightly mysterious reasons for being on-board, but it is the recent marriage of guests Simon Mostyn (River Apparicio) and his famous wife Kay (Alexandra Upton) that takes centre stage. The arrival of Simon's ex-flame Jacqueline de Severac (Alexandra Rose Wilson) acts as the torch to light up what feels initially like a weightless vacation, into a gradually more uneasy voyage.

As the overtly posh and always rude Miss Helen ffolyot-ffoulkes (lower case but upper class), Alison Griffin seizes the lines with a wind in her sails. Yet it is Guy Jack's standout turn that steals every second of his stage time as William Smith. His balanced performance has gravitas as well as delivering humour with exceptional timing, reviving the play in choppy waters where the wider dialogue gets over-detailed. A fastidiously scripted exposition of journeying across Egypt threatens to derail a scene between Mostyn and Canon Ambrose Pennefather (Mark Redrup, who exudes experience and class in his performance), yet they admirably persevere until the play comes alive when the eponymous crime becomes the central point of the drama.



Overall, the voyage of *Murder on the Nile* is a pleasant one for the audience – though not necessarily for the endangered passenger list trapped on deck. The ensemble cast, with its obvious sense of fun, and the skilled crew steer this paddle steamer of performance in a captivatingly enjoyable voyage.

Read Brent Muirhouse's review at www.markaspen.com/2023/03/19/murder-nile

Photography courtesy of Questors



Swim

by Liz Richardson

TBTL and Liz Richardson Productions at the Omnibus Theatre, Clapham then on tour until 24th June



Swim was written by the actor and theatre-maker Liz Richardson during lockdown, and premiered in 2022 at Keswick's Theatre by the Lake in the Lake District where Richardson was raised and swam as a child. After working in Manchester and London Liz Richardson relocated to the Peak District, a move that, together with certain real events, inspired her to write *Swim*, first for a cast of three and now revised and re-written as a one woman show.

“The sensation of water flowing around my body happily floating down a river, watching the banks pass me by. I like to take the same journey as a river it's the lack of control which feels so good, it's good to leave my life alone for a while.”



It is a stunning piece of storytelling about the whys of wild swimming, friendship and the acceptance of change, in many forms. Richardson's energetic and engaging performance is accompanied by projections and an ethereal live score, performed and sung by the composer and multi-instrumentalist Carmel Smickersgill. The resulting blend of music, words and video creates an exhilarating sense of immersion, only slightly undermined by the size of the venue.



Read Raymond Wheatan's review at www.markaspen.com/2023/03/17/swim

Photography by Chris Payne



Oliver Jnr

by Lionel Bart

Dramacube, Esher Orange at Cecil Hepworth Playhouse, Walton

At one time *Oliver!* was the most successful British musical, and presents an ambitious venture for a cast all in their early teens, but director Matthew Bunn has another triumph for Dramacube.

Nicely lit by Gary Stevenson, Lizzie Lattimore and Dickson Cossar, Hannah Calarco's set design, comprising a silver bricked bridge with a sinister tunnel, is atmospheric and effective throughout *Oliver's* adventures. Costumes by Jo Scholes are raggedly authentic and sound by David Gates well planned.



Greeted by the orphans, we are drawn into *Food Glorious Food* and the outrage caused by Oliver, subtly played by Isla Hickinson, asking "for more". Mr Bumble (Tori Agoro), looks very distinguished and smart, but Widow Corney alias Layla Heather, is truly tyrannical.

Action lights up when Oliver encounters his *bête noir*, the Artful Dodger, slickly played with natural energy by Grace Young. Fagan, strongly enacted by Chloe Ferizolli, comes across as sympathetic yet rotten to the core. *Pick a Pocket or Two* with its clever words is a standout number. Florence Bastin, who has a gifted voice, portrays a strong and tough Nancy. The poignant *It's A Fine Life* and *I'd Do Anything* are full of energy and the cast excelled. It is a joy to see Liam Fowler's grim and terrifying Bill Sykes.

