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THE WEEK

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THE BEST OF THE BRITISH AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

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What happened

Labour's first 100 days

Keir Starmer presided over an investment summit in London on Monday (*see page 40*), at which he pledged to “rip up” the bureaucracy holding back new homes, data centres, wind farms, grid connections, train lines and other infrastructure projects. The PM said he would do everything in his power “to galvanise growth” and show that Britain was “open for business”. In the run-up to the summit, the port operator DP World had threatened to reconsider a £1bn investment pledge after Transport Secretary Louise Haigh lambasted its subsidiary P&O for its hiring practices. But the row was ironed out and ministers ended up hailing £63bn of investment commitments from businesses.

For Labour, which marked 100 days in office on Saturday, the event was an opportunity to allay concerns about the forthcoming Budget (*see page 6*) and to move beyond recent negative headlines about freebies and No. 10 infighting. But the Government continued to be dogged by cronyism accusations this week, with claims that it had leant on Scotland Yard to provide Taylor Swift with a taxpayer-funded police escort to her London concerts this summer.



Starmer: wooing big businesses

What the editorials said

Starmer talks a good game when it comes to “turning Britain into a magnet for global investment”, said *The Daily Telegraph*, but it's just words. In reality, he's planning to burden businesses with new employment rights (*see page 20*) and higher taxes. The PM sought to convince investors that he leads the party of stability, but Labour's first 100 days have been characterised by feuding and scandal. The party's true attitude towards business was revealed by Haigh's display of “sixth-form political activism”, said *The Daily Mail*. Why would corporate leaders believe Starmer's assurances?

Haigh's remarks were unhelpful, said *The Independent*, but don't read too much into them. Starmer is desperate to encourage growth and knows how important it is to help businesses. And “for all the despondency of the last few weeks”, the country's economic prospects are brightening. The US entrepreneur Michael Bloomberg wrote this week that he had “never been more bullish on the UK's future”. Labour must seize the moment, said *The Sunday Times*. After so many wasted years under the Tories, voters are keen for a government that shows some vision and leadership. “Labour may be rewarded for thinking imaginatively.”

What happened

Badenoch vs. Jenrick

Campaigning in the Tory leadership election stepped up this week, after Kemi Badenoch and Robert Jenrick won the final round of MPs voting. With Tory members now being balloted to choose a winner (to be announced on 2 November), bookies had Badenoch as the favourite. This week, she described the contest as “existential” for the Tories. “If we get this wrong,” she warned, “there's not going to be a party.” Jenrick, meanwhile, repeated his calls for Britain to leave the European Convention on Human Rights.

The pair, both from the right of the party, had reached the final two after James Cleverly, who'd come top in the previous round, was knocked out. His allies denied claims that they'd tried to game the contest by urging Cleverly's supporters to vote for Jenrick, in the belief that he'd be the easier candidate to defeat in the run-off. They suggested, however, that some MPs might have taken it upon themselves to do so.



The candidates: both right-wingers

What the editorials said

The Conservative Party never ceases to surprise when it comes to picking a new leader, said *The Daily Telegraph*. Cleverly, the sole remaining candidate of the centre ground, had seemed a shoo-in to make the run-off. News of his elimination drew gasps of disbelief from Tory MPs, suggesting “something went seriously awry” in their voting. Yet the result stands, and leaves Tory members to choose between two candidates who have performed consistently well throughout this contest.

Cleverly would have been best-placed to lead a Tory revival, said *The Independent*. He'd wisely urged his party to “be more normal” and, owing to his affable demeanour, “the more people saw of him the more they warmed to him”. Now the Tories are destined to have a leader who'll struggle to appeal to the wider electorate, said *The Guardian*. Badenoch is gaffe-prone, and trades mainly in “culture-war provocation”; Jenrick is a former Remainer who has shamelessly tacked to the right in a bid to curry favour within his party. Neither is in step with “mainstream British public opinion”.

It wasn't all bad

A 23-year-old Londoner who became the youngest woman to climb K2 in 2022, has become the youngest to scale all 13 of the world's other highest peaks. Adriana Brownlee reached the summit of Shishapangma in Tibet on 9 October, making her only the second Briton to complete the feat. Aged eight, she had written in a primary school homework assignment that her dream was to climb “the highest mountain in the world... and be one of the youngest girls to do this”.

The wreck of Sir Ernest Shackleton's ship *Endurance*, which sank in 1915 after being trapped for ten months in Antarctic ice, has been revealed in astonishing 3D detail for the first time. The digital scan is made up of 25,000 high-resolution images that were captured by underwater robots when the wreck was found in 2022, at a depth of 3,000 metres. Released ahead of a new documentary, the scan shows scattered dinner plates and a boot, and even the flare gun that was fired as *Endurance* was swallowed by the ice. The wreck is remarkably well preserved thanks to the absence of wood-eating organisms at the bottom of the Weddell Sea.



An international team of archaeologists has discovered a 2,000-year-old tomb at Petra that could shed new light on the history of the city, and on the Nabataean civilisation that built it. The tomb, which was found under the hand-carved Treasury monument, contains 12 well-preserved skeletons, as well as hundreds of bronze, ceramic and iron artefacts. “The discovery is of international significance as very few complete burials from the early Nabataeans have been recovered from Petra before,” said Prof Richard Bates.

What the commentators said

Many governments get off to a rocky start, said Andrew Neil in the Daily Mail, but “none in modern memory” has stumbled as badly as Labour. It takes “a special kind of political nous” to make the signature policy of your first 100 days the abolition of the winter fuel allowance for most pensioners – and to justify that on cost grounds, even as you hand big pay rises to friends in the unions. On top of that, we’ve had the rows over freebies, the No. 10 civil war and the constant, counterproductive laments from ministers about how awful everything is in Britain.

It has been a disappointing period for those of us who voted Labour, said Nick Cohen in The Spectator. We thought the “grown-ups” were taking charge, but Starmer’s administration has floundered. If Tories think things will carry on like this, though, they’re likely in for a surprise. The Government’s troubles stem in part from the long gap between July’s general election and the Budget, which has sapped Labour of momentum and created a vacuum that has been filled with office politics and muck-raking stories in the Tory press. With the Budget now upon us, and a new team in place in No. 10, there is “every indication that the Starmer Government is about to get a grip”. The replacement of Sue Gray with Morgan McSweeney as the PM’s chief of staff should help quell No. 10 infighting and make things run more smoothly, said Steven Swinford in The Times. Starmer’s allies say his goal is to make the business of government “as boring as possible”, by building an efficient machine that quietly delivers his policy agenda.

The PM is seeking stability, said Rafael Behr in The Guardian. He believes that making life better for ordinary people by, for instance, enhancing workers’ rights and reducing NHS waiting lists, will create a happier, more secure electorate that will be resistant to the angry, populist politics peddled by the likes of Reform UK. “As a fellow liberal constitutionalist, I want it to be true. But I worry it isn’t enough.” The robust health of America’s economy, after all, hasn’t inoculated US voters against Trumpism. While Starmer makes a good intellectual case for a more interventionist approach, he hasn’t yet managed to sell his vision to voters.

What the commentators said

There is, it seems, “no scenario the Tory party cannot massively mishandle”, said Ian Dunt in The i Paper. In Cleverly, MPs had a candidate whom you could “quite easily” imagine as PM. Instead, they’ve picked two from the party’s “extreme right”: Jenrick, who once ordered an asylum reception centre to paint over a Disney mural, lest it give migrant children “any comfort”; and Badenoch, who is prone to “baffling” outbursts – such as her recent claim that 5% to 10% of civil servants should be in prison. Each has their strengths and weaknesses, said Matthew Parris in The Times. Jenrick is “quick-witted” and has fought a slick campaign; but he has in the past been embroiled in serious controversies, and seems willing to say anything in order to realise his ambitions. Badenoch, my preferred candidate, is “intellectually brave”, but her habit of shooting from the hip and picking unnecessary fights makes her a risky choice.

Labour MPs are delighted by this result, said Sonia Sodha in The Observer. “But a little caution would be advised.” If Badenoch wins, as looks likely, she’d pose problems for Keir Starmer: at her best, she “wipes the floor with her opponents”, and her combative style is likely to generate airtime – half the battle in opposition. Tory MPs seem to think that they need a “revolution”, said Tom McTague on UnHerd, and both candidates are radical in their way: Badenoch promises to upend the “progressive zeitgeist”, with her attacks on “left-legalism and its catch-all partner ‘wokeism’”; Jenrick wants to do the same for the “Blairite state”, via reforms of immigration policies and a return of sovereignty. But both risk being hobbled by the same problem, said Paul Goodman in The Guardian: neither won a majority in the MPs’ rounds, so they’d lack a mandate in the Commons. What’s more, to come back from opposition, the Tories must win support from voters across the spectrum: from the Greens in rural areas, to Reform and Labour in the North and the Lib Dems in the suburbs. Can either of these two really do that?

What next?

The Government will be looking to notch up some progress this autumn on the five key “missions” that Starmer set out for his future administration last year, says The Times. The five goals are: boosting economic growth; making Britain a green energy superpower; cutting crime; fixing the NHS; and spreading opportunity. Announcements are expected on improving the availability of nursery school places, and refurbishing primary schools.

There will also be a greater focus on curbing illegal immigration. Ministers are seeking to create new “support deals” with countries to speed the return of migrants, as part of plans to remove 14,000 migrants by the end of the year.

What next?

Badenoch was criticised this week for endorsing a campaign pamphlet suggesting that people with anxiety and autism get “economic advantages and protections” not given to their peers. Former Tory minister Robert Buckland noted that the report muddled a developmental condition with a mental health one; the National Autistic Society said that the comments were “detached from reality”.

Bob Blackman, chair of the 1922 Committee of Tory MPs, has indicated that the party will amend its rules to make it harder to launch leadership challenges.

THE WEEK

Burn it. Slash it. Cut the red tape. Lighting a bonfire of the regulations used to be the obsession of right-wing economists. Now everyone’s calling for it. “Ease the regulatory burden on Europe’s companies,” advised Italy’s former PM, Mario Draghi, in a recent report to the European Commission. “We will rip out the bureaucracy that holds back investment,” our own PM told the titans of business gathered at Labour’s investment summit this week. All of which would be splendid if, like Health Secretary Wes Streeting, you think the thicket of tape is only there because “more regulation” is the easiest lever for governments to pull, or more precisely, as he wrote in The Times, because of the Conservatives’ desire over the past decade “to look busy”. But it isn’t. Whether it’s regulations to stop the water companies polluting; or the ring-fencing rules imposed on the banks after the financial crisis to deter volatile investment; or the merger control regime to check monopoly – the tape is there because a group of concerned interests, appealing to the public interest, have lobbied hard for it. Yet at the investment summit, it was those self-same rules that CEOs of the water firms (*see page 23*), the big banks and the near monopolies were lobbying hard for Starmer to “rip out” in fulfilment of his pledge. And maybe, to placate the god of economic growth, that is the kind of ripping he will have to do. Justifiable or not, we should pay at least as much attention to the bribes politicians offer CEOs as the freebies they get back from them.

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Controversy of the week

An impossible task?

At the end of the month, Rachel Reeves will deliver her first Budget as Chancellor, said Robert Colville in *The Sunday Times*. “She finds herself in a near-impossible position”, because “she has made a series of near-impossible promises”. When she was running for office, Reeves told voters that there would be no increases to income tax, national insurance or VAT – no tax rises for “working people” – but “also that there would be more money for public services”. She promised higher investment, but also to control borrowing and debt. “She promised to be generous, but also thrifty. To spend, but also to save.” And the public finances, as Reeves often points out, were in bad shape to start with, said George Parker in the *FT*. The Treasury “has identified a £40bn funding gap”, which she will have to fill mostly with tax rises. Labour’s manifesto promised higher taxes for wealthy foreign “non-doms”. Reeves is also thought likely to increase capital gains tax (CGT) and taxes on private equity executives. It has been reported, too, that she will raise employers’ national insurance contributions.



Reeves: taxing dilemmas

“Soaking the rich is a Labour tradition,” said Emma Duncan in *The Times*, and it may seem fair enough when the country is “skint”. But “that would be a dangerous move, for we need the rich”. “The top 1% now contribute nearly a third of total income tax receipts, and the top 10% more than half.” Push it much further, and the mobile rich will “hop it”. There’s also a danger of discouraging investment and suffocating job creation at a time when the country needs both. For decades, the rich have successfully put it about that taxing them is a disastrous idea, said *The Guardian*. But the fact is that they don’t pay nearly enough. Nearly a quarter of those with a total income of £3m or more pay less than 12% in tax on that. One reason is that CGT is set so low: for example, private equity managers are paid partly through carried interest, which is subject to CGT at a lower rate than income tax. CGT has become “a driver of inequality”, and it must be reformed.

Reeves faces a real dilemma, said John Rentoul in *The Independent*. Taxing the super-rich will only bring limited returns, and could kill the golden goose. And specific taxes are inevitably presented by interest groups as disastrous for growth. Hence, presumably, reports that Reeves is rowing back from hitting non-doms and private equity in favour of employers’ national insurance. This will at least “raise a serious amount of money while also being virtually impossible to avoid”, said Matthew Lynn in *The Daily Telegraph*. But it’s a very bad idea. First, it’s a broken promise: Labour’s manifesto pledges no rises in national insurance. That it’s not charged directly to workers is immaterial. It will be paid for by workers in the form of lower wages and higher prices, and discourage companies from hiring. “Add it all up and this plan will punish the economy at the worst possible moment.”

Novichok inquiry

An inquiry opened in Salisbury this week into the death of Dawn Sturgess, who was killed in the Novichok poisonings in 2018. The inquiry will examine the circumstances leading to her death, identify where responsibility for it lies and highlight lessons. Sturgess, 44, unwittingly sprayed herself with the nerve agent, which had been concealed in a Nina Ricci perfume bottle. The inquiry heard that it held enough poison to kill “thousands”. At the opening of the inquiry, Sturgess’s mother, Caroline, said the family drew some “comfort” from the fact that “Dawn was the only life lost that day, when the potential harm was much, much more. We know she would agree.”

High-speed proposal

Ministers have been urged to consider proposals to build a new high-speed rail line between Birmingham and Manchester dubbed “HS2-lite”. Supporters of the project say that it would be 40% cheaper to build than the northern leg of HS2 that Rishi Sunak scrapped last year, but bring similar economic benefits. The trains would be able to travel at a maximum speed of 186mph – slower than the 225mph speeds of HS2, but much faster than the current West Coast Main Line.

Spirit of the age

Forget puffer coats and parkas: this autumn, fashionable types are wrapping themselves up in bathrobes, *The Guardian* reports. Celebrities to have adopted the trend include Rihanna, Angelina Jolie and Isabelle Huppert, who recently wore a fluffy white robe on the red carpet, accessorised with dark glasses and diamonds.

King Arthur has been included on a council’s LGBTQ+ history timeline because he “wore women’s clothes”. Denbighshire County Council featured the folkloric warrior king as part of a project celebrating “local stories of sexual orientation and gender identity”. According to myth, Arthur once disguised himself as a woman to sneak into a ball and get close to a love interest.

Good week for:

Han Kang, the 53-year-old South Korean novelist, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. The award cited her “intense poetic prose that confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life”. This year’s Peace Prize went to Nihon Hidankyo, a group that represents the survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Interns, after the Wall Street trading firm Jane Street advertised a summer job with a salary of \$250,000pa. “We don’t expect you to have a background in finance or any other specific field,” says the ad, but “research experience is a plus”.

Wallace and Gromit fans, with the release of a “teaser” for the first feature film starring the Claymation duo since 2008. *Wallace & Gromit: Vengeance Most Fowl* – which features the villainous penguin Feathers McGraw – will be on the BBC this Christmas.

Bad week for:

BBC presenters, who will no longer be referred to as “the talent”, its director-general has said. During a discussion on BBC Radio 4, Tim Davie told Nick Robinson that he had “kind of” banned the word, in the wake of the Huw Edwards scandal.

Storm warnings, after a glitch in the BBC Weather app led to forecasts of winds of up to 13,508mph in London and 5,293mph in Rome, and temperatures of 404°C in Nottingham.

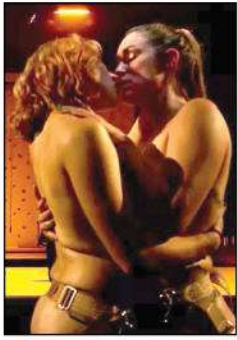
Joker: Folie à Deux, which was knocked off the top spot at the US box office after just a week by an indie horror film called *Terrifier 3* and a cartoon called *The Wild Robot*. The speed of its collapse is believed to be a record for a comic book movie.

Poll watch

45% of Australians want their country to remain a monarchy under King Charles. **33%** would like it to become a republic. **22%** are unsure. *Pulse of Australia*

72% of British adults believe that children who are brought up in this country should be taught to be proud of Britain and its history, including **67%** of those of black Caribbean descent, **63%** of those of Chinese descent, and **57%** of Indian descent. **60%** of adults believe Britain has historically been a force for good in the world. *Policy Exchange/ The Daily Telegraph*

Democrat contender Kamala Harris has a 2.6 point lead over Donald Trump in the latest poll of polls from FiveThirtyEight.



Stuttgart
Opera fright: Live piercings; blood spurts; a female Jesus singing tracks by Eminem and spanking a nun's buttocks; naked nuns rollerblading and copulating with a crucifix: the first two

performances of *Sancta*, an opera satirising the Catholic Church, which is being staged in Germany, saw 18 audience members having to seek treatment for severe nausea. Based on the Weimar-era opera *Sancta Susanna*, it's the latest work by choreographer Florentina Holzinger, whose last hit featured a live endoscopy. The opera is restricted to audiences 18 or older and contains the content warning: "Sexual acts will take place on stage".

Paris

Savage cuts: The fate of France's new minority government, led by its right-wing prime minister, Michel Barnier, hung in the balance this week as it presented a hostile parliament with a budget described by some as "the most violent austerity plan" France has ever seen. It involves €40bn in spending cuts and €20bn of new taxes on businesses and the wealthy. Barnier was appointed PM by President Macron last month to resolve the political deadlock following July's snap election, which left a hung parliament dominated by left-wing and far-right blocs. He maintains that the budget will reduce the year's public deficit from 6.1% to 5% of GDP – which is still well over the EU limit of 3%. Analysts predict that Barnier is more than likely to make numerous concessions in the coming weeks, to avoid seeing his government toppled in a vote of no confidence.