Under the guidance of choreographers and musical directors Rory Cubbon and Heather Stockwell musical numbers are natural and vibrant. There were some songs that could have been used more to their full potential – such *Oom-Pah-Pah*, but this did not hold back the enjoyment, the energy or the exuberance of this iconic musical.



Read Heather Moulson's review at www.markaspen.com/2023/03/20/oliver-eo

Photography by Bomi Cooper

Registration now open for Art House Open Studios

Local charity Arts Richmond has been commissioned by Richmond Arts Service to coordinate the borough's open studios 2023 festival, Art House. Registrations are open until 16 April.

Art House is a chance for local artists, craftspeople, and artist and community groups to open their homes, studios and group venues and to showcase their talents to members of the public.

Tim Corum, Head of Richmond Arts Service, says: "Richmond Arts Service acknowledges and appreciates just how important Art House Open Studios is to our local artists, creatives and audiences, and the benefits that such initiatives contribute to the borough's arts ecology.

"We are now very pleased to confirm that Art House 2023 will take place later this year and will be wholly organised and coordinated by Arts Richmond.

The Arts Service will continue to engage with Art House as an important part of Richmond borough's visual art scene."

Catherine Sweet, Arts Richmond Chair of Visual Arts, says: "I am delighted that Arts Richmond will be coordinating Art House this year.



The festival is a wonderful opportunity for people to visit creative spaces, connecting with artists themselves and hearing how their work evolves. It's a vital chance for artists to meet new audiences, sell their work and build their creative networks, and one we are keen to ensure is sustainable for many years to come."

Further details and the form to register participation are now available via the [Arts Richmond website](#).

Participants who have further questions before registering, or who might need a paper application form, should contact Arts Richmond as soon as possible.

A wonderful Richmond themed Art Exhibition on display at The Richmond Club

Saturday 25th March to Sunday 9th April, from 12 pm-7 pm

[The Richmond Club](#) is hosting a very special art exhibition put together by the Richmond Art Society for its members and guests. The exhibition will run from March 25 and open to the public over the weekends of 25-26th, April 1-2, and April 8-9, from 12 pm to 7 pm. Club members will be able to view the collection at opening hours throughout the week.

The beautiful, and versatile Pineapple Room will be transformed showcasing stunning art, from local artists, inspired by the borough of Richmond Upon Thames, and curated by The Richmond Art Society.



Jim Woodman, Chair of Richmond Art Society said: “We have a diverse range of artwork on display so there’s something for everyone to enjoy. The venue itself is ideal for us, with plenty of space and natural light to showcase the artwork.”



Jo Ellis



Caroline Sayer



Jo Ellis

Featured artists include Peter Taunton, who paints mainly in oils, drawing inspiration from a wide range of subject matter including landscapes, interiors, people, and still life artworks; Ellis, whose work ranges from abstract expressionism to townscapes, influenced by her travels and love for old towns; and Caroline Sayer, a London-based artist, and gardener who has exhibited her work at a number of galleries and shows, including the Menier Gallery, Shipton Street Gallery E2, and various contemporary art fairs.

The Richmond Club is Richmond’s first private member’s club and was crowned Best Start-Up Business 2022 at The Richmond Business Awards.

To view this artwork and more just pop into the Club on the weekends mentioned above between 12 pm and 7 pm.

For more information about The Richmond Club, visit:

<https://therichmondclub.uk/>

The Richmond Club, 115-117 Kew Road, Richmond, TW9 2PN

THE RICHMOND CLUB 

Jensen becomes club's most-capped player

Mathias Jensen earned his 23rd Denmark cap in their Euro 2024 qualifying win over Finland, to become the club's all-time most-capped player

Written by Brentford Football Club

Brentford midfielder Mathias Jensen is now the club's all-time most-capped player, after his appearance in Denmark's 3-1 win over Finland on Thursday.