Seville, Spain

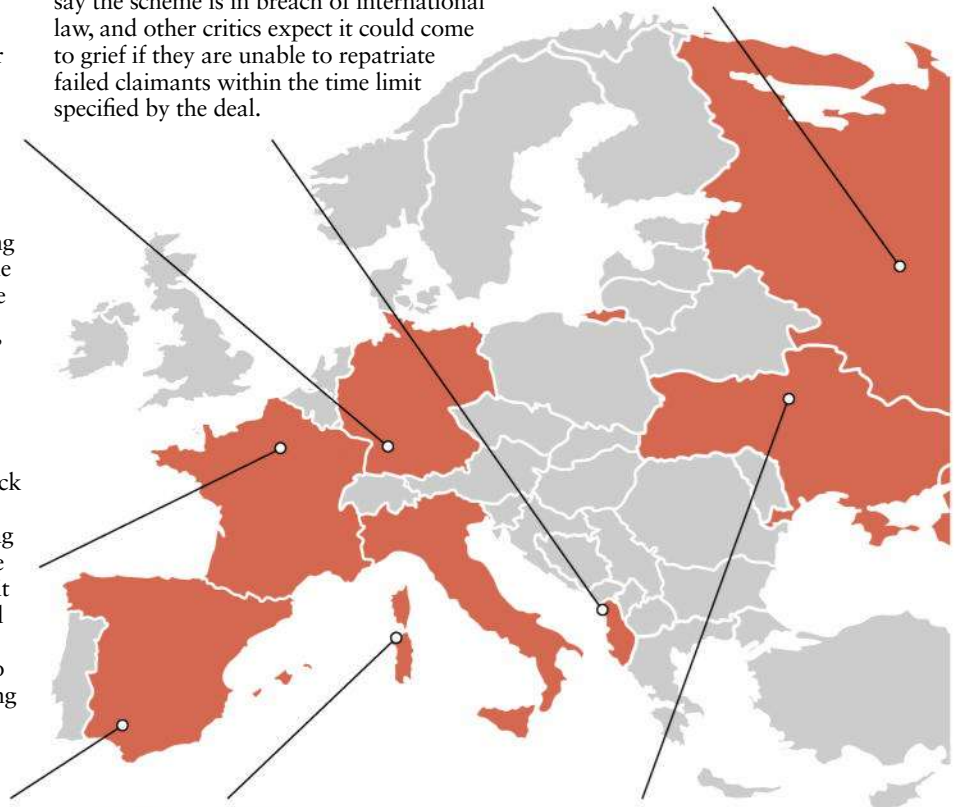
Columbus claims: The origins of the 15th century explorer Christopher Columbus have always been obscure. It had long been assumed he was a gentile from Genoa, but after two decades spent investigating his remains, buried at Seville Cathedral, a team of forensic scientists has concluded he is likely to have been a Spanish Jew. They found a close match between his DNA and DNA from the bones of his son and cousin – DNA of western Mediterranean origins, "compatible" with Jewish origins. It would thus have been unlikely he was Genoese, as Jews weren't allowed to live in Genoa in the 15th century. In a documentary shown by Spain's national broadcaster, RTVE, the researchers suggested Columbus could have deliberately hidden his origins, given that Jews in Spain at that time were persecuted. The research has yet to be peer-reviewed, and its claims have been greeted with scepticism by other experts.

Gjadër, Albania

Migrant centre: Italy's controversial scheme to process asylum applicants at centres in Albania went into action this week, with the first migrants arriving at a new holding facility in Gjadër. The 16 men – ten Bangladeshis and six Egyptians – were taken to Albania from a migrant boat intercepted by the Italian navy in the Mediterranean. Women, children and men who are ill or show signs of torture will still have their claims processed in Italy, as specified in the pact with Albania signed off last year by Italy's prime minister, Giorgia Meloni. The Gjadër facility is the first of two planned centres, where Meloni hopes asylum requests (which currently take months to handle in Italy) can be processed in 28 days. Human rights groups say the scheme is in breach of international law, and other critics expect it could come to grief if they are unable to repatriate failed claimants within the time limit specified by the deal.

Moscow

Trump's gift: The Kremlin has confirmed reports that Donald Trump did indeed send President Putin Covid tests during the pandemic. In a new book, *War*, veteran journalist Bob Woodward details Trump's close relations with Putin, and claims both men had agreed to keep the shipment of tests secret. "I don't want you to tell anybody because people will get mad at you, not me," Putin reportedly told Trump. However, the Kremlin denied Woodward's claim that the two men had spoken up to seven times on the phone since Trump left office in 2021, including after Russia invaded Ukraine. Trump has long boasted of his "very good relations" with Putin, but through a spokesman he too denied that claim, and called Woodward a "sleazebag".

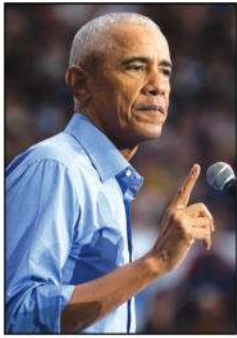


Sassari, Italy

Deepfake trial: Giorgia Meloni has given evidence in the trial of a man she accuses of creating a deepfake porn video in which she appears to star. Alessio Scurosu, 40, allegedly superimposed the Italian prime minister's face onto the body of another woman in a video that has had millions of views since it was posted online in 2020. Meloni is demanding €100,000 in damages, which she says she will donate to a fund that helps female victims of violence. Speaking to the court in Sardinia via video link from Rome, she said she believed such videos to be "a form of violence against women".

Kyiv

Conscription drive: Military recruiters in Ukraine have raided restaurants, shopping centres and a rock concert in Kyiv in a search for men to press-gang into the army. Video footage aired by local media shows officers checking military registration documents and forcibly detaining men. Such raids used to be a relatively rare sight in the heart of the capital, but "man-hunting" patrols have for some time been operating in Kharkiv and other Ukrainian cities, as the country struggles to address a dire shortage of military manpower (see page 16). This year, the government has taken measures to boost conscription, which include reducing the mobilisation age from 27 to 25, stiffening punishments for draft dodging, and sending prisoners to fight on the front. Kyiv has also passed a new law that obliges anyone eligible for military service to input that information into an online system or face stiff penalties.



Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Criticising the “brothers”: Barack Obama has criticised black men for failing to get behind Kamala Harris, amid polls showing that one in four plan to vote for Donald Trump. In a speech in the swing state of Pennsylvania, he said that Harris did not seem to be attracting as much support from black voters as he had. This, he went on, “seems to be more pronounced with the brothers”, and he suggested that this could be due to their attitudes to women. The speech went

down badly with some Democrats and on social media, where Obama was accused of belittling and scapegoating black men.

Coachella Valley, California

“Assassin” thwarted: A 49-year-old man from Las Vegas who was arrested after being found driving to a Trump rally with unregistered guns in his car, has threatened to sue the police in California for claiming that he was planning to assassinate the former president.

Vem Miller was stopped at a checkpoint half-a-mile from the rally in Coachella. A search revealed two guns, ammunition and a few IDs. The next day, Chad Bianco, the local sheriff, told reporters that his officers had “probably stopped another assassination attempt”, generating headlines worldwide. But Miller was charged only with firearms offences, then released on bail. A right-wing activist, registered Republican and known Trump supporter, he has since described the allegations as defamatory “bullshit”, saying he always travelled with weapons for self-protection.

Boca Chica, Texas

Rocket breakthrough: Elon Musk’s SpaceX achieved a major breakthrough last Sunday, when the booster of its Starship rocket was successfully caught by a pair of robotic arms as it returned to Earth. Having launched from the firm’s Starbase in Boca Chica, the 122-metre-tall rocket separated at an altitude of 40 miles. While the upper stage performed a partial orbit before splashing down in the Indian Ocean, its booster descended along its original flight path and slowed itself down as it neared the ground by reigniting three of its 33 engines. Watched by cheering SpaceX staff, it then swung towards the launch tower, where it was held by mechanical arms known as “chopsticks”. SpaceX’s ultimate goal is for both sections of Starship to return to Earth using this method, making the rocket fully reusable.



Tampa Bay, Florida

Hurricane damage: A massive clean-up operation was under way in Florida this week, after Hurricane Milton left a trail of devastation across the state. Although not as powerful as the worst forecasts, Hurricane Milton – which came hard on the heels of Hurricane Helene – brought

tornadoes, 120mph winds, and 10ft storm surges when it made landfall as a category three storm last week. Some 23 people were killed; more than three million homes and businesses were left without power; and the roof of a baseball stadium was blown off in the badly hit Tampa Bay area. President Biden – who unlocked \$600m in recovery aid – said that Milton had caused \$50bn of damage; other estimates put the losses as high as \$180bn. Helene, which killed at least 225 people across the US southeast two weeks earlier, is estimated to have caused \$250bn of damage.

The official response to both disasters was complicated by the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories about relief efforts (see page 15). Meteorologists tracking the storm faced death threats, and accusations that they were controlling the weather; and Republicans including Donald Trump were rebuked by fellow GOP politicians for saying that the Biden administration had deliberately diverted aid away from Republican areas.

Ottawa

Escalating row: The row between India and Canada over the murder of a Sikh activist in British Columbia last year escalated dramatically on Monday. At a press conference, Canadian police said they had clear evidence that “agents” of the Indian government, in league with Indian gangsters, had been directly involved in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, as part of a wider campaign of violence directed at Sikh separatists in Canada. Ottawa said that it had asked New Delhi to waive the diplomatic immunity of those agents, who included the High Commissioner, but it had refused, and so they were expelled. India expelled six Canadian diplomats in response, saying the charges were “preposterous”. On TV, PM Justin Trudeau said that India had made a “monumental mistake in choosing to use their diplomats and organised crime to attack Canadians”.



Mariana, Brazil

Huge lawsuit: More than 700,000 Brazilians allegedly affected by the 2015 Mariana Dam disaster have joined a lawsuit against the Anglo-Australian mining company BHP. The collapse of the dam, at an iron ore factory in Brazil, sent 43 million cubic metres of mining waste into the Doce River, leading to a toxic, arsenic- and mercury-laced flood that engulfed villages and farmland, and polluted water supplies as well as beaches. Nineteen people were killed. BHP, which has a 50% stake in the firm that owns and runs the dam, is being sued in the London High Court, in one of the largest group claims in English history. The claimants, who include individuals, municipalities and indigenous communities, are seeking £33.6bn in damages.

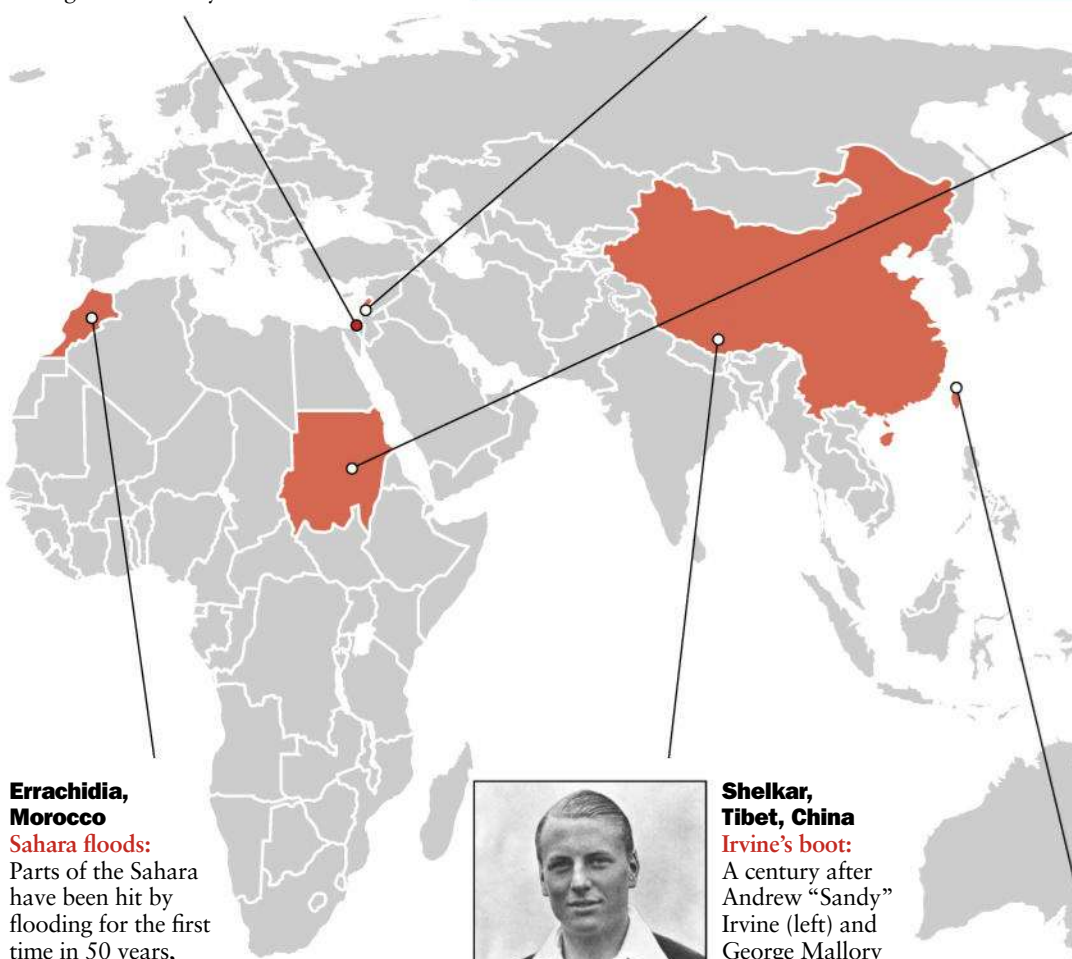
Jabalia, Palestinian Territories

Israeli assault: Israel pressed on with its renewed ground and air offensive on northern Gaza this week. Health officials in Gaza said that at least 150 people had been killed in and around the Jabalia refugee camp; Israel said it had “eliminated” 50 of the Hamas fighters who had regrouped in the area, including one who’d been involved in the 7 October 2023 attack. Israel has issued an evacuation order for the area, but the UN says that 400,000 civilians are trapped by the fighting; and that no food aid has reached them since 1 October. About 84% of Gaza is under evacuation orders, pushing civilians into ever-smaller zones. This week, leaked communiqués revealed that the US recently urged Israel to boost humanitarian aid into Gaza within 30 days, or risk having some military assistance cut off.

Ramiya, Lebanon

Peacekeepers under fire: The long-established UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon has come under fire from Israeli troops more than 20 times in the past fortnight, eliciting international condemnation; at least five members of the 10,000-strong force have been injured. In a statement, the UN also said that Israeli tanks had broken through the gates of its base in Ramiya, and requested that its lights be turned off, as part of Israel’s evacuation of injured troops. Israel has repeatedly called for UN Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil) troops to withdraw from combat areas, to stop them being used by Hezbollah as “human shields”. It says the force, which is drawn from 50 countries, has failed in a core component of its mission, and allowed Hezbollah militants to establish themselves in the southern border area.

More than 1,400 people have been killed in the conflict in Lebanon since late September. Roughly 1.2 million people have left their homes, and Israeli evacuation directives now cover more than a quarter of the country. This week, an Israeli strike killed 21 people in a Christian-majority town in the north of the country, and four Israeli soldiers were killed in a Hezbollah drone attack on a base in northern Israel.



Khartoum

Market strike: A Sudanese army air strike hit a busy market in Khartoum on Saturday, killing at least 23 people. The army was targeting a camp occupied by the rebel Rapid Support Forces, who seized most of the capital shortly after the civil war broke out last year, but shoppers, traders and local residents were among the scores of dead and wounded. With the army trying to seize back Khartoum, the fighting there has escalated recently, adding to a humanitarian crisis described as the worst in the world.

Errachidia, Morocco

Sahara floods: Parts of the Sahara have been hit by flooding for the first time in 50 years, following torrential rain in Morocco and Algeria. At least 22 people have died in the extreme weather. In southeast Morocco, which sees roughly 10in of rain per year, 3.9in fell over 24 hours, creating lagoons amid the sand dunes. Water also rushed to fill Lake Iriqui, near Zagora, which had been dry for half a century, and reservoirs in the area were replenished at record rates. Meteorologists said the extratropical storms may alter the region’s weather conditions in the months and years to come. Swathes of Morocco, including the southeast, have seen six years of drought, but it is not clear how far the deluge will go towards alleviating its impact.



Shelkar, Tibet, China

Irvine’s boot: A century after Andrew “Sandy” Irvine (left) and George Mallory vanished, as they sought to become the first people to climb Everest, a boot has been found high on the mountain’s north face. The boot contains the remains of a foot, which is encased in a sock with a nametag reading “A.C. Irvine” (see page 10). Mallory’s body was found 25 years ago; the discovery of the boot has raised hopes of finding more of the 22-year-old’s remains – and the camera he is said to have had with him. This could solve the mystery of whether the pair made it to the summit before their deaths.

Taipei

Military drills: China sent a record 125 warplanes to take part in a drill around Taiwan this week – describing it as “a stern warning against the separatist acts of ‘Taiwan independence’ forces”. Days earlier, Taiwan’s President Lai Ching-te had reasserted Taiwan’s sovereignty but appealed to China to work with him for peace in a speech that observers viewed as fairly moderate in tone. Beijing – which claims Taiwan – has previously denounced Lai as a “dangerous separatist”, and has stepped up its manoeuvres around the island since he took office in May.

The Bake Off outsider

Sandi Toksvig has long been a staple on shows such as *Whose Line Is It Anyway?* and *The News Quiz*. But her highest-profile gig was hosting *The Great British Bake Off* with Noel Fielding between 2017 and 2020 – and it was not one she relished, says Julia Llewellyn Smith in *The Sunday Times*. “Three of the longest years of my life,” she sighs. For starters, she didn’t really understand the show’s *raison d’être*. “Cakes are readily available in the shops.” And the filming process wasn’t much fun either. “You stand at the end of a long table for hours when [judges] Prue [Leith] and Paul [Hollywood] taste everything and we literally didn’t speak or taste anything. I used to say, ‘Can we not sit down? I’m not contributing,’ but no.” Surely she at least enjoyed eating the cakes, once filming was over? “Not really. My thing is cheese.” Nor did she like the publicity that the show brought with it – and so eventually she quit. “I walked away from the biggest paycheck of my life, but that’s fine. I’d never watched it. I still haven’t watched it.”

A chilling presence on set

The Hitcher – a horror thriller about a serial killer whose modus operandi is to hitch lifts and then slaughter the vehicle’s driver – was a critical flop when it was released in 1986. But it has since come to be viewed as something of a cult classic, in large part thanks to the chilling menace that Rutger Hauer (pictured) brought to the titular role. And, according to his co-star, C. Thomas Howell, who was 19 at the time, Hauer was just as scary on set as he was on screen. “Rutger seemed to terrify everyone on the production and was pretty much left alone,” he told Chris Broughton in *The Guardian*. “I think he enjoyed the power he had over people.” Three weeks into filming,



Hauer suggested to Howell that the pair have lunch together. “I went to his trailer and we sat in dead silence as he chain-smoked filterless Camel cigarettes. After an eternity, I mustered up some courage and said: ‘Rutger, what’s your secret to playing bad guys?’ He took a long drag of his cigarette, leaned into my face, slowly exhaled, and whispered: ‘I don’t play bad guys.’ I just gathered up my things, thanked him for lunch and backed out of the trailer.”

Miranda’s diagnosis

In the early-2010s, Miranda Hart was a ubiquitous presence on our screens. Her sitcom, *Miranda*, had seen her crowned Britain’s “Queen of Comedy” in 2011, and there was talk of a career in Hollywood. But from about 2015, she all but vanished. Now she has revealed why. In her new book *I Haven’t Been Entirely Honest With You*, she describes being struck down by a mystery illness that left her bedridden. “There’d be times I’d look at a glass of water, and think, I don’t know how to pick that up,” she told BBC Culture. Doctors downplayed her symptoms. “No one had any answers.” But in 2020, she was finally diagnosed with Lyme disease, which she’d probably contracted when she was 14 and living in the US state of Virginia, a known hotspot for it. The diagnosis came as a huge relief; and it coincided with an uptick in her romantic life, too – she fell in love during the pandemic, and got married this year, aged 51.

She still has to manage her illness, but she says getting married mid-life has been a “full injection of joy” and also of hope: it shows that things do change. And her fans are thrilled for her. “It’s really very touching that you should be happy that I’m happy,” she wrote, in response to a flurry of messages. “And I really, really am.”



Emily Atack was only 17 when her role in *The Inbetweeners* made her a star in 2008, says Zoe Williams in *The Guardian*. At first, she relished life in the spotlight: clubs and bars let her in with her fake ID, and she was treated like an A-list celebrity. “I really enjoyed that people were really fun and nice to me,” she says. Nor did she mind posing semi-naked for lads’ magazines. “Genuinely, I had no problems with that – I enjoyed those shoots. I was celebrating my youth and my sexuality in beautiful locations, wearing gorgeous underwear, with lovely crews of people and photographers, and I f**king loved it.” Before long, though, things started to take a strange turn. Even as *FHM* was lauding her as “Britain’s sexiest woman”, tabloids were publishing articles describing her as “curvy”, and printing unflattering photos of her under faux-caring headlines such as “Pals fear for Emily as she gains weight”. Back then, she found the contradictory coverage bewildering. “I just didn’t get it,” she says. “I didn’t know if I was really beautiful or really ugly. The thing I was seeing in the mirror began to disintegrate and change.” Only now, at 34, does she feel she understands what drove it. “It’s anger towards women. Men are so angry with sexy women. It’s like, ‘We’ll give you a little bit of power, but not too much. Here, you look nice on this front cover, but also, you’re a fat, ugly pig.’”

Viewpoint:**A nametag on Everest**

“The website of Cash’s Nametapes now offers stick-on or iron-on labels, which could have spared me precious hours during my days of sewing on my son’s labels. But there cannot be a mother’s heart of a certain vintage that didn’t feel a pang at the sight of Andrew “Sandy” Irvine’s sock, carefully labelled and recently discovered on the north face of Mount Everest, a century after his attempt to reach the summit with George Mallory. Irvine was just 22 when he died – old enough to lose his life pursuing an awfully big adventure. But still young enough for someone to undertake that humblest and fondest of tasks, and sew his nametag onto his sock.” *Jane Shilling in The Daily Telegraph*

Farewell

Fleur Adcock, poet and editor, died 10 October, aged 90.

Lily Ebert, Auschwitz survivor and, at 96, a memoirist, died 9 October, aged 100.

General Sir Mike Jackson, former head of the British Army, died 15 October, aged 80.

Ethel Kennedy, wife of Bobby Kennedy and human rights advocate, died 10 October, aged 96.

Ratan Tata, industrialist, and philanthropist (see page 41), died 9 October, aged 86.



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Did the Covid virus leak from a lab?

Once dismissed as a conspiracy theory, the idea that Covid-19 originated in a virology lab in Wuhan now has many adherents

Why is this debate important?

There have been more than seven million confirmed Covid-19-linked deaths since the virus first emerged in late 2019. But the origin of the virus that caused them, Sars-CoV-2, is still shrouded in uncertainty, and debate on the issue has become toxic and highly politicised. There are two main theories: that it emerged naturally via “zoonotic transfer” in a market where wild animals were sold in Wuhan, eastern China; and that it escaped from a laboratory in the same city – which would make it the world’s most lethal industrial accident. Scientists, officials, journalists, intelligence agencies, politicians and amateur sleuths have all had their say, resulting in a bewildering range of data and perspectives.



Dr Shi at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, 2017

What exactly does zoonotic transfer involve?

When pathogens jump from a wild animal to a human population not previously exposed to them, it is called “zoonotic spillover”; it is the predominant cause of recent pandemics. When Covid-19 emerged, many of the first cases were linked to the Huanan “wet market” in Wuhan, where live wild animals were sold for meat. It was widely assumed at the time that the pandemic had started there; the Sars epidemic in 2003 had been traced to wet markets in southern China. Virologists believe that the previously unknown virus responsible, Sars-CoV-2, originated in bats, probably in southern China, and most think it found an intermediate host in the form of one of the animals at the market.

Why is the lab-leak theory appealing?

Can it really be a coincidence, its proponents ask, that a coronavirus pandemic started within a few miles of the Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), the world’s biggest research laboratory for bat coronaviruses? The mostly closely related viruses to Sars-CoV-2 in the wild are found 1,000 miles away in Yunnan, southern China. The WIV’s scientists regularly travelled there to collect bat coronaviruses, and carry out research into how they infect humans. The WIV’s Dr Shi Zhengli, known as the “bat woman” for her expertise in the area, initially expressed surprise that an outbreak should have begun in Wuhan, and wondered if it had come from her lab. The Wuhan lab had worked on the closest known relative of Sars-CoV-2, RaTG13 (which is 96.2% genetically similar), and had done this type of work under Biosafety Level 2, out of a possible four levels of precautions – arguably too low for such dangerous pathogens. There’s other circumstantial evidence, too, supporting the theory.

What other evidence is there?

In the case of Sars and the Mers pandemic, animal hosts infected with viruses were found. In the case of Covid-19, no animals infected with Sars-CoV-2 were found in the market; in fact, none were found anywhere, though you might expect them to leave traces in the supply chain. In addition, we know that the laboratory pursued risky “gain of function” experiments that resulted in viruses

becoming more infectious. A leaked funding proposal from 2018 described plans to create viruses at the WIV strikingly similar to Sars-CoV-2, modified so that they have a “furin cleavage site”, a feature on the virus’s spike protein that can make them more infectious. And less than two years later, “a never-before-seen Sars-like virus with a newly introduced furin cleavage site” emerged in Wuhan, writes Dr Alina Chan, a leading supporter of the lab-leak theory. One other alarming detail is that three scientists on Dr Shi’s team were reported to have fallen ill with Covid-like symptoms in November 2019.

Doesn’t this sound suspicious?

Yes, but even Chan would admit that there is no definitive proof. And most in the field think that the natural-origin theory is simply much more plausible. A pair of papers published in *Science* in 2022 by Prof Michael Worobey et al set out the case: 32% of the first 174 human cases had a clear link to the Huanan market, in a city of 12 million people; while cases not directly linked to the market were clustered close to it. The earliest cases were found in the market’s southwest, where vendors of live wild animals, such as raccoon dogs and bamboo rats, congregated. Samples were taken in January 2020; many of the stalls tested positive for Sars-CoV-2, and showed DNA traces of the animals nearby. Lab-leak theorists hypothesise that a human infected by the lab went there and caused a “super-spreader event” – a coincidence made even more improbable by the fact two separate strains of Sars-CoV-2 were found in the market. Research shows that, in areas where infected animals are kept close to humans, such multiple zoonotic jumps are common; by contrast, the chances of two humans infected with separate strains of Covid going to the market are very remote.

What about the other circumstantial evidence?

None of it is very convincing. There is no evidence that the Wuhan lab held a Sars-CoV-2 precursor; RaTG13, which it worked on, is too far away in evolutionary terms to have been a progenitor. Nor is there any evidence that Sars-CoV-2 was modified in a lab. And

there’s a simple explanation for why no infected animals were found at the market: they were taken away and destroyed for public health reasons. As for the lab’s staff falling ill with Covid-like symptoms – such illnesses aren’t at all unusual in the flu season.

How can we be sure of all this?

We can’t be entirely sure, not least because of the secretive attitude of the Chinese authorities (see box). But expert opinion is fairly clear. Early this year, 168 epidemiologists and virologists were polled by the Global Catastrophic Risk Institute, and four out of five stated that a natural zoonotic origin was more than 50% likely. Another genetic study of samples from Huanan market published last month proved “beyond reasonable doubt”, said its authors, that the pandemic began there, and that other theories required “fanciful” interpretations of the evidence.

China and the blame game

Pandemics tend to cause panic and conspiratorial thinking. In the case of Covid-19, the fires have been stoked by the Chinese government. It has never published clear conclusions on how the virus emerged: on the contrary, state sources muddied the waters by claiming, without evidence, that Sars-CoV-2 arrived in Wuhan on frozen food imports or was brought there by the US military. In early 2021, WHO-appointed scientists flew to Wuhan to investigate the pandemic’s source. After spending 12 days there, which included a visit to the WIV lab, the team concluded the lab-leak theory was “extremely unlikely”. The report was criticised by the US, the EU and 13 other nations, on the grounds of Beijing’s lack of transparency when it came to crucial data. In mid-2021, the WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus called for a new investigation; China refused, complaining of xenophobia and “arrogance towards science”.

In June 2023, US intelligence published its overall assessment: while the lab-leak theory could not be ruled out, a majority of US intelligence agencies agreed (with low confidence) that the pandemic most likely began as a zoonotic event. They found no evidence of a progenitor virus existing in a lab.

Turning a blind eye to Sudan's agony

Jonathan Freedland

The Guardian

“Remember when we said that Black Lives Matter? We didn’t mean it,” says Jonathan Freedland. If we did, we’d be up in arms about what’s going on in Sudan. For the past 18 months, that nation has been ravaged by a brutal war that has displaced almost 11 million people and is “threatening to devour 13 million more through famine”. Nobody knows the death toll – some say 150,000 or more – but horrendous accounts have emerged of systematic killing and mass rapes. Aid groups say it’s the worst humanitarian crisis of our time. Yet we barely hear of it. Where are the front-page headlines and angry protests? It’s hard not to conclude that people just don’t care that much about Africa. In addition, Sudan’s civil war doesn’t fit a neat narrative, so Western progressives don’t “quite know who to root for”. There is no clear division between “goodies and baddies”, no “Volodymyr Zelensky figure” to cheer on, no agents of US oppression reflexively to condemn. “Faced with that conundrum, it’s easier just to declare the whole thing too complicated and look the other way.”

A shifting perspective on diversity

John Burn-Murdoch

Financial Times

A profound shift is transforming our politics, says John Burn-Murdoch. The Left is slowly losing its grip on ethnic-minority voters. For the first time ever, Labour won less than half the non-white vote in this year’s election, while the Tories scored their best results in areas with large Hindu populations. A similar pattern is evident in the US, where many non-white voters are defecting to the Republicans. Actually, this trend isn’t so surprising when you examine public-opinion surveys. A recent study found that 22% of ethnic-minority Britons believe it’s crucial to keep taxes low – about the same as the figure among white Tory voters, but far higher than the 14% figure for white Labour voters. US polls likewise show that on issues such as immigration, patriotism and meritocracy, the views of the average black or Hispanic voter are significantly more conservative than those of the average white liberal voter. Now more than ever, politicians would be wise to “start listening to what different ethnic-minority voters actually want, instead of relying on increasingly erroneous stereotypes”.

The Swedish antidote to tribalism

Matthew Syed

The Sunday Times

Something of historic importance occurred in Sweden last week, says Matthew Syed. It moved to ban the practice of marriage between cousins. And that has profound implications not just for biological health – eliminating the risks of inbreeding – but for the health of society. Cousin marriage is the cement of tribalism: it perpetuates a clannish view of the world that sees giving special favours and kickbacks to members of one’s own kin group as a practice to be lauded, a view antithetical to democracy, the rule of law and economic growth. Indeed, it’s arguable that the Catholic Church’s ban on cousin marriage in the early Middle Ages fuelled the rise of the West: by forcing people to marry outside their kin group, the ban helped dissolve tribal affiliations and promote a sense of nationhood. In recent decades, however, mass migration from the developing world has reintroduced cousin marriage in the West and, with it, such ills as segregated communities, forced marriage and postal-voting fraud. That’s why we should all follow Sweden. Cousin marriage is a cultural practice that every country – and the communities themselves – would be better off without.

For the NHS... now the drugs don’t work

Phil Whitaker

The New Statesman

As if our health service were not already close to collapse, Nice – the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence – seems intent on weakening it further, says Phil Whitaker. It may soon give the go-ahead for injections of the diabetes drug Mounjaro to be made available on the NHS. The drug is an appetite suppressant that’s been found to help people lose up to 25% of their starting weight across the course of a year (see page 17). Yet far from being a silver bullet, this is the path to ruin. We just don’t know whether Mounjaro is clinically effective: yes, it’s shown to have positive effects on such indices as weight and blood pressure, but that’s no proof it’s doing patients any good. What we do know is that the cost of dispensing skinny jabs to all in need (some £150 per patient, per month) would cripple our health service: it just doesn’t have the staff or monetary resources to meet demand. No, it’s not a drug that’s needed to tackle the obesity crisis – it’s a concerted strategy for public health. Spending ever-more resources “trying to counter the ill health driven by such industries as food, alcohol and tobacco” will simply bring the NHS to its knees.

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

A hospitality worker who hung “body bags” from a tree outside her house in Liverpool has been ordered to take the Halloween display down, on the grounds that it is “triggering”. Caroline Ashley says she was surprised when a council worker visited her home to request the removal of decorations, explaining that they had “really upset” a neighbour. “It’s the quickest the council has come out for anything,” Ashley noted.



The annual World Conker Championships was plunged into controversy after the men’s winner was found to have a painted steel chestnut in his pocket. David Jakins, 82, who has entered every year since 1977, finally won the title in Northamptonshire this week; but rivals’ suspicions were aroused when, three times, he destroyed opponents’ conkers with a single hit. It was also suggested that he may have exploited his role as top judge, or “King Conker”, to game the system. Jakins has dismissed the claims as “nonsense”, and said he had the metal conker on him only for “humour value”.

A woman in the US state of Washington was forced to flee her home after it was besieged by up to 100 raccoons. The woman started feeding a family of raccoons 35 years ago, but was forced to call the sheriff’s office when the population “exploded”, and the animals began hounding her day and night for food, surrounding her menacingly whenever she left the house. The sheriff’s office said that those who attended the scene had “never seen that many raccoons in one place”.

A storm of lies: the politics of hurricane season

Back-to-back hurricanes have wreaked havoc across America's southeastern states in the past month, said Rex Huppke in [USA Today](#). And as if officials didn't have enough on their plate, they're also having to contend with a mass of lies and misinformation. The primary source of this stuff is Donald Trump. Among his recent false claims is that Democratic officials had gone "out of their way to not help people in Republican areas"; that Kamala Harris had spent all the federal relief funds on housing illegal migrants; and that President Biden hadn't been in touch with governors in affected states. Trump's lies have been amplified by his "minions": Elon Musk tweeted that federal officials had been "ferrying illegals" into the country, instead of "saving American lives"; the Republican congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene suggested that the government can control the weather, and was deliberately directing hurricanes towards Trump country.



President Biden visiting storm-ravaged Florida

If anyone has sought to exploit this crisis, it's Harris, said Kirsten Fleming in the [New York Post](#). She interrupted the storm clear-up last week by accusing Florida's governor, Ron DeSantis, of refusing to take her call, saying it was

"irresponsible" and "selfish". He insisted that he didn't know she had called, pointing out that he had been rather busy. Harris is right that a natural disaster is a time to work together and not to play politics. Shame she didn't take her own advice.

There's a difference between playing politics and deliberately propagating lies, said Elaine Godfrey in [The Atlantic](#). The Federal Emergency Management Agency has had to set up a dedicated webpage for debunking the rumours spread by Trump and his allies. It doesn't augur well for the 5 November election. Given the closeness of the race, the result could remain unresolved for a few days, creating ripe conditions for a similar campaign of misinformation. Instead of hurricane-related conspiracy theories, there'll be claims of "secret bins full of uncounted ballots". Instead of being blamed for hogging relief funds, undocumented migrants will be accused of illegally voting en masse. "The Maga loyalists in Congress and the pro-Trump media ecosystem will amplify these claims." Musk will helpfully fan the flames on X/Twitter. It has been a bad hurricane season, but in a little over a fortnight, America could be engulfed in "a storm of a different kind".

The cost of war, in US dollars

Matthew Petti

Reason

At least \$22.76bn. That's how much the past year of conflict in the Middle East has set back America, according to a new study by the Costs of War Project at Brown University, says Matthew Petti. This is just the direct burden on the US military budget, dating from the Hamas attack of 7 October 2023 until the end of last month. The bulk of it – \$17.9bn – was spent on Israeli military aid. The sum doesn't include indirect costs, such as increased US security assistance to neighbouring countries, nor the \$1bn in US humanitarian aid to Palestinians. The study's timeframe also doesn't cover Iran's 1 October attack on Israel, during which the US navy says it fired "about a dozen interceptors" at Iranian missiles. Assuming they were SM-3 interceptors, that would cost about \$400m. Strikes on Houthi rebels in Yemen have also carried a steep price: the US navy launched its campaign there in January by "firing 80 cruise missiles, more than it had purchased the year before, on the first night". Add in the cost of aircraft carrier deployments and clashes with militias in Iraq, Syria and Jordan, and it makes for quite a bill. Great for US arms manufacturers; not so great for the US taxpayers, who "are paying much of the financial cost of keeping the violence going".

Tesla: now a badge of shame

Matt Bai

The Washington Post

I live in a liberal neighbourhood, says Matt Bai. Everywhere you look, there are posters for Kamala Harris and lawn signs saying things like "Hate has no home here" or "In this house we believe..." followed by a list of social justice slogans. Another thing you see a lot of is Teslas – and they've become a significant source of "moral anguish" for many of my friends. They bought these electric cars "in large part because it gave them the sense they were having a positive impact on the world". They provided you with the means to "go from zero to 60 in under three seconds and demonstrate your liberal bona fides at the same time". But now that Tesla's owner, Elon Musk, has "gone full Maga" and started spouting all sorts of hateful stuff, the cars have become rather an embarrassment. Some of my friends are now wondering whether they should sell them. That seems unnecessary. We own lots of stuff made by firms whose owners probably aren't very nice. Volvos are made by a Chinese company, so I'm not sure owning one is exactly "a statement for democratic values, either". But while I wouldn't bother getting rid of a Tesla I already owned, I would now draw the line at buying one. Musk is "a malevolent force in society". He doesn't deserve our business.

What doctors can learn from AI

Jonathan Reisman

The New York Times

As a young medical student, I used to think that my future job as a doctor would always be safe from artificial intelligence, says Jonathan Reisman. However good machines got at the technical side of medicine, they'd never be able to replicate human qualities such as empathy and compassion. Turns out I was wrong. ChatGPT and other large language models not only excel at diagnostics, they also have an impressive bedside manner. "In one study, ChatGPT's answers to patient questions were rated as more empathetic (and also of higher quality) than those written by actual doctors." This is disturbing in some respects, but it shouldn't come as that much of a surprise. For the reality is that in medicine, as in much of life, there is a formulaic aspect to some human interactions. As students, we were taught the "dos and don'ts" of breaking bad news to patients: don't blurt it out; do get to the point relatively quickly; don't hide behind medical terms; provide clear information. In my subsequent career, I've found that the worse the prognosis, the more "I reach for those memorised lines". So AI can be a useful tool here. "There are linguistic formulas for human empathy and compassion, and we should not hesitate to use good ones, no matter who – or what – is the author."