The Bees man earned his 23rd cap in the Euro 2024 qualifying match, to move past the club's former defender and fellow Dane, Henrik Dalsgaard.

Jensen played 77 minutes of the clash, which saw Atalanta forward Rasmus Hojlund score a hat-trick for Kasper Hjulmand's side.

Norwich striker Teemu Pukki was involved in the Finnish goal, as he provided for Oliver Antman to score the equaliser just after half-time, before the home side ran out eventual winners.

Fellow Bees Christian Norgaard and Mikkel Damsgaard started alongside Jensen in the game in Copenhagen. Norgaard played the whole game at the Parken Stadium, whilst Damsgaard played 65 minutes.

Jensen, who signed for Brentford from Celta Vigo in 2019, before helping the Bees to promotion two years later, represented Denmark from every age group from under-18s through to under-21s.

He made a total of 30 caps for the Danish youth teams, before making his senior debut in a 4-0 win over Faroe Islands in October 2020. Six of his 23 caps came at the postponed Euro 2020, when Denmark reached the tournament's semi-finals, before losing to England in extra-time.

The Brentford man also played twice in last year's World Cup in Qatar, facing Tunisia and Australia in the group stages.

His only goal for his country came in an 8-0 win over Moldova in a qualification game for that World Cup.

Another Brentford player will join up with the Denmark side for their upcoming Euro 2024 qualifier against Kazakhstan, with Bees defender Zanka called up to the squad.

He replaces Barcelona defender Andreas Christensen, who came off injured in the victory over Finland on Thursday.



Red Roses name matchday 23 to play Scotland in TikTok Women's Six Nations opener



Head coach Simon Middleton has named his matchday 23 for England's TikTok Women's Six Nations opener against Scotland at Kingston Park (Saturday 25 March, KO 16:45 and live on BBC Two).

Sarah Hunter will lead her side for one final time at No.8 after announcing she is to retire following the match in her hometown of Newcastle.

Saracens prop Mackenzie Carson has been called up to England's Six Nations squad after her birth right transfer to represent the Red Roses was confirmed. The 24-year-old qualifies for England through her English mother. Having previously earned three caps for Canada, including one against England during the Autumn Internationals in 2018, Carson has made herself available to play for England under World Rugby's birth right transfer rules which allows a capped player to switch allegiance to another country they are eligible to play for following a three-year stand-down period. She starts at loose-head prop to earn her first cap alongside Amy Cokayne (hooker) and Sarah Bern (tight-head prop) in the front row.

Elsewhere, Zoe Aldcroft and Poppy Cleall are the lock pairing while Sadia Kabeya and co-captain Marlie Packer start at blind-side flanker and open-side flanker respectively. Abby Dow (full back), Jess Breach (right wing) and Claudia MacDonald (left wing) make up the back three. Holly Aitchison and Amber Reed form the 10-12 axis with Harlequins' Lucy Packer at scrum half and Lagi Tuima at outside centre.

Liz Crake, Kelsey Clifford and Ella Wyrwas are all in line to earn their first caps after being named among the substitutes. Lock Rosie Galligan will miss the tournament after sustaining a hamstring injury in training last week. Meanwhile, scrum half Natasha Hunt is unavailable for selection for this fixture due to a calf injury.

Middleton said: "We are all really looking forward to Saturday's match against Scotland in Newcastle. "There has been a brilliant atmosphere in camp and with a mix of new and experienced players, there is a real buzz. A number of players are in line to earn their first caps, and this is an excellent and deserved opportunity. "This is a very new squad and they have been asked to train hard and learn fast over the last three weeks. This week we've really been able to see the cohesion starting to develop and we can't wait for the team to get out there on Saturday.

"We are all absolutely gutted for Rosie Galligan, she brings so much to the squad and losing her for the tournament is a significant blow. Rosie is not only an outstanding player but has really stepped up in terms of leadership qualities. She brings an incredible amount of positive energy to everything she does and that has a massive positive effect on those around her. She will be missed for sure but like everything with Rosie you know she'll come back stronger.