Exodus: the desperate rush to get out of Lebanon

Refugee crises are nothing new in the Middle East, said Nicholas R. Micinski and Kelsey Norman in [The Conversation \(Melbourne\)](#). The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 brought about “the world’s longest-standing refugee situation”: six million Palestinians spread across the Levant. The first Gulf War and the 2003 US invasion of Iraq left millions displaced, as did Israel’s 2006 war with Hezbollah, and subsequent conflicts in Syria, Libya and Yemen. But the current exodus from Lebanon has plunged the region into an unprecedented crisis. In the weeks since Israel launched its full-scale invasion and bombardment, 1.2 million people (a fifth of Lebanon’s population) have been displaced – adding to the two million Gazans displaced since last October.



A relief worker carries a child across the border into Syria

Lebanon was already on its knees before this conflict escalated, said Vivian Yee in [The New York Times](#). It had endured years of unstable government, largely owing to the insidious role played in its politics by Hezbollah, the Shia militia that doubles as a political party. It hasn’t had a president for two years – it’s now run by a weak caretaker regime – and the crippling economic crisis that took hold in 2019 has left millions impoverished. And after Israel’s onslaught began last month, those same people are doing all they can just to survive, said [The National \(Abu Dhabi\)](#). Many have holed up in schools, hotels and nightclubs designated as shelters by the Lebanese government. But huge numbers are fleeing the country. A fortunate minority have stumped up \$1,800 for one-way tickets on charter yachts to Cyprus; about 6,000 have taken the bold step of fleeing to Iraq.

What makes this exodus especially tragic, said Tasnim Chaaban in [L’Orient-Le Jour \(Beirut\)](#), is that it includes vast numbers of people who’d found, in Lebanon, a refuge from other war zones. Even before this crisis, Lebanon was home to more refugees per head than any other country on Earth, among them 250,000 Palestinians and 1.5 million Syrians – refugees from their own 13-year civil war. Most of the 400,000 people who’ve fled into

Syria since September have been people who not long ago had fled from Syria into Lebanon.

To understand the reasons for the sheer scale of this onslaught, said Daniel Byman of the [Centre for Strategic and International Studies \(Washington\)](#), you have to go back to the 2006 war with Hezbollah, when Israel poured troops into Lebanon expecting to sweep the militia’s fighters aside. Israel’s failure to do so shattered its reputation for military invincibility, while the defiance displayed by Hezbollah forces “electrified

Arab audiences”. After that achievement, the group, backed by Iran, steadily increased its power: it vastly expanded its missile arsenals – locating many of the weapons in civilian areas – and extended its huge network of underground tunnels. But over that same period Israel, too, has been making preparations for another war with Hezbollah, and this time committing itself to pursue a far more destructive doctrine regarding the use of force – namely, to obliterate every village from which Israel is fired on. That massive retaliation is what we’re now witnessing, said Mat Nashed in [Al Jazeera \(Dubai\)](#), and the devastation it has caused has severely damaged Hezbollah’s reputation and its popularity. Lebanon’s Christian and Sunni Muslim factions, long resentful of the way Hezbollah has “hijacked” the state through its military strength, are hoping this could be the moment to banish Hezbollah to the political sidelines for ever.

The EU is now offering financial assistance to Lebanon, said Rym Momtaz of the [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace \(Washington\)](#), but it needs to do a lot more: it should use its diplomatic and military weight in the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil) to push for “a sequenced de-escalation”. For, in truth, Europe has a pressing reason to fix this mess – if it doesn’t, the fresh influx of migrants pouring into the continent via Cyprus could completely destabilise European politics. Crises in Lebanon have a way of spilling far beyond the nation’s borders; and unless checked, this one will prove no different.

SPAIN

Why his majesty must not say “sorry”

El Diario (Madrid)

An apology. That’s all Mexico’s new president, Claudia Sheinbaum, wanted from our king, says Isaac Rosa. Not money; not a legal ruling; just a simple gesture – an apology for the centuries of abuse Spain perpetrated on the New World during its conquest. But Spain’s King Felipe VI point blank refused. And that’s when things fell apart. Sheinbaum dropped him from the guest list for her inauguration; Spain’s Socialist government, affronted by the snub, refused to send any delegation to the ceremony; and Spain’s nationalists declared that, far from apologising, Spain embraces “its imperial legacy with pride”, as if causing the death of millions of indigenous Mexicans was something they’d gladly do again. Alberto Núñez Feijóo, leader of the People’s Party, even vowed to send Sheinbaum a copy of the revisionist history *Nothing to Apologise For*. And, on reflection, he has a point. How far back must apologies go? Should King Felipe “be asking forgiveness for what Spain’s Austrian rulers did five centuries ago”, and then apologise for everything else, right up to the sex scandals of his father? Regret is a delicate thing, “when it comes to a king; once it starts, who knows where it will end?”

UKRAINE

A fair way to fight for one’s country

Kyiv Post

Ukraine’s front-line soldiers are running out of steam, says Andriy Kurkov. And, on learning in April that a draft law to let them demobilise after three years’ service was to be scrapped, many felt they’d had enough. A prominent case is that of Serhiy Gnezdilov, a well-known blogger who’d volunteered to serve in 2019, as Ukraine battled Russia in its east, and has “served in some of the hottest spots of the war”. But after five years with no end in sight, he has “snapped”. Only “losers” who get caught by enlistment officers end up at the front, he acidly observed last month; everyone else swaps tips on how to avoid the heat of battle. And he has now announced his desertion from the army, an offence that could land him 12 years in jail. Gnezdilov’s words have split Ukrainian society. But even those who despise him as a traitor know he’s put his finger on a truth: a real question of fairness arises when you see some men drinking and laughing in cafés while others are dying on the front line. The authorities probably won’t prosecute Gnezdilov, for fear of drawing more attention to the issue, but until they come up with a fairer system, Ukraine has little chance of prevailing on the battlefield.

What the scientists are saying...

An alarming generational “drift”

Increases in various illnesses and ailments are often attributed to the fact that people are living longer – and so developing conditions that their parents would have not reached the age to get; but a new study has found that today’s older people are simply less healthy than earlier generations. The analysis of data on more than 100,000 people from several generations in England, the US and Europe revealed that “baby boomers” born in the late 1940s and 1950s were about 150% more likely to suffer from cancer, lung disease and heart problems when they were in their 50s and 60s than those born before the Second World War were when at that age. They were also as likely or more likely to struggle with basic tasks such as bathing, eating and walking short distances. “Even with advances in medicine and greater public awareness about healthy living, people born since 1945 are at greater risk of chronic illness and disability than their predecessors,” said lead author Laura Gimeno of University College London – a finding that has “huge implications for government spending”. And this “generational health drift” is likely to continue: Gen X were found to be more likely to be obese, have diabetes and be in poorer mental health than baby boomers.

How two jellies can become one

Researchers from the University of Exeter were studying comb jellies – shimmering, jellyfish-like creatures that use “combs” of tiny hairs to propel themselves through the water – when they noticed one that was unusually large. Closer inspection revealed that it was unusual in other ways, too: it had two anuses, two mouths and two sensory systems – all of which led the team to suspect that two jellies had fused



Comb jellies appear to have no sense of self

together. To test their theory, they took some specimens and removed a small part of each’s body, after which they pinned the ctenophores together in pairs, so that their injuries touched, and left them in a tank. Nine times out of ten, the two animals grafted together, presumably as a survival tactic. When one side of a fused jelly was prodded, both sides twitched, suggesting the nervous systems had merged; and feeding them fluorescently labelled shrimp revealed that their digestive tracts had also combined, allowing them to share food. But waste was expelled from both anuses at different times. The fact that one jelly didn’t reject the tissue of the other suggests that the ctenophore immune system lacks the ability to distinguish between self and non-self, said study author Dr Kei Jokura.

Lung cancer breakthrough

A new drug cocktail to combat lung cancer has been found to have remarkable results

in a phase 3 trial, halting the advance of the disease for 40% longer than the standard treatment, reports The Guardian. The trial involved well over 1,000 people, all of whom had an advanced form of non-small cell lung cancer, and carried a mutation of the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) gene, which is found in about a quarter of cases worldwide. Such a mutation among cancer patients occurs more in women than men, and in people who’ve never smoked heavily or at all. Some patients were given a combination of amivantamab and lazertinib – drugs that work in different ways to target cancer cells; others were given osimertinib, the standard treatment. Patients who took the drug cocktail were still alive with no progression in their disease 23.7 months later, on average, compared with 16 months for the others. “It’s amazing to see this new combination shows longer cancer control than osimertinib, which was itself a breakthrough treatment only a few years ago,” said Dr Martin Forster, the oncologist who led the UK arm of the trial.

The vapers who’ve never smoked

Vaping was hailed as a means of weaning smokers off cigarettes; but a growing number of people who vape have never been smokers, a study has found. Until 2021, it was estimated that 133,000 people in England who vaped had never smoked. Now, the figure is one million. The rise is being driven by younger people, aged 16 to 24, one in seven of whom now vape. But how serious this trend is from a public health standpoint depends on what these people would have done otherwise. “It is likely that some would have smoked if vaping were not an available option,” lead researcher Dr Sarah Jackson, of University College London, told the BBC.

The greening of Antarctica

Antarctica is turning from dazzling white to a dirty green at an alarming rate, as moss and other plants flourish in rising temperatures, scientists have warned. An analysis of satellite data has shown that almost 12 square kilometres of the continent was covered in vegetation in 2021, up from one in 1986 – the equivalent of going from 100 football pitches filled with greenery to more than 1,500. Most of it is moss, but lichen, liverwort, fungi and small flowering plants are also gaining a foothold – and the ecological impact could be “absolutely massive”, said the team from the Exeter and Hertfordshire universities and the British Antarctic Survey.



Moss and other plants are flourishing

If isolated areas of greenery link up, biodiversity could be lost; and as the plants reach the end of their lives, their leaves and roots will decompose to form new soil, creating an opportunity for other plants to grow, including non-native species carried in on tourists’ shoes and scientific equipment. “Our findings confirm that the influence of anthropogenic climate change has no limit in its reach,” said researcher Dr Thomas Roland. “Even on the Antarctic peninsula, this most extreme, remote and isolated wilderness region, the landscape is changing and these effects are visible from space.”

Rolling out the “skinny jab”

The NHS is proposing to roll out weight-loss jabs to thousands more people in an effort to ease Britain’s obesity crisis. Over the next 12 years, it wants to offer jabs of tirzepatide (brand name Mounjaro) to 1.6 million people, starting with those with a BMI of 40 or more and multiple chronic health conditions. (Anyone with a BMI above 30 is considered obese.) Tirzepatide is the most effective obesity drug on the market: studies have shown that it can help people lose up to 26% of their body weight in 18 months when it is injected weekly. Two-thirds of Britons are now overweight or obese and, according to the latest research, the average middle-aged Briton is a stone heavier than they were 30 years ago, with middle-aged women weighing 12 stone on average and men 14 stone. All this is estimated to cost the public purse £27bn a year in additional healthcare costs and benefits.

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Ford

BRING ON
TOMORROW

Pick of the week's

Gossip

James Holland, the historian who specialises in the Second World War, has praised the ingenuity of his local postal workers, after receiving a letter (from the 102-year-old widow of a War veteran) that was addressed to: "Mr James Holland, Well known historian, Wiltshire." Someone at Royal Mail had scribbled on: "Try Salisbury SP5" as a clue for the sorting office.



Hugh Grant's parents were not at all supportive when he went into acting, he recalled on *The Graham Norton Show*. His father was a soldier and his mother a teacher. She had wanted him to be the Archbishop of Canterbury, and in their social circle, "showbusiness meant nothing". After *Four Weddings and a Funeral* made him famous, his mother was asked at a dinner party what her sons did for a living. One of them was an investment banker, she told the man; and the other was a film star. "How very interesting," he replied. "Which bank?"

The poet **Fleur Adcock**, who has died aged 69, was known for poetry that was irreverent, insightful and witty. One described a dream she'd had about kissing **John Prescott**: "Our eyes had locked/ and we were leaning avidly forward/ lips out-thrust, certain protuberances/ under our clothing brushing each other's fronts,/ when my mother saw us, and I woke up./ In fact, I've never kissed an MP. The nearest I got was a Labour peer in a telephone box in Euston station." Prescott was unamused, said *The Daily Telegraph*, but was said to have looked up "protuberances".

Reading: is the habit dying out?

In his long and distinguished career teaching in British and American universities, the Shakespeare scholar Jonathan Bate has noticed something worrying, said Andrew Billen in *The Times*: students read a lot less than they used to. They struggle to plough through one Dickens novel in three weeks, a fraction of the pace of earlier generations. He is convinced that smartphones and social media – six-minute YouTube videos and instant TikTok dopamine hits – have eroded their attention spans. School syllabuses are also much less demanding: children are set *Of Mice and Men* rather than *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *A Christmas Carol* rather than *Great Expectations*. Bate is concerned. How can students absorb complex ideas and develop their critical thinking if they can't read long books?



Have TV box sets replaced books?

Bate is not alone, said Rose Horowitz in *The Atlantic*. At top American universities, tutors say that students no longer arrive "prepared to read books". One Columbia University professor reports that some students have never been required to read a book cover to cover: they've been assigned excerpts, poetry and articles. Twenty years ago, his students had no trouble tackling *Pride and Prejudice* one week and *Crime and Punishment* the next. Now they don't just find the pace difficult, they struggle to attend

to details such as character and language "while keeping track of the overall plot". Many college professors now "feel they have no choice but to assign less reading and lower their expectations". To be unable to read a book by the time you get to university is "a terrible indictment" of current education and parenting, said Lucy Mangan in *The i Paper*. "It means that incalculable potential is being lost of likely benefit to us all; and tremendous happiness being denied to individuals."

"Is there any pastime whose imminent demise is more often predicted than reading," asked Jane Shilling in *The Daily Telegraph*. In every generation, it is said to be dying out. Yes, there are reasons to be worried: half of all UK adults now don't read regularly for pleasure. But there are signs of hope, too.

The Publishers Association reported record UK revenue for last year, of £7.1bn. According to the Booksellers Association, the keenest customers of bookshops are the "digital natives of Gen Z". People still read, but there are just many more alternatives now, said Tomiwa Owolade in *The Times*. You can get history and politics from podcasts, and many of the pleasures of a novel from TV box sets. Reading a good book is a "beautiful experience". But for most people today, it is one of many.

Workers' rights: a welcome reform?

A Labour government is "hardly worthy of the name, at least to its core supporters, if it doesn't address the legal rights of working people", said Sean O'Grady in *The Independent*. Hence Labour's manifesto pledge of a new Employment Rights Bill within its first 100 days in office. Last week, it duly published that bill, two days ahead of deadline. The question is, does the bill contain enough to please Labour voters and energise MPs who have been disheartened by the Government's dismal first three months? On the whole, it does, said *The Observer*. With the UK lingering "far below the OECD average when it comes to employment protection", millions of Britons "suffer the indignity of insecure work with no or very low sick pay, and very limited rights". This bill makes considerable strides in rectifying that by, for instance, beefing up protections against unfair dismissal; extending statutory sick pay, so that people can claim it from the first day they are ill (instead of the fourth); severely restricting "fire and rehire" practices; and outlawing zero-hours contracts, except for workers who want them.

But what is striking about the bill, said Kate McCann in *The i Paper*, is how much it does not contain. That workers should have a "right to switch off", by ignoring work emails out of hours, is included as guidance, not law. A major

reform to protect workers in the gig economy has been delayed for further consultation. Other key pledges – such as a right to sue for unfair dismissal from day one – have also been watered down. Why? Because Labour has a "Janus complex in regard to the conflicting demands of workers' rights and the economy", said *The Times*. To win back voters in former "red wall" seats, and stem a flight to Reform UK, it had to promise stronger workers' rights; but now it is in office, its survival as a two-term government depends on growth, to pay for public services and cut Britain's "debt mountain". That can't be achieved by public investment alone; so it has put the brakes on the measures most likely to damage the competitiveness of British business.

Large firms with well-staffed HR departments might weather these reforms, said Matthew Lesh in *The Standard*. Smaller ones will really struggle. The new rights will impose costs that they'll pass on in higher prices and lower pay, and will have other unintended consequences. For example, if firms think they'll not be able easily to remove poorly performing new staff, they may not hire in the first place. Many firms, especially big ones, "may stay quiet", fearful of offending the new Government and glad of the two-year delays and extra consultations. But they shouldn't: "more red tape is not the route to prosperity".

The Nobel Prize: a triumph for AI

With so much “doom-laden political rhetoric” around these days, it’s easy to forget that Britain is still remarkably successful at some things, said Alex Brummer in the Daily Mail. When it comes to science and innovation, for instance, this country still punches far above its weight. Since 1901, Britain has won no fewer than 140 Nobel Prizes, a total surpassed only by America, which has almost five times our population. The University of Cambridge alone outranks every nation except the US and the UK, having nurtured 124 Nobel laureates. They include two of the latest recipients, who were awarded the honour last week. The first was Geoffrey Hinton, the London-born scientist known as the “Godfather of AI”, who shared the physics prize for his foundational work on artificial neural networks. The second was Demis Hassabis, chief executive of London-based DeepMind, who with his American colleague John Jumper shared the chemistry prize for their work on an AI model, AlphaFold, which can predict the structure of proteins.



Hinton: awarded the prize for physics

The choice of 2024 Nobel winners has highlighted the importance of AI and the way modern science “often crosses traditional boundaries, blending different fields to achieve groundbreaking results”, said Marc Zimmer

on The Conversation. Machine learning isn’t just a tool for computer scientists. By predicting the structure of more than 200 million proteins and showing how these building blocks of life work, AlphaFold has created a freely available database that researchers are using to pursue a host of exciting new possibilities in drug development and personalised medicine.

Both Hinton and Hassabis deserve recognition for their remarkable achievements, said Peter Franklin on UnHerd, but there is something a little odd about them receiving these particular prizes. AI is “not usually regarded as a branch of physics”. And brilliant as AlphaFold is, the “knowledge it obtains for us is the product of brute computer processing power, not human inspiration”. This year’s Nobels are perhaps a sign that science performed by human brains is approaching its natural limits, and that we’ll soon have to rely on computers for further discoveries. We’re not there yet, though. We should persuade Silicon Valley to endow a new Nobel Prize for computer science – “or rather science by computer” – so that the prizes for physics and chemistry can be reserved for scientists in those disciplines who make startling breakthroughs. “It’s too early to write off old-fashioned inspiration.”

Wit & Wisdom

“If you can’t be kind, at least be vague.”
Judith Martin, quoted in The Washington Post

“I want my children to have all the things I couldn’t afford. Then I want to move in with them.”
Phyllis Diller, quoted in Parade

“Politicians and diapers have one thing in common. They should both be changed regularly, and for the same reason.”
Eça de Queirós, quoted in Gentleman’s Journal

“Go out on a limb. That’s where the fruit is.”
Frank Scully, quoted in The Knowledge

“Reputation is what men and women think of us; character is what God and angels know of us.”
Thomas Paine, quoted in The New York Times

“Show me a hero and I will write you a tragedy.”
F. Scott Fitzgerald, quoted in Entertainment Weekly

“Don’t play what’s there; play what’s not there.”
Miles Davis, quoted in Psychology Today

“Be ready when the luck happens.”
Liza Minnelli, quoted on Today

“Birthdays are good for you. Statistics show that the people who have the most live the longest.”
Larry Lorenzoni, quoted in Reader’s Digest

Statistics of the week
60% of the households who still have a landline get more calls from scammers than from legitimate callers.
The Daily Telegraph

The number of people aged 16 to 24 not in education, employment or training has risen almost a quarter since 2022 to more than 870,000.
ONS/Financial Times

Wimbledon’s line judges: the end of an era

An era at Wimbledon has drawn to a close, said John-Anthony Disotto on TechRadar. Last week, the All England Club announced that, at next year’s tournament, the services of its 300 line judges will not be required. The judges – mostly avid tennis fans who were paid around £150 a day – have been a feature of Wimbledon for 147 years. Smartly clad, latterly in Ralph Lauren uniforms, they stood at the edge of the court, watching with “laser focus” to determine whether the ball crossed the line (and shouting “out”, or “fault”, accordingly). But now Wimbledon is following other grand slams in adopting Electronic Line-Calling (ELC) on all 19 of its courts. The system, an update on the Hawk-Eye tech used for close calls, includes 12 cameras to track the ball’s movement, at a rate of 70 frames per second, mics to listen out for the sound of the ball, and advanced software to interpret its location in real time and predict its trajectory.



A Ralph Lauren-clad judge

The decision makes a kind of sense, said Andy Dunn in the Daily Mirror. Wimbledon is one of the most important events in the world of sport: its prize money was £50m last year. Accurate to

within 3mm, ELC is far more reliable than any human eye; and “if you can eradicate human error”, it would be silly not to. Plus ELC has other uses too, said Kevin Nguyen on The Verge: it generates data that can be useful and interesting to players and viewers, and that can be sold to betting companies to create more accurate odds and facilitate “micro-betting” on specific moments within a match.

And yet this is surely a grave error, said William Sitwell in The Daily Telegraph. Of course, Wimbledon is a big commercial event, but it’s not like other grand slams. There are millions of people who never normally watch tennis who queue up in SW19 each summer, or spend two weeks glued to the TV coverage. And that is largely due to Wimbledon’s “unique accoutrements”: the strawberries and Pimm’s, Henman Hill, the Royal Box, the ball girls and boys, Sue Barker, the rain and, yes, the drama of line challenges (“You cannot be serious!”) and computerised replays. The judges – who “fill the court with colour” and bind the tournament to its roots – are a big part of what makes Wimbledon special.

Football: England's "exhilarating" new manager

The timing may have been unexpected, said Oliver Brown in *The Daily Telegraph*, but the news itself was "genuinely exhilarating". The appointment of Thomas Tuchel as the new England manager "is a victory, quite simply, for excellence over ancestry". The FA's choice represents a rejection of the "stubborn, self-defeating dogma that the manager's bloodline must at all costs be Anglo-Saxon". Instead, they've accepted that England's current "luminous generation of players" are only likely to reach their full potential if galvanised by a figure who "understands how to inspire on the grandest stage". And there is no doubt that Tuchel knows how to do that. On three occasions, while managing Chelsea, he "outsmarted Pep Guardiola", including once in the Champions League final. More recently, while coaching a less-than-vintage Bayern Munich team, he was two minutes away from "reaching club football's greatest game for a third time in five years". Of course, there will be those who are uncomfortable with the mere idea of the English team being led by a German. "But on this issue, I incline towards the Rhett Butler philosophy of frankly not giving a damn."



Tuchel: "charismatic intensity"

and 2024, the World Cup semi-final in 2018 – England had "moments of opportunity that they let slip". Clearly, the FA believes that "Tuchel will provide that tiny bit extra, in terms of tactics and mindset", that will enable England to get over the line. A man of "charismatic intensity", who also performs impressively in the press room, the 51-year-old seems likely to excel in tournament football, given his "extraordinary" record in knockout competitions. And his attractiveness to the FA will have been further enhanced by his history of getting the best out of English players – from Mason Mount and Ben Chilwell at Chelsea to Harry Kane at Bayern Munich last season.

But it must be said that Tuchel's appointment is a huge gamble, said Ian Herbert in the *Daily Mail*. Described by his biographers as a "rulebreaker", he is someone who tends to "kick against orthodoxy", who is unwilling to conform with the "culture" of a place. His record has been marked by "rows with his bosses": at Chelsea, where he fell out badly with Todd Boehly; and more recently at Bayern, whose president branded him a "disaster". Under him, there will inevitably be "rows, controversies, noise" – things that were largely absent under Southgate. Tuchel's appointment feels like a "sudden stab in the dark" – a move that will almost certainly bring back the "unpredictability of all our yesteryears".

History will be kind to Gareth Southgate, but he was a manager who lacked a certain "X factor", said Jonathan Northcroft in *The Times*. In all his really defining matches – the Euros finals in 2021

Tennis: farewell to a Spanish master

It may have been an "inevitable" decision, but that "doesn't reduce its impact", said Simon Cambers in *The Guardian*. Last week, Rafael Nadal announced that he would retire from tennis after next month's Davis Cup. The Spanish left-hander, who is 38, had expressed a desire to keep playing, but his body no longer allows him to "compete for the biggest titles". By most measures, he ends his career as the second-most successful male tennis player of all time, after Novak Djokovic. He has 22 grands slams to the Serb's 24 (Roger Federer, the other member of the "Big Three", finished with 20); 36 Masters titles to Djokovic's 40; and the second-highest career earnings. Andrés Iniesta, the World Cup-winning Spanish footballer, might have been right when he described Nadal as the "best sportsman in the country's history".

Nadal was known for his "inexhaustible spirit", his ferocious topspin forehand and his "pyrotechnics" on court, including his



Nadal: "a dream come true"

famous "banana shots", said Oliver Brown in *The Daily Telegraph*. Yet I believe a number – 14 – offers the best clue of all to his greatness. That's how many French Opens he won – a tally that surely constitutes the single most "downright preposterous record in all sport". Pete Sampras, remember, was "deemed a demi-god when he won his seventh Wimbledon"; Nadal doubled what anyone thought possible at a single grand slam. He lost just four times on the crushed brick of Roland-Garros: twice to Djokovic, once to Robin Söderling, and this year to Alexander Zverev, "when his powers were visibly attenuating". But Nadal wasn't just a clay-court expert, said Stuart Fraser in *The Times*: he won the US Open four times, and Wimbledon twice – including an epic five-set victory over Federer in 2008. "Everything I have experienced has been a dream come true," Nadal said in his retirement video. "I can only end by saying a thousand thanks to all."

England send records tumbling in Multan

Whatever the outcome of the series, England's 2024 tour of Pakistan will always be remembered for its remarkable opening Test, said Nick Hault in *The Daily Telegraph*. When Pakistan scored 556 runs in their first innings in Multan, they would have assumed "they were safe". What followed was one of the most "staggering turnarounds" in cricketing history, as England bludgeoned 823 for seven in their first innings, at nearly 5.5 an over, before bowling Pakistan out for 220 to win by an innings and 47 runs.

It was a match that sent records tumbling, said Simon Burton in *The Observer*. No team had ever scored 500 and gone on to lose a Test by an innings. Joe Root and Harry Brook (who



Brook: a "greedy Yorkshireman"

respectively scored 262 and 317) put on 454 for England's fourth wicket, shattering the nation's 67-year-old record for highest partnership. Captain Ollie Pope said of the pair, "We knew if we batted like we know we can, we can go big. We've got two greedy Yorkshiremen and they did exactly that." Brook scored England's first triple-century for 34 years, and only the country's sixth overall.

And, in the course of his innings, Root soared past Sir Alastair Cook as England's leading all-time run scorer. In the past two years, England have become a team who believe that "victory is never out of reach", said Mike Atherton in *The Times*. Against a frankly poor Pakistan, a crushing series victory seems likely.

Sporting headlines

Athletics Ruth Chepngetich of Kenya broke the marathon world record in Chicago, winning in 2:09:56. It shaved nearly two minutes off the previous record, set by Tigst Assefa of Ethiopia last year.

America's Cup New Zealand led Ben Ainslie's *Ineos Britannia* 4-2 on Wednesday in the sailing competition.

Crickets England are top of their group in the Women's T20 World Cup after beating Scotland by ten wickets.

Tennis Jannik Sinner beat Novak Djokovic in straight sets in the final of the Shanghai Masters.

Pick of the week's correspondence

How to deal with Putin

To The Economist

When I was in Nato's HQ in Kabul, a belief emerged that negotiations with the Taliban would inevitably produce a lasting peace deal. It never emerged. The very hope that a deal was possible and just required a bit more pressure on the Taliban's leadership distracted us from recognising that the militants had completely undermined the state apparatus in rural Afghanistan. The Taliban knew they had the momentum, and negotiations just served as a tool for their final victory.

Hoping for negotiations is not a strategy. For more than a century, large wars have ended either with a return to the status quo or a decisive victory. Unless Mr Putin clearly faces defeat, he will not be pressed into a reasonable peace. Any deal he would accept would serve only as a means for the eventual subjugation of Ukraine. He needs to see that continuing the conflict will exhaust Russia and risk the collapse of his regime. Half-measures will just give him succour, prolong the conflict and enable his dream of imperial conquest. There is no substitute for victory.
Major Robert Rose, adviser team leader, US army, Bulgaria

Watered down regulation

To the Financial Times

Your front page story about infrastructure investment ("Abu Dhabi writes off Thames Water stake as Labour tries to lure investors") reports that investors have been complaining to the Government that the water industry is regulated too strictly. This is a view diametrically opposed to that of the vast majority of the British public. This week's investment summit raises two questions: who will the Government listen to, and are we now on the way to other forms of infrastructure and public services being owned overseas and weakly regulated?
Victor Anderson, Brighton

Restore Euston's pride

To The Guardian

The extension of HS2 into Euston would transform an expensive white elephant into a useful part of our rail system.

Exchange of the week

Whose life is it anyway?

To The Times

As a former hospice nurse, I know that the main concern of those who are dying is those they love above themselves. Illness is costly, both financially and with the extra stress on families travelling to visit loved ones. To argue that it is an individual choice to die is largely false: decisions are influenced by the dying person's perception of the needs of those they love.

Denise McEwan, Moulton, Northamptonshire

To The Times

The risk is not only that people may be pressured into an assisted death. After ten years of working for my local hospice, I know that many terminally ill patients are pressured into arduous and intrusive treatments. Relations often find it harder than the patient to accept impending death, and later grieve over the extra suffering.

Caroline Cochrane, Witney, Oxfordshire

To the Financial Times

Denzil Lush, the former senior judge of the Court of Protection, estimated that 15-20% of enduring-power-of-attorney (EPA) cases involved financial abuse, often by close relations. This troubling figure should be seriously considered in the assisted dying debate. There is a real risk that vulnerable elderly people may be pressured to end their lives prematurely to relieve the financial burden on their families, and expedite the inheritance process.

Any assisted dying legislation must therefore include robust safeguards, independent assessments and mandatory reporting of conflicts of interest, to protect the most vulnerable. The risk of abuse is too significant to ignore in this debate.

Trevor Lyttleton, founder and former chair of Contact the Elderly (now Re-engage)

To The Times

It is hard not to feel a little dishonest when I offer my patients excellent end-of-life care, knowing they may end up in A&E at 3am because district nurses are not funded for overnight visits, and that our local hospice has no beds. Wes Streeting is right that poor care could create coercive pressure towards assisted dying. We have effective responses to end-of-life suffering, but they cost more than letting people take their own lives.

Dr David Randall, consultant nephrologist, London

Nothing would mark this more effectively than the rebuilding of the beautiful Euston Arch, designed in 1837 by Philip Hardwick. Its demolition in the 1960s was an act of wanton vandalism, approved by Harold Macmillan to demonstrate his commitment to things modern.

But most of its sandstone blocks are recoverable and in good condition, and the Euston Arch Trust has practical plans for its reconstruction. It could stand as a magnificent symbol of the nation's pride in the renewal of its railways.
Francis Bown, London

Old stuff that lasts...

To The Times

Your report on the discovery of Andrew Irvine's sock, still

labelled with his name after 100 years, probably reflects the longevity of many domestic items made back then ("Sock that could solve Everest mystery"). Many such items will have survived without being preserved in ice. I am 90. I still sleep in, wash and iron linen sheets that are at least ten years older than I am.
Deirdre Chappell, London

...but now needs fixing

To The Spectator

Matthew Parris identifies AI as a threat to middle-class job security, speculating that tradesmen might have better prospects in the future. His observation is two decades late.

A motivated chap who fixes the chips on your windscreen

already earns 50% more than a university professor; a good plasterer, plumber or electrician, twice as much. This is nothing to do with AI: when the profit in making new things declines, the labour to fix old stuff gains a premium.

James Gillick, Louth, Lincolnshire

In loco parentis

To The Times

When children cannot sit still because they have been plonked in front of a screen since day one; cannot read; don't know basic biological facts about sexual intercourse; haven't ever visited a gallery, theatre or place of worship; cannot use a pen, or spend the entire summer holidays never writing a single word; spout misogynistic, homophobic, racist, Islamophobic, antisemitic, ill-informed conspiracy theories; drop litter; damage school property; don't have respect for others; can't tie a tie; have zero grasp of history; and when they idolise Andrew Tate, how can we leave parenting to parents?

Joanna Williams ("Hey, teacher, leave those kids alone – and let parents do the parenting") is living in a different universe, and until such time as her utopian vision comes to fruition, I'll just have to keep educating children in more ways than one (20 years and counting). Teachers need to work with parents rather than in isolation. As the saying goes, it takes a village to raise a child. And mutual respect from all parties.

Ben Wolfen, English teacher/parent, London



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Review of reviews: Books

Book of the week

Unleashed

by Boris Johnson

William Collins 772pp £30The Week Bookshop **£23.99 (incl. p&p)**

“It is, perhaps, hard to imagine a collaboration between Virgil and Captain W.E. Johns, a fusion of the *Aeneid* and *Biggles Pulls It Off*,” said Michael Gove in *The Spectator*. But that is how Boris Johnson’s memoir reads. In it, our “intrepid hero” travels tirelessly round the globe, “sticking it to Vladimir Putin” and “snatching submarine contracts from under Emmanuel Macron’s snooty Gallic nose” before returning home for a spot of levelling up and a “well-deserved glass of Tignanello”. How you respond to *Unleashed* is likely to depend on your pre-existing view of its author. For Johnson’s critics, it will confirm that he approached being PM much as “Mr Toad approached driving”. But his fans – “and I am still very firmly one of them” said Gove – will be delighted. Reading these pages will make them more convinced than ever that there is “something heroic” about Britain’s “most iconoclastic prime minister”.

Unleashed is “unlikely to make my favourite-books-of-the-year list”, said Nicola Sturgeon in *The New Statesman*. But “it’s not as



bad” as one might expect. On occasion, it surprises the reader with its depth and sincerity. Johnson is compelling on the UK’s deep economic divide between London and the rest, and emerges as a “true believer” in the case for tackling climate change. He is even “passably persuasive” when insisting that his avowal of Brexit was rooted in genuine belief. Very little of that convinced me, said Tim Adams in *The Observer*. Whether rehashing the fiction that Britain’s quick Covid vaccine rollout was only possible because of Brexit, or claiming that he could have won the 2024 election, Johnson emerges as a self-serving chancer “incapable of any register other than snark”.

There’s a lot of the “trademark Johnson shtick”, which, though quick to wear thin, is often quite funny, said Tom Peck in *The Times*. But “the mask of cartoon Boris is never truly permitted to slip”. He sidesteps subjects that require introspection – such as his “unusual and quite difficult childhood” – and offers no insight into, say, the Whitehall wrangling and Downing Street “turf wars” that blighted his premiership. As history, the book is “unlikely to move the dial”, said Jesse Norman in the FT. It displays all his weaknesses: lack of interest in policy detail, for one. But for those willing to “suspend their disbelief” that its author is a former PM, this is a “charming and sometimes thought-provoking romp”.

A Woman Like Me

by Diane Abbott

Viking 320pp £25The Week Bookshop **£19.99**

There have always been “two sides” to Diane Abbott, said Rachel Sylvester in *The Times*. A fearless and “rather fun” trailblazer, she is also an “unreconstructed left-winger” who can be “self-righteous, predictable and factional”. And both sides are on display in her memoir, *A Woman Like Me*. Take the chapters dealing with Jeremy Corbyn, who was her boyfriend in the late 1970s. She’s “funny and candid about their relationship” – there’s an amusing account of a camping holiday in France, during which he insisted on travelling on a rickety East German motorbike, and of the date he took her on to Karl Marx’s tomb. But she is “less willing to face up” to his flaws as a politician; she still regards the furor about antisemitism in the Labour Party as a “conspiracy” by his enemies.

Yet Abbott’s resilience is “astonishing”, said Gaby Hinsliff in *The Guardian*. Her teachers thought a “working-class black girl wouldn’t get into Cambridge”. She proved them wrong. She suffered years of abuse and battled many rejections to become the UK’s first black female MP, and was “triumphantly reelected” this year – “despite Keir Starmer’s best efforts”. Whatever you think of her, Abbott’s story is fascinating. This is a “rich, complex memoir”.

Novel of the week

Annihilation

by Michel Houellebecq

Picador 544pp £22The Week Bookshop **£17.99**

Michel Houellebecq once admitted that what he most wanted was to move his readers. “That’s what I admire most in literature,” he said: “the ability to make you weep.” With his new novel (which he says will be his last), the reliably “scabrous” 68-year-old has finally made good on that ambition, said David Sexton in *The Spectator*. At first,

Annihilation appears to be a political thriller in the mould of Houellebecq’s last novel, *Serotonin*, which was set during the *gilets jaunes* protests. Paul, its 50-year-old protagonist, is a special adviser to France’s “brilliant finance minister”, who is embroiled in a plot to install a “puppet president”. A subplot involves environmentalists who are engaged in “cabbalistic cyberterrorism”. Yet as it progresses, these themes recede and a different story emerges, centred on Paul’s father, who has suffered a severe stroke. What results is a “deeply affecting novel about love and death and the way we treat the dying”.

None of it, to me, felt terribly convincing, said Dwight Garner in *The New York Times*. Having begun promisingly enough, the novel turns into an incoherent mishmash. From the “scandal of end-of-life care facilities” to the “content of Paul’s dreams”, it “dilates” on many themes without ever arriving on a central subject. Never has Houellebecq been so “thoroughly dull”. There may be “longueurs” and a few implausible plot twists, said Michael Gove in *The Times*. “But there is also a sympathy, compassion and tenderness” that is far more pronounced than in his previous work. The former “enfant terrible” now seemingly wants to be a “doting *grandpère*” – and the shift in register is welcome.



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Theatre: The Other Place

Lyttelton, National Theatre, London SE1 (020-3989 5455). Until 9 November Running time: 1hr 20mins ★★★★★

“There’s a lot of Greek suffering hovering over London at the moment,” said Sarah Crompton on What’s on Stage. Robert Icke’s new version of *Oedipus*, starring Mark Strong and Lesley Manville, is about to open, and an *Elektra*, with Brie Larson, is due in January. But both of them “will have to be exceptional to match the sheer cathartic power” of *The Other Place*, a “very loose” retelling of *Antigone* that manages to be naturalistic yet also uncanny. Writer-director Alexander Zeldin strips away the complexities of Sophocles’s plot to illuminate brilliantly why a 2,500-year-old play – about a young woman who defies her uncle, with tragic consequences – still has “universal resonance”.