"Natasha (Mo) Hunt has also picked up a knock and is ruled out of this game. Mo has brought her club form into England and has trained really well up until this point so it's hugely disappointing to lose her for this game. We are confident we will see her back later on in the tournament.

"Six Nations fixtures and games against Scotland are always special occasions and we know Bryan (Easson) will have prepared his side well. "All of our players and staff can't wait to get to the North East and play in front of a sell-out crowd where hopefully we can put on a show and get our Six Nations campaign up and running."

England team to play Scotland

- | | |
|--|--|
| 15. Abby Dow (Harlequins, 30 caps) | 1. Mackenzie Carson (Saracens, uncapped) |
| 14. Jess Breach (Saracens, 24 caps) | 2. Amy Cokayne (Harlequins, 70 caps) |
| 13. Lagi Tuima (Harlequins, 12 caps) | 3. Sarah Bern (Bristol Bears, 52 caps) |
| 12. Amber Reed (Bristol Bears, 62 caps) | 4. Zoe Aldcroft (Gloucester-Hartpury, 38 caps) |
| 11. Claudia MacDonald (Exeter Chiefs, 24 caps) | 5. Poppy Cleall (Saracens, 63 caps) |
| 10. Holly Aitchison (Saracens, 15 caps) | 6. Sadia Kabeya (Loughborough Lightning, 8 caps) |
| 9. Lucy Packer (Harlequins, 9 caps) | 7. Marlie Packer (CC; Saracens, 89 caps) |
| | 8. Sarah Hunter (CC; Loughborough Lightning, 140 caps) |

Finishers

- | | |
|--|--|
| 16. Lark Davies (Bristol Bears, 44 caps) | 20. Sarah Beckett (Gloucester-Hartpury, 25 caps) |
| 17. Liz Crake (Wasps, uncapped) | 21. Ella Wyrwas (Saracens, uncapped) |
| 18. Kelsey Clifford (Saracens, uncapped) | 22. Tatyana Heard (Gloucester-Hartpury, 9 caps) |
| 19. Cath O'Donnell (Loughborough Lightning, 24 caps) | 23. Emma Sing (Gloucester-Hartpury, 2 caps) |

COVID-19 business grant schemes

Government can build resilience against future national emergencies by applying lessons from its experience of paying £22.6bn in grants to businesses amid the COVID-19 pandemic, a new National Audit Office (NAO) report says.

The report, **COVID-19 business grant schemes**, records the pace at which 4.5 million payments were issued to firms via eight schemes from March 2020 to March 2022. Working under significant pressure, the former Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and councils successfully established the schemes and quickly distributed grants to businesses in England to soften the impact of restrictions.

HM Treasury (HMT) asked BEIS in late February 2020 to consider how a grant scheme might be delivered. The first scheme was announced at the Budget on 11 March with a second announced on 17 March. No contingency plans existed between central and local government for supporting firms during a national emergency. Local authorities were not notified of the new schemes until they were publicly announced by HMT. This created significant practical challenges as councils scrambled to understand scheme requirements and answer questions from businesses.

The initial grant schemes, where BEIS did not require pre-payment checks, contributed the overwhelming majority of the estimated £1.1bn losses from error and fraud across all of the schemes. These losses amounted to just under 5% of the value of grants paid to businesses. BEIS estimated that error and fraud under later schemes was significantly lower. By mid-February 2023, the new Department for Business and Trade (DBT) reported £11.4m of these losses had been recovered.

BEIS learned lessons from the initial response in 2020. It established strengthened governance arrangements and also mandated pre-payment checks which helped to greatly reduce the level of losses in later schemes.

Ipsos is currently carrying out a BEIS-commissioned evaluation of the grant schemes to assess their economic impact and value for money. This work is more challenging than it would have been had evaluation been built in from the start. DBT, which is now responsible for these schemes, expects a draft final report in late spring 2023 and is also examining the impact of its other COVID-19 interventions, including business loans. HMT has no parallel plans to evaluate the overall impact of government support to businesses.