The action unfurls not in ancient Thebes, said Sarah Hemming in the Financial Times, but in a modern-day suburban home, where King Creon is Chris, his niece Antigone is Annie, and her sister Ismene is Issy. Here, Antigone has no slain brother. Instead, we join the story some years after the suicide of the girls’ father – and amid a family feud about the fate of his ashes. This is *Antigone* as “modern psychodrama, digging deep into the fears, desires and taboos that surge through it. The result is both surprisingly funny and shockingly frank.” Emma D’Arcy as Annie and Tobias Menzies as Chris turn in “blazing”



A modern psychodrama that is “surprisingly funny and shockingly frank”

performances as two people struggling “with a grief they can’t control and a past that haunts them”. But all the cast excel, said Arifa Akbar in The Guardian, in a riveting evening that generates audible gasps of shock from the audience. The “drama is huge”, though the play is lean, at 80 minutes.

I’d say it’s too lean, said Fiona Mountford in The i Paper. In Greek tragedy, the endings bring the “purity and clarity” of catharsis. Here, too much is left unexplained. Zeldin does rather duck Sophocles’s larger questions, to focus on the “foetid” relationship between Chris and Annie, said Claire Allfree in The Daily Telegraph. Still, on its own terms, “this is sucker-punch theatre, beautifully detailed and at times excruciatingly funny”.

The week’s other opening

The Fear of 13 Donmar Warehouse, London WC2 (020-3282 3808). Until 30 November

Oscar-winner Adrien Brody makes his London stage debut in this “faultless” (and alas sold out) production. In Lindsey Ferrentino’s fact-based drama, he plays Nick Yarris, an innocent man who spent 22 years on death row for rape-murder (Daily Telegraph).

Albums of the week: three new releases

**Jelly Roll:
Beautifully
Broken**
EMI
£15



Jason DeFord, the Grammy-nominated Tennessee artist who records as Jelly Roll, is a “country star for modern America”, said Will Hodgkinson in The Times. Following stints in prison, struggles with addiction, and an unsuccessful spell as a rapper, DeFord turned his life around, and emerged as a country musician, a “chronicler of America’s defeated, addicted and those generally down on their luck”. His new “breakout” album, *Beautifully Broken*, offers up a pop-country sound. It’s an impressive collection: its stories of “vice, despair and general disaster” are told with a “real sympathy” for their subjects, putting DeFord “in the noble tradition of Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings and other heroes of the American dispossessed”.

Musically, the album’s main currency is “stadium-ready pop-rock of various hues”, said Alexis Petridis in The Guardian. There are “Coldplay-esque pianos” on *Winning Streak*, and a “grizzled take on Ed Sheeran” on *Get By*. It’s a shift away “from his back-country roots – but the grit in his lyrics lifts it above standard pop fare”.

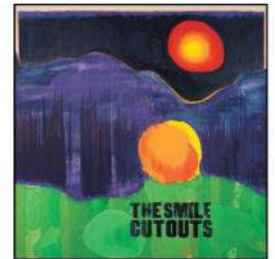
**Igor Levit:
Brahms – Piano
Concertos &
Solo Piano**
Sony Classical
£22



Igor Levit “never does anything by halves”, said Richard Fairman in the FT. There are several recordings of Brahms’s *Piano Concerto No. 1* and *No. 2*, but in this epic three-disc set, the German pianist throws in a delightful 77-minute helping of the solo piano works – the late intermezzos, fantasias and other short pieces of *Op. 116*, *117*, *118* and *119* that are among Brahms’s most attractive and intimate creations. In the concertos, conductor Christian Thielemann creates an “orchestral canvas of rich colours” and emotion, splendidly played by the Vienna Philharmonic; Levit’s performances “combine grandeur and a live sense of spontaneity”.

The opening of the second concerto is “especially wonderful”, said Geoff Brown in The Times, with the “beautifully played horn solo matched by Levit’s tenderly nuanced response”. However, in the normally more dramatic first, some stretches feel “unusually docile”. Over the three discs, “solo Levit just about pips concerto Levit. But either way he’s not a pianist anyone should ignore.”

**The Smile:
Cutouts**
XL Recordings
£12



Radiohead haven’t released an album in eight years, but Jonny Greenwood and Thom Yorke – with Sons of Kemet drummer Tom Skinner – have struck a rich and prolific vein as The Smile, said Phil Mongredien in The Observer. *Cutouts* is the trio’s second album this year (recorded during the same sessions as January’s impressive *Wall of Eyes*), and “there’s no let up in quality. More please.”

Cutouts is a bit like the “cheeky younger sister” of *Wall of Eyes*, said Roisin O’Connor in The Independent; it’s “expansive, brilliant and surprisingly fun”. While the arrangements on the former album were sombre and vulnerable in tone, there’s a “newfound vibrancy” and an eclectic playfulness to this one. *Colours Fly* “veers from smart, tempered beats and Egyptian guitar scales into something darker and more wild”. *Eyes & Mouth* “bounces from a Chic-style riff into dazzling scalar melodies, propelled by Skinner’s shimmering hi-hats and skittering beats”. Yorke and Greenwood, not a duo known for joyful excess, “sound like they’re having a ball”.

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



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Transformers One

1hr 44mins (PG)

Surprisingly good animated addition to the long-running franchise

★★★★

“As befits a franchise about shape-shifting robots, *Transformers* has had more alternate incarnations than anyone cares to remember,” said Laura Stott in *The Sun*. “And in the 40th year since the original 1980s cartoon, we have yet another version.” This one, happily, is “pretty entertaining” – and you don’t need to have seen any of the other films to make sense of it. An animated origins story, it takes us back to the days when Optimus Prime and Megatron – who will become sworn enemies – were “lowly” mining bots on the planet Cybertron, as well as the best of pals. Then a joyride gets them banished to “scrapheap-sifting duties”, and they discover that their planet’s idolised leader Sentinel Prime (Jon Hamm) is a crook – prompting a rebellion. The film does often feel like it’s preparing “to flog you some more plastic stuff this Christmas”, but it’s “pacey” good fun.

Transformers One, which could more accurately be called *Transformers Nine*, is not part of a franchise “that could ever be accused of subtlety”, said Robbie Collin in *The Daily Telegraph*, but the stylistic choices made by director Josh Cooley (*Toy Story 4*) make it “far more thoughtful and ingenious than the average reboot”. Its characters “may be hulking mechanoids, but they’re animated with stop-motion-like tactility”, their surfaces scuffed like a kid’s “most-played-with belongings”. Is the film just “a glorified Saturday-morning cartoon? Yes, but with the emphasis on glorified.” After “16 years of clamorous, clattering mayhem”, cinemagoers could be forgiven for longing for the franchise to end, said Kevin Maher in *The Times*. Yet this film is an “unsettling watch” because, though “loud, multicoloured and garish”, it’s also “quite good”.



Salem's Lot

1hr 54mins (15)

Lacklustre Stephen King adaptation set in 1970s Maine

★★

“A fresh Stephen King adaptation should be exciting,” said Christina Newland in *The i Paper*. “It’s a shame, then, that *Salem’s Lot*” – a small-town chiller set in 1970s Maine – has “zero new ideas or even a particularly frightening take” on the author’s 1975 novel. Directed by Gary Dauberman, the film stars Lewis Pullman (“a charisma vacuum”) as a writer who returns to his home town to research his new book, and discovers that “a mysterious newcomer” (Alexander Ward), who is posing as an antiques dealer, is actually a “vampire with a burning desire to turn the entire population into fellow bloodsuckers”. The film has the “sense of having been cut and re-cut repeatedly, with scenes rushing into the next or characters cropping up late” with little introduction, and its weird pacing makes it “deeply unscary”. Dauberman “does change the book’s original conclusion to something more modern and satisfying”, but “in the final analysis, this *Salem’s Lot* is vastly inferior” to the popular 1979 miniseries.

This film was due for release back in 2022, and has gone straight to streaming in the US – which has made for rather a “shaky advance reputation”, said Jonathan Romney in the FT. But I’d agree with King (executive producer here), who declared on X/Twitter that the film was, “Quite good. Old-school horror filmmaking: slow build, big pay-off.” I’m afraid I found *Salem’s Lot* “half-baked and half-hearted”, said Tim Robey in *The Daily Telegraph*. Its vampires “send you to sleep without any risk of nightmares”, and it looks abysmal, with most scenes either “ineptly underlit or horribly graded”. Sure, “there have been a few worse King adaptations” – but not many.



Timestalker

1hr 30mins (15)

Ambitious indie film about the pursuit of love

★★★

In *Timestalker*, writer-director Alice Lowe has borrowed “from the likes of Terry Gilliam and Stanley Kubrick to tell a story about the obsessive pursuit of love, with a healthy side of schlocky gore”, said Laura Venning in *Empire*. Lowe – for whom the film was a “passion project in the works for eight years” – plays Agnes, a woman who keeps falling in love with the same man (Aneurin Barnard) in century after century. She first sets eyes on him in 1688, when, as a Scottish maidservant, she attends his execution and is “enchanted by his brooding good looks”. Next, we skip to the 18th century, where “a new incarnation of Agnes – now living with a brutish husband (Nick Frost) – becomes enamoured with a self-interested highwayman (Barnard again)”. There are further appearances in the Victorian era, the 1940s and beyond. It does start to feel repetitive, and Agnes herself is rather “thinly drawn”: her “erotomania” is really just a device to string together “a collection of zany comedy sketches”. Still, this is “an admirably ambitious fable that could be destined to become a cult oddity”.

Lowe has said she wanted her film to reflect “the eternal humiliation that is the search for love”, and our propensity to make “the same mistakes over and over”. Yet for me, said David Sexton in *The New Statesman*, the film “fell completely flat”. It has “no real life, no shareable feeling: the subversion and deflation seem pointless, never funny”. Shot in just 22 days in Wales, *Timestalker* is a “time-hopping menagerie of madness”, with Lowe “centre stage and always game”, said Anna Bogutskaya in *Time Out*. And it left me feeling excited about “what she’s going to make next”.

Rivals: Jilly Cooper’s bestselling novel gets a rollicking adaptation

“As a statement of intent, the opening scene of *Rivals* (Disney+) is a humdinger,” said Anita Singh in *The Daily Telegraph*. The eight-part series begins with a shot of Rupert Campbell-Black as he “ravishes” a red-stilettoed woman on a Concorde, to the sound of Robert Palmer’s *Addicted to Love*. “When our hero retakes his seat, female passengers swooning in his wake”, he is challenged about his behaviour in a toilet. “A loo,” he corrects. “Don’t be plebeian.” In short: have no fear that Jilly Cooper’s book has been “Disney-fied”. This series packs sex, class and the 1980s into “one riotously OTT package”, and the result is a “marvellous antidote to modern life”.

At times, it seems “as if every actor working in British television is in *Rivals*”, which tells the story of the battle for



David Tennant as Tony Baddingham

a regional television channel, said Stuart Heritage in *The Guardian*. “David Tennant is in it. Aidan Turner is in it.” So are Danny Dyer, Emily Atack and Rufus Jones. “The recognisable faces are endless – and they are all 100% on board with what *Rivals* requires”, which is lots and lots of close-ups of shuddering orgasms. Cooper fans (and they are legion) will surely love it, said Carol Midgley in *The Times*. But even if you’re not “au fait with the books”, you can still enjoy being whisked back in time to a decade “before mobile phones, and when people still got steaming drunk at lunchtime”.

Rivals is a “reliably moreish in-your-face story of extramarital affairs, TV-world backstabbing, labradors, big hair, shoulder pads, helicopters, money... And it is all done with great gusto.”

Exhibition of the week **Monet and London: Views of the Thames**

The Courtauld Gallery, London WC2 (020-3947 7777, courtauld.ac.uk). Until 19 January

London's South Bank is these days unrecognisable from how it would have looked in the late 19th century, said Florence Hallett in *The i Paper*. Back then, the area now dominated by the Royal Festival Hall and the National Theatre was "a crush of factories billowing filth, smoke and steam from giant chimneys, accompanied ... by a cacophony of animals and machines". The hellish scene was a source of great inspiration to Claude Monet, who visited three times between 1899 and 1901 and painted dozens of pictures of the view from his room at the Savoy hotel.



Waterloo Bridge, Overcast (1903): one of Monet's "spectacular" visions of London

A successful exhibition of 37 of these works was staged in Paris in 1904, but his plans for a second showing in London never materialised: most of the paintings had been sold and buyers were reluctant to part with them. Now, 120 years on, The Courtauld Gallery has finally realised Monet's ambition. Its new show brings together 21 of his Thames views from collections "scattered across the world", reuniting them "just a couple of minutes' walk" from where they were created. Hung together across the two main exhibition galleries, the works feel both "incredibly familiar" and uncannily odd: "no reproduction can recreate Monet's brushwork". The result is a "revelation".

The paintings gathered here "capture effects of light refracted through London's peasoupers" exquisitely, said Alastair Sooke in *The Daily Telegraph*. For Monet, the weather conditions created

by atmospheric pollution in the city were "as dramatic as the aurora borealis", and while his "misty, mysterious" visions of London may owe something to Turner and to Whistler, they are "gorgeous" nonetheless. He makes the Houses of Parliament – depicted from across the river – look "as magical and insubstantial as a palace in fairyland", while the surface of the Thames is animated by "fluorescent streaks" of "sage, turquoise" and "salmon-pink". When the factory chimneys themselves make an appearance, they pop up "wraith-like" through the gloom.

Seen together, these works, painted "in large, broad strokes, layer upon layer of iridescent colour", form a "symphonic whole", said Jackie Wullschläger in the *FT*. The "majesty" of each is enhanced by its neighbours, and the artist's "exceptional sensitivity to minute atmospheric nuances" is brilliantly showcased. Five "dynamic" views of the then-new Charing Cross Bridge see it turned into a "weightless" phantom, variously disappearing into mist or illuminated by "light-streaked steam from passing trains". One view of Waterloo Bridge, meanwhile, transforms the traffic over the thoroughfare into "dabs" against "a lilac blue haze". These "pivotal and original" pictures "render city life as we experience it as ephemeral, fugitive, blurry moments". *Monet and London* is an "enthralled and immediate" show, which immerses us in his "spectacular vision of the city".

Where to buy...

The Week reviews an exhibition in a private gallery

Frank Auerbach

*at Offer Waterman/
Francis Outred*

Frank Auerbach's paintings of London are a chronicle of the city over the past seven decades, not in documentary terms, but as a record of something intangible, a feeling of place. The early works in this superb show, *Portraits of London*, from the early 1950s, are as dull of palette as a wartime diet, depicting mass reconstruction and rubble clearance in the city's bombed-out heart: the impasto is so thick as to appear less sculptural than industrial, mimicking the textures of the scenes it depicts. The following decade saw Auerbach exploit aggressively bright colours and zinging directional marks: dramatic zig-zags of red and blue seemingly terrorise the new Post Office Tower in a view from Primrose Hill.



Albert Street II (2010), detail

These disparate approaches are synthesised in later scenes that hymn the traffic passing Mornington Crescent or the entrance to the artist's studio around the corner, each a network of thrilling gestures. There are 25 paintings here, and every one of them is revelatory. Prices on request.

*17 St George Street, London W1
(waterman.co.uk). Until 7 December*

Jitters in the London art market

The capital's art market was "facing severe headwinds", said Lanre Bakare in *The Guardian*, ahead of last week's Frieze art fair.



"Several galleries, including the blue chip, 80-year-old institution Marlborough, have folded." At Christie's, auction sales in London plunged by 22% in the first half of 2024, while the *Financial Times* reported that earnings were down 88% at Sotheby's. Conflicts around the world, high interest rates and the coming US election have given buyers the jitters; London's auction houses have seen a drop in "megasaes". In the event, though, sales at Frieze were "more buoyant than expected", said Melanie Gerlis in the *FT*. Gagosian sold out nine new sculptures by Carol Bove (priced at \$850,000 each), while at Frieze Masters, Édouard Manet's 1865 painting at Longchamp racecourse sold for €4.5m. The London auction season kicked off, with mixed results – though David Hockney's *L'Arbois, Sainte-Maxime* (1968, pictured) sold above-estimate for £11.5m.



Best books... Sarah Rainsford

The BBC's Eastern Europe correspondent on books that explain Putin's Russia. She'll discuss her book *Goodbye to Russia* (Bloomsbury £22) at the Stratford Literary Festival on 27 October (stratfordliteraryfestival.co.uk)

A Dirty War by Anna Politkovskaya, 2001 (Harvill Press £18.99). In 2022, it was a shock to many that Russian troops in Ukraine could act with such brutality, but Politkovskaya had documented the same in Chechnya, years earlier. A journalist of immense courage and conscience – both intimidating and inspiring – she told that story like no other. She was murdered in Moscow in 2006.

Between Two Fires by Joshua Yaffa, 2020 (Granta £10.99). A thought-provoking insight into the complexities of life in an authoritarian system. Putin's Russia is a twisted world that warps minds and morals. These evocative portraits capture the

nuance as Yaffa explores how far his characters are willing to compromise in order to succeed, or even survive.

Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took on the West by Catherine Belton, 2020 (William Collins £12.99). The clue to this book's importance is in its subtitle. Putin and his clan went to war with the West long before we woke up to the danger, as Belton explains so eloquently. A must-read for any Russia watcher, which should be all of us.

The Language of War by Oleksandr Mykhed, 2024 (Allen Lane £18.99). If you're seeking to understand today's

Russia, it's important to understand what it has done to Ukraine. This visceral work by a Ukrainian writer captures the fury and hatred created by Russia's ruinous war – by the things you can “never forget. Or forgive,” as Mykhed puts it.

One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 1962 (Penguin £8.99). Mykhed (above) doesn't want us to read Russian literature any more, deeming it part of a “repressive imperial machine”. I get that. But Solzhenitsyn's prison-camp novel, one of the first I tackled in Russian, is a reminder that the repression inside Russia itself, the hunt for enemies within, has dark precedents.

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The Week's guide to what's worth seeing

Showing now

Meera Syal gives a “deeply persuasive” performance in **A Tupperware of Ashes**, Tanika Gupta's drama, loosely inspired by *King Lear*, about a Bengali matriarch who is slipping into Alzheimer's (Daily Telegraph). Until 16 November, National Theatre, London SE1 (nationaltheatre.org.uk).

Head to Milton Keynes for **Vanessa Bell: A World of Form and Colour**, the largest-ever solo show of work (paintings, ceramics, furniture) by the pioneering Bloomsbury artist. Until 23 February, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes (mkgallery.org).

Book now

Elton John's musical version of **The Devil Wears Prada** lands in the West End, with Vanessa Williams as editor Miranda Priestly – a panto villain if ever there was one. Until 31 May, Dominion Theatre, London WC2 (devilwearspradamusical.com).

Halloween at Hampton Court Palace delves into its haunted history, using projections and



Detail from Vanessa Bell's *Self Portrait* (c.1958)

creepy sound effects to conjure up the ghosts said to stalk its halls. 26 October-3 November, Hampton Court Palace, Richmond (hrp.org.uk).

Tickets for the **Hay Festival Winter Weekend** are now on sale, with talks by Ali Smith, David Spiegelhalter, former Australian PM Julia Gillard and more, as well as concerts, choirs and the annual Christmas lights switch-on. 28 November-1 December, various venues, Hay-on-Wye (hayfestival.com).

Television

Programmes

Churchill: Britain's Secret Apartheid Nadifa Mohamed explores a neglected chapter of WWII history where, despite his misgivings, Churchill allowed the US army to maintain its policy of racial segregation in Britain. Sat 19 Oct, C4 20:20 (60mins).

DI Ray Second series of the crime thriller. Parminder Nagra's DI Ray investigates the double murder of a young nurse and a crime boss. Sun 20, Mon 21 and Tue 22 Oct, ITV1 21:00 (60mins each).

Storyville: Dogs of War Documentary telling the story of a Basingstoke man who spent 40 years fighting as a mercenary, everywhere from Afghanistan to Colombia. Tue 22 Oct, BBC4 22:00 (90mins).

Trump: The Criminal Conspiracy Case

Investigation into the former president's attempts to overturn the 2020 election results in Georgia. Wed 23 Oct, BBC2 21:00 (90mins).

Al Pacino: Once Upon a Time in Hollywood As his memoir is published, the actor opens up to Colin Paterson about the ups and downs of his life and career. Fri 25 Oct, BBC2 21:00 (60mins).

Films

Harriet (2019) Biopic about the abolitionist Harriet Tubman who, having escaped slavery, made the perilous journey back to the South to free other enslaved people. Mon 21 Oct, BBC2 23:05 (115mins).

All About Eve (1950) Bette Davis stars as a sharp-tongued Broadway diva manipulated by an ambitious fan in the evergreen comedy-drama. Thur 24 Oct, BBC4 20:55 (135mins).

New to streaming

Nobody Wants This Ten-part romcom in which Adam Brody plays a handsome rabbi who falls for a sex podcaster. “Light, funny and gentle” (Sunday Times). On Netflix.

Disclaimer Cate Blanchett and Sacha Baron Cohen star in this glossy adaptation of Renée Knight's psychological thriller, directed by Alfonso Cuarón. On Apple TV+.

The Archers: what happened last week

Azra's son Khalil continues to ruffle feathers around the village, especially when Lynda accuses him of feeding crisps to her llamas. At the Tea Room, Fallon and Adam talk about George's hearing – she's decided to read out her personal statement. George shows an apprehensive Brad how to run his social media business; they admit they'll miss each other. Over a friendly dinner, Alice tells Hannah she and Chris are co-parents now and, if Hannah likes him, she should go for it. Lynda visits Azra to smooth over the earlier misunderstanding. The Grundys gather for dinner before the hearing – George gets upset but Eddie says they're not ashamed of him, they're proud. In court, Fallon reads out her victim statement, to George's shock; Susan comforts a distraught Emma. In the end, George is sentenced to two years, but learns he'll serve them in an adult prison. The next day, Emma can't get out of bed, but Susan chivvies her and tells her George is strong. When he calls Emma from prison later, something is kicking off in the wing – then he's cut off.

20th century gems



▲ **Northumberland:** Ridgeway, Hexham. A delightful 1930s modernist house with views across the North Tyne Valley. Main suite, 4 further beds, family bath, kitchen, 4 receps, garden, garage. OIEO £850,000; Sanderson Young (01912-233500).



▲ **London:** The Dehavilland Studios, Clapton. A loft in this former aircraft-parts factory designed by Sir Owen Williams. The building is a stunning example of industrial art deco architecture. 1 bed, family bath, open-plan kitchen/living room. £875,000; Urban Spaces (020-3744 2500).



▲ **Devon:** Orchard Court, Tavistock. Close to Dartmoor National Park, this attractive house is set in mature gardens. 4 beds, bath, shower, kitchen/dining room, 2 receps, garden, garage. £1.25m; Savills (01392-455755).

▶ **Somerset:** York's Lane, Chewton Mendip. Stylish 1960s modernist house by renowned architect Ray Moxley. 2 beds, family bath, shower, kitchen, 2 receps, 2-bed cottage, garden, garages. £1.895m; The Modern House (020-3795 5920).





◀ **Yorkshire:** Farnley Hey II, Farnley Tyas. A magnificent example of mid-century architecture designed by Peter Womersley in 1954. Featuring a party room known as “the dance floor”. 4 beds, 2 baths, kitchen, 3 receps, garden, parking. £1.2m; The Modern House (020-3795 5920).

▼ **Argyll and Bute:** Coille Dharaich, Kilmelford, Oban. This lochside property was built in the 1970s and enjoys stunning views over Loch na Cille to the islands beyond. 4 beds, family bath, shower, kitchen, 3 receps, garden, parking. OIEO £480,000; Dawsons (01631-563901).



◀ **Kent:** Studfall Ridge, Lympe Hill. An impressive art deco house boasting 180-degree views across the Channel to France. Main suite, 3 further beds (1 en suite), 2 baths, kitchen/breakfast room, 3 receps, cinema room, garden, parking. £1.5m; Strutt & Parker (01227-473700).




▲ **London:** Wellesley Road, Twickenham. This first-floor flat is part of a striking art deco-inspired building in the elegant Strawberry Hill neighbourhood. 1 bed, family bath, open-plan kitchen/living/dining room, parking. £475,000; Savills (020-8447 4400).

A woman with short, curly grey hair, wearing a teal, long-sleeved, form-fitting dress, stands in a bright, sunlit room. Her arms are outstretched horizontally to the sides. She has a joyful expression, with her eyes closed and a slight smile. The room features a large window with white frames, a chandelier hanging from the ceiling, and a wooden table with various decorative items like vases and plants. The overall atmosphere is warm and positive.

For the people who
find the idea of downsizing
rather uplifting.

For the finer things in property.

**STRUTT
& PARKER**

BNP PARIBAS GROUP 

The craze for “K-food”

Until recently, Korean food was hard to find in Britain outside of a few enclaves such as New Malden, in southwest London, which has been home to a significant Korean population since the 1950s. Now, “K-food” is all but impossible to avoid, says Tomé Morrissy-Swan in the Daily Telegraph. The trend was ignited by the “street-food wave” of a decade or so ago, which helped popularise dishes such as Korean fried chicken and Korean corn dogs. Soon, a new generation of “modern” Korean restaurants, many offering unfamiliar tastes and textures, followed – from Miga in Hackney, where the cooking is “homely” but “superb”, to Bokman in Bristol, which specialises in wood-fired chicken stuffed with sticky rice. And now people are increasingly making and eating Korean food at home, which has been made easier by the rise of large Korean supermarket chains such as Seoul Plaza and Oseyo, which have 33 UK branches between them. According to Becky Lee Smith, a cultural ambassador, Britain’s embrace of Korean food can’t be separated from the “Korean wave” of the past two decades – the “rapid global spread of Korean culture”, from films to pop music, that has been nurtured and supported by the South Korean government.

Tips for a good meat-free bolognese

Vegetarian bolognese can often be a disappointment, says Yotam Ottolenghi in The Guardian. The rich flavours and textures of a long-cooked ragù are hard



Royal China: a dim sum-filled Sunday lunch

to replicate when no meat is involved. But it’s possible to get a close approximation, so long as you remember that “mushrooms are your friend”. Begin by slowly sweating onions, garlic, celery and carrots in plenty of olive oil until they’re soft and sweet. At this point, add the mushrooms: “I find that a mix of fresh and rehydrated dried ones works best, especially if you also use the mushroom soaking water.” After that, it’s a question of building up the flavour and texture. And a splash of red wine, some miso or Marmite, plenty of seasoning and “maybe some soy”. For extra bulk, add a tin of cooked lentils, or some blitzed roast

walnuts. “Cubes of roast aubergine or tofu also work well.” When it comes to spices, you could add cumin for “warmth” and paprika for its “smoky depth”, but allspice and chipotle chilli flakes are also options. After that, leave the most important ingredient of all – time – to do its work. This is a dish that’s “more than happy to simmer away until you get it just right”.

The best Sunday lunches in London

The roasts served at the **Canton Arms** in Stockwell are “among the best” in London, says Mike Davies, chef-director of The Camberwell Arms, in the FT. Try its roast beef with roast potatoes, horseradish-*crème fraîche* and watercress for a “benchmark” Sunday roast. At **The Clarence Tavern** in Stoke Newington, “sharing roasts take centre stage”, alongside a superb wine list. Another fab pub is **The Waterman’s Arms** in Barnes: the Sunday menu “spans porchetta and slow-roasted lamb to share”, while showcasing seasonal produce. But in my view, Sunday lunch doesn’t have to involve a roast. I love a long, dim sum-filled lunch at **Royal China** (I favour the branch on Baker Street). Or there’s **Selale** in Harringay, a Turkish restaurant where you can order an enormous mixed grill for the table, creating an “ad hoc communal-dining experience” that feels perfect on a Sunday. At **Pique-Nique** in Bermondsey, the delicious main-course sharing plates – whether roast chicken with herb sauce or veal fillet *en croûte* – make for a delightful “French-leaning Sunday lunch”.

Recipe of the week: tartiflette

One of the most popular winter dishes in France, tartiflette is a must-try if you can get hold of a Reblochon cheese, says Manon Lagrève. This soft, cow’s milk cheese from the Alps is buttery, nutty and seriously addictive, and it is becoming easier to find outside France, but if you really can’t get hold of it, you could use Port Salut or muenster cheese instead.

Serves 4

1kg floury potatoes 3 large onions, sliced 1 tsp butter 100ml white wine 1 large Reblochon (500g)
250g smoked lardons (or smoked bacon, diced) 100ml double cream sea salt and freshly cracked black pepper

- Peel and slice the potatoes 3-4mm thick and place in a medium-size saucepan filled with cold water along with 1 teaspoon of salt. Cover, bring to the boil, then cook for 15 minutes. Drain and set aside.
- Fry the onions with the butter in a large frying pan (skillet) for about 5 minutes over a medium heat, until softened but not coloured. Add the white wine and cook until it evaporates. Remove the onions from the pan and set aside.
- Fry the lardons in the same pan for 5-7 minutes until golden and crispy, then remove from the pan. Preheat the



- oven to 180°C fan (200°C/400°F/gas 6). Spread half of the onions across the base of a roasting tin, top with half of the lardons and then all of the potatoes. Finish with the rest of the onions and lardons and pour in the cream.
- Slice the Reblochon lengthways, then place on top, crust-facing up. Season to taste, with pepper. Cook for 30 minutes until the Reblochon has fully melted and is golden on top. Serve with a dressed salad.
- **Tip:** You can make a vegetarian version by replacing the lardons with cooked mushrooms and using a suitable vegetarian cheese.

Taken from *Chez Manon: Simple Recipes from a French Home Kitchen* by Manon Lagrève, published by Hardie Grant at £26. Photography by Nassima Rothacker. To buy from The Week Bookshop for £20.99, call 020-3176 3835 or visit theweekbookshop.co.uk.

New cars: what the critics say



Nissan Qashqai

Price: from £30,135

What Car?

The Qashqai is credited with starting the “seemingly unstoppable” trend for family SUVs. With “hot competition” from rivals, this car has been given a facelift: new technology and engines, styling tweaks, plus upgrades to the infotainment system and better refinement. The third-generation Qashqai retains the qualities that made it so popular, and remains “a strong contender” in the family SUV class.

The Daily Telegraph

Nissan has done “nothing to rock the boat” with this midlife update: the front has a new grille, the back has a reprofiled bumper... but under the bonnet, the Qashqai is unchanged. There’s the same choice of 138bhp or 156bhp 1.3-litre petrol mild hybrid engines, and the 187bhp e-Power full hybrid, which is unique, as the electric motor powers the wheels and the 1.5-litre petrol engine charges the battery.

Autocar

The interior feels modern and there’s a “good helping of standard equipment”. Nissan has focused on technology with better graphics, plus Google Maps and Assistant built in. Thankfully, the physical buttons for climate control remain. It’s still not very engaging, but it is easy to drive, and is comfortable if you stick with the 18in wheels. Steering is very light, which makes manoeuvring a doddle.

The best... portable radios



Majority Little Shelford

This “cute” DAB radio with Bluetooth measures just 13cm x 10cm x 17cm. It can be mains or battery powered, and has a useful preset function, plus an alarm clock and a sleep timer (£40; thorness.co.uk).

▼ **Tivoli Audio SongBook Max** Built for big sound, this has a powerful built-in preamp and multiple drivers. It weighs 5.2kg, has DAB, Bluetooth and a ten-hour battery life. Also comes in cream (£599; tivoliaudio.co.uk).



Sangean CP-100D

DAB radio With its gramophone design, this compact two-watt DAB radio is “strikingly different”. It is 26cm tall, has Bluetooth, station presets, is rechargeable, and comes in five colours (£169;



▼ **Roberts Revival Petite 2** Available in a range of colours, this compact DAB radio (12cm x 9cm x 7cm) has up to 20 hours of playback, 20 station presets and Bluetooth connectivity, plus USB-C charging, a telescopic aerial and an alarm (£100; robertsradio.com).



► **Klang S3** For discerning audiophiles, this has a total music output of 120 watts and a maximum frequency of 20,000Hz. Not just an internet radio, it is a streaming system with a CD player and Bluetooth (£549; loewe.tv).



SOURCE: THE TIMES

Tips of the week... surprising beauty hacks

- Teabags are great for fixing broken nails. Before applying gel or polish, use a small piece of the net of a teabag, like a mesh, to connect the break shut with nail glue.
- To get rid of a green tint in bleached or blonde hair after swimming, apply ketchup to dry hair on the green areas and leave on for 10-20 minutes, before shampooing out.
- Lip balm can be used to tame unruly brows and frizzy hair. Lanolin nipple cream is brilliant for chapped lips, and it works as a hydrating hand cream too. Sudocrem nappy cream works well to relieve shaving rash.
- If you don't have cleanser, you can use olive oil or coconut oil to remove make-up instead. Warm the oil in your hands before massaging over the face, and wipe off with a wet cloth. Rinse thoroughly if you're prone to spots. Use the oil for moisturising the skin, cuticles and dry hair ends too.
- Save the leftover water when you rinse rice, and freeze it in an ice cube tray. In the morning, after cleansing, run the cubes over your face for supple, super-bright soft skin.

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN

And for those who have everything...



It can be tricky to find a white wall big enough for a projector, so the BenQ GV50 sits in a special cradle to beam the 120in Full HD picture onto a ceiling. It has built-in speakers, Google TV and a sleep timer. **£639; richersounds.com**

SOURCE: STUFF

Where to find... the UK's best city walking tours

The two-hour **Derry Girls Tour** celebrates the TV show that helped turn the city into a tourist hotspot. It begins at the *Derry Girls* mural on the Badgers Bar and includes locations such as the Guildhall (£10pp; Sat, Apr-Oct; derrycitytours.com).

Blackbeard to Banksy is a two-hour history tour of Bristol, from the city's medieval heart to its harbour (£12pp, daily; blackbeard2banksy.com).

Come hungry to the **City of Arcades Food Experience** in Cardiff. You'll meet the city's artisan producers and tuck into delicacies on this 4.5-hour tasting tour (£67.50pp; fortnightly, Fri/Sat; lovingwelshfood.uk).

The 90-minute **Glasgow Street Art Tour** takes you off the beaten track to discover the city's unique street-art scene (£12pp, 2pm daily; walkingtoursin.com).

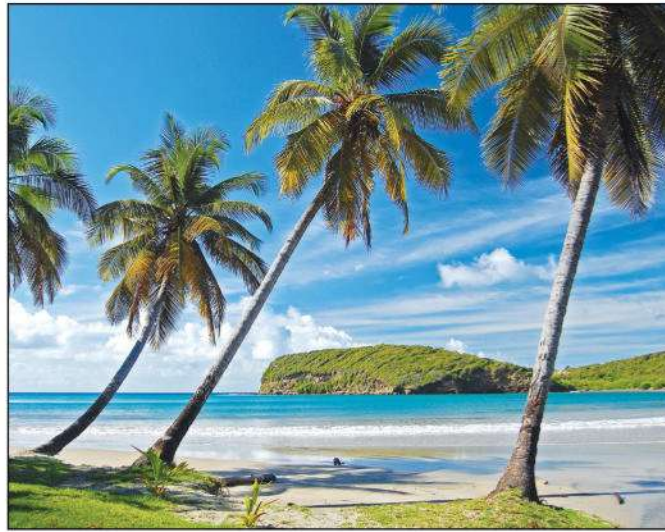
The **Five Ways to Die in Birmingham Tour** lasts two hours and offers a glimpse into the city's haunted past (£15pp; birminghamwalkingtours.co.uk).

SOURCE: THE SUNDAY TIMES

This week's dream: Grenada's luxurious new resorts

With its rainforest-cloaked mountains and “glorious” sugar-sand beaches, Grenada is one of the loveliest islands in the Caribbean, and yet it sees relatively few visitors, says Tim Moore in the FT. That has less to do with its isolated position (it lies in the far south of the Lesser Antilles, only 100 miles from Venezuela) than it does with the socialist revolution that gripped it in 1979. The revolution's leader, Maurice Bishop, is still held in high regard by many locals today. But he was killed by hardliners in 1983, and while the US invasion that followed ushered in “an enduring era of low-key conservative rule”, the island's “traumatic history” probably spooked investors. Only now are things changing, with the opening of several new luxury resorts around the island's coast.

The first of these, Silversands Grand Anse, opened in 2018 beside an “immaculate” two-mile beach. Its “centrepiece attraction” is a 100-metre infinity pool, the longest in the Caribbean, “flanked by willowy royal palms”. And this year,



One of Grenada's many “glorious” sugar-sand beaches

produce excellent bean-to-bar chocolate, and often welcome visitors. There is also good hiking in the island's mountains: they rise steeply to an impressive 840 metres, and are swathed in primary-growth forest. And the sailing and snorkelling along the west coast are delightful – you might charter the *Savvy*, a “merrily gaudy” wooden sloop owned by Danny Donelan of Savvy Sailing.

its owner – the Egyptian telecoms billionaire Naguib Sawiris – opened a smaller resort, Silversands Beach House, on a headland nearby. Its 28 bungalows all have sea views from their rear decks, and below them lies a “gorgeous” beach. These hotels sit on Grenada's sheltered western shore. Another, Six Senses La Sagesse, recently opened on the Atlantic-facing east coast, which is more “rugged and bracing”. It lacks a beach, but its saltwater lagoon and “large” infinity pool make up for that, and its wild setting is splendid.

The island's main town, St George's, is “winningly” ungentrified. Beyond it lie spice farms and cocoa farms that

Getting the flavour of...