Gareth Davies, head of the NAO, said:

“BEIS and local government deserve credit for working quickly to set up and distribute grants to businesses. Early schemes lost significant sums to error and fraud, but BEIS addressed this in later iterations. The government does not yet know the impact of these grants - in terms of maintaining jobs or how much support might have been given to businesses which did not need it. Without such an assessment, an overall judgement about the value for money of the schemes remains open.

“The government’s experience of working at speed with local authorities to channel financial support during the pandemic offers important lessons should similar crises occur. The new Department for Business and Trade can now use these lessons to improve contingency planning and to build government resilience for responding to future national emergencies.”

Click here for the [full report](#) and click here for the [PAC Chair’s statement](#).



National Audit Office
www.RichmondTribune.com

COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted access to medicines for noncommunicable diseases

WHO published a new report *Access to NCD Medicines: Emergent Issues During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Key Structural Factors*, today, to highlight the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on access to noncommunicable disease (NCD) medicines, and the policies and strategies implemented by countries to anticipate and mitigate stresses across NCD medicine supply chains.

During the pandemic, people living with cancer, heart diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes and other NCDs experienced difficulties in accessing their routine medicines. This report reviewed the impact of the pandemic on NCD medicines from manufacturing, procurement, importation, to delivery, availability and affordability.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges that people living with NCDs face in accessing essential medicines,” said Dr Bente Mikkelsen, Director of the Department of Noncommunicable Diseases at WHO. “Many have had their treatment disrupted, which can lead to serious health consequences. It is therefore very important not only that treatment and care for people living with NCDs are included in national responses and preparedness plans, but that innovative ways are found to implement those plans.

Numerous pharmaceutical supply chains were affected in different ways and to varying extents. The report also provides considerations for the key stakeholders in the NCD pharmaceutical supply chain, including governments, regulatory authorities, manufacturers, and the private sector, as well as directions for future research toward improved supply chain resilience.

There is an urgent need to improve the transparency of the overall pharmaceutical information ecology as a foundation for pandemic planning and response: if we are unable to identify weaknesses in the global NCD supply chain, we cannot hope to mend them. Without effective monitoring, transparent data, it is difficult to identify weaknesses in the global NCD supply chain. This requires countries to look at its supply chain, strengthen and expand medicine shortage notification systems, build in flexibility in its regulatory measures and minimize barriers to trade.

“Actions are needed to strengthen the resilience of medicine supply chains globally and in country to respond to today’s needs and to prepare for emerging challenges, including emergencies and pandemics” said Dr Clive Ondari, Director Health products policy and standards.

Globally, more is spent on medicines for NCDs than any other therapeutic class. There is a need to continue to assess the successes and failures of the global supply chain toward improved NCD medicine access and services as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses. Although a few short-term interventions were established to respond to immediate pandemic needs, a longer-term strategy to strengthen access and delivery mechanisms during emergencies and mitigate future outbreaks should be developed, with particular emphasis on ensuring the uninterrupted and sustainable provision of medicines and products needed to diagnose and treat chronic diseases. “Let’s not forget: COVID-19 may be out of sight, but access to NCD medicines is still out of reach for many” said Dr Mikkelsen.

For the report, the Hard Talk Event and further information:

Report - [Access to NCD medicines: emergent issues during the COVID-19 pandemic and key structural factors](#)

NCD Hard Talks webinar - <https://www.who.int/news-room/events/detail/2023/03/22/default-calendar/ncd-hard-talks-webinar-the-finish-line-isnt-crossed-until-everyone-has-access-to-ncd-medicines-have-we-forgotten-the-lessons-of-covid-19>

Announcement - <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-03-2023-covid-19-pandemic-significantly-impacted-access-to-medicines-for-noncommunicable-diseases>



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