Hiking in the mountains of Mallorca

A key part of my recovery from breast cancer treatment has been walking, says Anna Crane in *The Times*, and nothing has left me feeling stronger or more “intensely happy” than the hiking trip I took to Mallorca's glorious Tramuntana Mountains last May. I opted for a week-long guided group tour with the operator Exodus, which involved five “fairly easy” treks of between four and seven hours each, with nights spent at a “simple” hotel near a beach in Port de Sóller, and at the “tranquil” Santuari de Lluc, a monastery with a guesthouse. There was much to relish on each walk – the “sweeping” sea views, the “earthy” scents of pine, rosemary and juniper, the “sweet chatter of birdsong and tinkling sheep bells”. And completing the final trek, which took us up the Puig d'en Galileu (one of Mallorca's highest peaks, at 1,181 metres), left me with “an enormous sense of achievement”. *The trip costs from £1,345pp (exodustravels.com).*

A lively city in southern California

It is often overlooked by visitors to California in favour of San Francisco and Los Angeles, but the state's third city, San Diego, has seriously “cool credentials”, says Jacqui Agate in *The Sunday Times*. A “border town” at heart (it forms an international conurbation with Tijuana, in Mexico), San Diego is more “laid-back” than its northern neighbours, and rich in culture. Since Covid hit, it has seen a big influx of creative types looking for “more balanced lives”, who are drawn in part by its sunny summers and glorious coastal setting. As a result, its most charming neighbourhoods are livelier than ever – if you go, be sure to explore North Park (a “hipster” district), Barrio Logan (the city's oldest Mexican quarter) and oceanfront La Jolla. And it has some very stylish new (or recently revamped) hotels, including The Lafayette, Palihotel, and La Valencia.

Rye and its delightful surroundings

With its “wonky” half-timbered houses and old pubs, the Sussex town of Rye (pictured) is one of the loveliest in England. These days, it can get swamped by tourists, says Greg Dickinson in *The Daily Telegraph* – which is the moment to head out and explore the surrounding area. A couple of miles away sits the beautiful town of Winchelsea, with its “cathedral-like” church. Then there's Romney Marsh, just over the border in Kent, with no fewer than 14 medieval churches (of which the most “iconic” is the wooden-framed St Thomas Becket in Fairfield). And down on the coast are the huge sandy beach at Camber, and Dungeness, the largest expanse of shingle in Europe, where the late filmmaker Derek Jarman's cottage and garden are now open for pre-booked visits.

Hotel of the week



Seehotel Ambach Caldaro, Italy

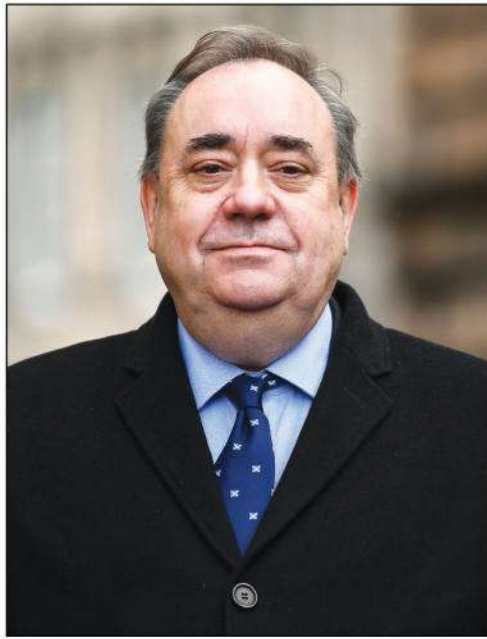
Offering “breathhtaking” views across Lake Caldaro in the Italian Alps, this family-run hotel is a “beautiful” relic from the 1970s, says Max Benato in *The Guardian*. Designed by the architect Othmar Barth, its whitewashed exterior curves like a “brutalist boomerang”, and its interiors are a parade of “the Italian design industry's greatest hits” from the era, all “channelling good-time vibes”. Walking in “really is like time travelling”, with nothing but the bathrooms altered during a recent refurbishment. There's a hectare of parkland by the lake, with a spa and pool, and Bolzano is nearby.

Doubles from €168 per person, half-board; seehotel-ambach.com.

Charismatic politician who nearly broke up the Union

Alex Salmond
1954-2024

One of the most consequential – and divisive – politicians of his generation, Alex Salmond, who has died aged 69, transformed the Scottish National Party from a fringe party into a “formidable political force”. As leader of the SNP from 1990, and later first minister, he “normalised” the cause of Scottish independence, and came within a few percentage points of breaking up the United Kingdom, said *The Guardian*. The result of the referendum in 2014, at 45% to 55%, was closer than many had predicted; but it was a loss even so, and he resigned, to be replaced by his former protégée and political partner, Nicola Sturgeon. Three years later, Salmond lost his Westminster seat too. Then allegations of sexual misconduct started to resurface and, in 2018, Sturgeon’s administration at Holyrood launched an official inquiry into allegations that he had sexually harassed two civil servants in 2013.



Salmond: hosted a chatshow on Russia Today

public eye when he went into politics. They had no children. The left-wing firebrand then spent seven years working as an economist for the Royal Bank of Scotland, “where he devised a much-prized economic index, the Royal Bank/BBC Oil Index”.

In 1987, as one of his party’s rising stars, he became MP for Banff and Buchan, a seat he held for the next 23 years. One of just three SNP MPs at that time, he made waves in 1988 when he interrupted Nigel Lawson’s Budget speech to denounce his tax cuts as an “obscenity”, and was suspended for a week. He made further headlines as a prominent critic of the poll tax (which was introduced in Scotland a year earlier than in England and Wales), and, in 1990, he succeeded Gordon Wilson as the leader of the SNP.

Seeing that the party needed to broaden its appeal, he rebranded it as centre-left, and pro-European. Then, in the late 1990s, he persuaded his party – which had previously opposed devolution – to support New Labour’s creation of a Scottish Parliament, arguing for a “gradualist” approach. In the first Scottish elections in 1999, the SNP came second to Labour, led by Donald Dewar. In 2000, Salmond stood down as SNP leader to return to Westminster, where he became a trenchant critic of Tony Blair’s foreign policy. It was often said that he was most comfortable at Westminster. But then in 2004, following a slew of poor election results, his replacement, John Swinney, resigned. At the last minute, Salmond cut a deal with Sturgeon that would see

him return as first minister with her as his number two. In 2007, the SNP beat Labour, and he became leader of a minority government. Overnight, he changed the sign on the civil service HQ from Scottish Executive to Scottish Government, said Lesley Riddoch in *The Guardian*. He removed bridge tolls, abolished tuition fees and scrapped prescription charges. And with energy reserved to Westminster, he used planning laws to veto nuclear plants and promote onshore wind farms. In 2011, despite a proportional representation system that seemed to exclude the possibility, the SNP seized an outright majority. Soon after, David Cameron agreed to the referendum. Support for independence was then hovering at about 32%.

Incensed that Sturgeon had not publicly defended him, and insisting that he would clear his name, Salmond took the SNP government to court over its handling of the case. The inquiry was ultimately deemed unlawful, owing to the fact that the official tasked with leading it had had prior contact with the complainants. By then, though, more women had come forward, and Police Scotland had become involved. In March 2020, he went on trial, said *The Daily Telegraph*. Nine women had made charges in all. Salmond’s lawyer admitted that his client was “touchy-feely”, and had had “sleepy cuddles” with a colleague. Salmond said that he wished that he had been “more careful” about people’s personal space. But he claimed that the charges were exaggerated or fabricated, and told colleagues that he was the victim of a plot to keep him out of SNP politics. The jury acquitted him of 12 charges, with the 13th (of sexual assault with intent to rape) “not proven”. But his reputation was damaged by the facts that he had not disputed, and by his barrister being overheard seeming to say that he could be regarded “as a sex pest”.

“In 1987, as one of his party’s rising stars, he became MP for Banff and Buchan, a seat he held for 23 years”

Nicola Sturgeon was criticised for misleading MSPs about what she had known about the complaints and when, but a separate inquiry found no evidence that she had engaged in a conspiracy against her former boss. He refused to give up, however: last year he launched a new malfeasance lawsuit against the government, and warned that a “day of reckoning” was coming.

Alex Salmond was born in Linlithgow, West Lothian, in 1954, and brought up in a political household: his parents, both civil servants, were working-class nationalists “with a small n”, he said. He attended the town’s academy, then read economics and history at the University of St Andrews, where he joined the SNP. He would later co-found the 79 Group, which called on the SNP to take a radical leftist approach. Contemporaries remembered him as a fierce debater, a mischief-maker, and an avid player of *Diplomacy*, said *The Scotsman* – the board game that rewards strategic thinking and ruthless cunning. After graduating, he hoped to join the BBC as a reporter. When that didn’t pan out, he went to work as an economist in the Scottish Office, said *The Times*, where he met his future wife, Moira McGlashan. Seventeen years his senior and “Conservative-leaning”, she kept out of the

Following his acquittal, Salmond set up a breakaway party, Alba, with other nationalists who objected to Sturgeon’s Green alliance and adoption of gender politics. It won just 1.7% of the vote in the 2021 Scottish election, and failed to win any seats. Yet its poll results had recently been improving; ever the optimist, Salmond had high hopes of returning as an MSP in 2026.

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

Google: going nuclear



Google is taking drastic measures to secure the future of its “energy-hungry” AI data centres, said Kate Beioley on FT.com. In a first for a tech company, it will back the construction of “six to seven small modular nuclear reactors” from Kairos Power, with the first scheduled to open in 2030. Financial terms weren’t disclosed. “The nuclear-power industry’s fortunes are increasingly getting hitched to Big Tech” and its insatiable appetite for electricity, said Jennifer Hiller in The Wall Street Journal.

Last month, Microsoft struck a deal with Constellation Energy “to restart the undamaged reactor at Pennsylvania’s Three Mile Island” – site of America’s worst nuclear accident; Amazon has also acquired a nuclear interest. But Google is the first to embrace modular reactors, seen by some as the future because they’re cheaper and faster to build than “behemoth bespoke plants”. In theory, this deal will eventually produce 500 megawatts of electricity: “enough to power a midsize city”. Still, it isn’t without risk. Kairos has so far built only “test units” without nuclear-fuel components. One firm doubtless watching with interest is Rolls-Royce, which is developing “mini-nuke” reactors in Britain, said Pui-Guan Man in The Daily Telegraph. Since Rolls is now mired in a “delayed UK tender competition”, any sign of an alternative commercial market will be very welcome.

Tesla: robo-flop

Tesla investors have been waiting since the spring for a glimpse of Elon Musk’s “highly anticipated self-driving taxi”, said Bloomberg. The Cybercab launch, held at the Warner Bros. film lot near Los Angeles, was big on glitz but “light on specifics”. Musk “glossed over” technical details, prompting Jefferies analysts to describe the vehicle, which will “probably” go into production in 2026, as “toothless”. Disappointed investors sent Tesla’s stock down by 10% – a stark contrast to the surging shares of ride-hailing rivals Lyft and Uber, which had been “nervously awaiting the Cybercab’s debut”, and were granted a reprieve. (Tesla’s humanoid robots Optimus, described by Musk as “the biggest product ever of any kind”, mingled with the crowd; hopes it would “generate investor enthusiasm” were scotched when it emerged the company had stealthily “used humans” to “remotely control” them.) On paper, Tesla’s Cybercab still holds huge promise, said Lex in the FT: “autonomous vehicles for hire” are “almost certainly the future”. Yet shareholder scepticism is justified. Google, Amazon and General Motors are also vying for robotaxi supremacy, and “Musk has a habit of being cavalier about deadlines”.

J. Sainsbury: Qatari sale

After its row with P&O’s Dubai owner, DP World, on the eve of the investment summit, the last thing the Government needed was another contretemps with wealthy Gulf investors. Sadly, Sainsbury’s supplied it, said Jennifer Creery in Fortune. Shares in the UK’s second-largest grocer took a tumble on news that its “top investor”, the Qatar Investment Authority, plans to offload \$400m worth of shares – greatly reducing an investment it has held since 2007. The move left some shareholders scratching their heads, said Ed Devlin in The Grocer. Sainsbury’s has “bounced back” after a difficult period; CEO Simon Roberts’s “food-first strategy” has seen the group take market share from rivals Asda and Morrisons. Some analysts speculated that perhaps the QIA is “selling down” on good news. But it could just as easily be fear of worse to come, said Adam Mawardi in The Daily Telegraph. “The sale comes against a backdrop of frenzied activity on the stock market as investors scramble to adjust their finances ahead of the Budget”: executives at Britain’s biggest companies have sold more than £1bn of shares since the election was called. There are certainly signs that the Qataris – who also have stakes in Barclays, Harrods and The Shard – are reassessing their UK portfolio.

Revolut: fraud concerns

These are challenging times for Britain’s challenger banks. Earlier this month, Starling was fined nearly £29m by the Financial Conduct Authority for “shockingly lax” financial sanctions screening. Now its gung-ho rival, Revolut, is under scrutiny too, said Lars Mucklejohn on City AM. A BBC *Panorama* investigation found Revolut was named in almost 10,000 police fraud reports last year – more than any other UK bank last year. It’s bad news for Revolut, which finally won a provisional banking licence this year after three years of trying, and could prove expensive. Under the Payment Systems Regulator’s new rules, banks are liable for reimbursing victims of “authorised push payment” scams (when someone is tricked into sending money to a fraudster) up to a limit of £85,000.

Seven days in the Square Mile

Official figures showed that **UK headline inflation** fell faster than expected in September, falling to 1.7% – well below the Bank of England’s 2% target. Most significantly, **services inflation** (the most important indicator of domestic inflationary pressures) plummeted to 4.9%, marking the first time it has been below 5% since May 2022. The main cause was falling airfares. The figures make it more likely that the Bank will back faster interest-rate cuts, particularly given new stats showing that wages are now growing at their slowest pace since the pandemic.

US markets hit successive new highs, buoyed by strong earnings, a rebounding tech sector and fresh confidence about a soft landing for the US economy. Shares in chip giant **Nvidia** – a proxy for confidence in the future of AI – broke a fresh record. The chipmaker’s \$3.39trn market capitalisation is now within reach of **Apple’s** market-leading \$3.5trn. Donald Trump’s crypto platform, **World Liberty Financial**, suffered a faltering launch. Just 3% of the available tokens were bought on the day.

The **oil price** fell below \$75 a barrel as concerns over a major supply disruption receded – reports suggest Israel may avoid targeting Iran’s infrastructure. Planemaker **Boeing** hoped to raise \$35bn in new funding as a strike by thousands of its workers entered its second month. It has plans to lay off around 17,000 people. **British bookmakers** became the latest victims of pre-Budget anxiety; a report that the Treasury is considering a £3bn tax raid wiped billions from the market value of its biggest players.

Spitting fury

When the gene testing company 23andMe floated three years ago, it made a paper billionaire of its co-founder Anne Wojcicki (former wife of Google’s Sergey Brin). The “once-hyped” firm, which pledged to revolutionise healthcare using its mail-in “spit kits”, has since seen its value plunge from \$5.8bn to less than \$150m, said the FT, following a damaging data breach and a spate of board resignations. Rows with investors and “growing concern over who owns its genetics data” have added to its woes. With potential buyers running scared, Wojcicki may have to draw on her personal wealth to shoulder a buyout. “The clock,” said one VC investor, “is ticking.”

Issue of the week: Labour's investment summit

The Government sought to woo investors and frame an industrial policy. Did it succeed?

"Labour governments were once famed for doing deals over beer and sandwiches," said Richard Partington in *The Guardian*. Keir Starmer's "charm offensive to win the backing of the world's most powerful bosses required a bit more". After a day of meetings at the City's grand Guildhall, hundreds of big cheeses from firms including Goldman Sachs, BlackRock and HSBC were "escorted by ceremonial military guard" to St Paul's Cathedral for an "exclusive reception" with King Charles, and serenaded by Elton John. Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds supplied the hyperbole, describing the event as "Davos in London", Starmer the soaring rhetoric, said Bloomberg. "You are pivotal to this great cause of our times," he told attendees, promising to unleash "the shock and awe" of private capital on the UK economy. What self-respecting Master of the Universe could resist?



Keir Starmer at Guildhall: "soaring rhetoric"

which may feature a change in the fiscal rules allowing the Chancellor to borrow up to £50bn more for capital spending. While many businesses will welcome increased government investment, others will be "wary of market reaction, as gilt yields drift upwards". Uncertainty is the biggest issue. Labour's manifesto said that the "fiscal rules are non-negotiable"; they look as though they are about to change. It said that national insurance would not be raised; it now looks likely that it will. Chancellor Rachel Reeves made a big play of capping corporation tax at 25% for the rest of the parliament. Will that change too?

Despite getting off to "a rocky start" – including nearly losing £1bn worth of investment from Dubai's DP World after Transport Secretary Louise Haigh described its P&O Ferries subsidiary as a "rogue operator" – the summit seemed to deliver, said Kate Andrews in *The Spectator*. No matter that much of the £63bn of foreign investment pledges touted had already been announced. There was some perplexity that the summit preceded the Budget,

At the summit, the Chancellor released a green paper outlining the UK's "new industrial strategy", said Nils Pratley in *The Guardian*. We've had ten of those since 2011. But this one actually looks bold and convincing. Reeves should be just as bold about ignoring "dogmas around debt", said Ambrose Evans-Pritchard in *The Daily Telegraph*. There's virtually no risk of "spooking the markets by borrowing to invest" – the likelihood of a global "gilt strike" is close to zero. Investors have accepted the argument of former Goldman Sachs guru Lord O'Neill that chronic underinvestment has led to a "doom loop" of stagnation and decline. Reeves has a rare opportunity to transform Britain's approach to public investment. She must grab it.

Making money: what the experts think

● Bitcoin's back

The world's most valuable cryptocurrency roared to a three-month high this week, "buoyed by hopes that the upcoming US elections will prove favourable for the crypto industry", said Anthony Cuthbertson in *The Independent*. Bitcoin was trading above \$68,000 a unit on Wednesday – more than 100% up on this time last year and just a few thousand dollars short of the \$73,000 record set in March. Trump is "positioning himself as the pro-crypto candidate", said David Ben Kay of the Ethereum Foundation: his policies include "creating a national bitcoin stockpile" and blocking the US Fed from developing a rival digital currency. But Trump's promises have also pushed the Democratic nominee, Kamala Harris, toward a more crypto-friendly stance.



The original single is worth up to £6,000

● Bigger than gold?

The latest rally puts bitcoin's market cap at around \$1.3trn, ranking it among the top ten most valuable assets in the world. That position of strength may now make it "immune" to any external politicking, according to BlackRock CEO Larry Fink. Last year, Fink "led the charge" to bring a fully fledged spot bitcoin ETF to the

market, said Billy Bambrough on *Forbes* – offering punters "exposure to crypto without having to deal with exchanges or risk self-custody". It's all "very positive", said Anthony Scaramucci of hedge fund SkyBridge Capital, who puts his bitcoin price target at \$170,000. Trump, of course, is even more bullish – predicting it could eventually eclipse gold, currently trading at around \$2,666 per ounce.

● Vinyl revival

The Oasis reunion is giving extra oomph to the vinyl revival, said Marc Shoffman in *MoneyWeek*. A copy of the band's second album (*What's the Story*) *Morning Glory?* – signed by Noel Gallagher and drummer Alan White – sold for "an impressive" £413 at auction in September. And Wessex Auction Rooms reports an increase in demand for 1990s records. As with any collectables, rarity and good condition are key factors in establishing value – so hunt down original "first pressings". Mint copies of Joy Division's *An Ideal For Living*, of which only 1,000 copies were pressed, can sell for as much as £4,700. A first pressing of the Sex Pistols' *God Save the Queen*, which was quickly withdrawn, can command up to £6,000.

Favourite ETFs

Exchange traded funds (ETFs) are useful for exposure to specific sectors or indices, says The Motley Fool. Here, "five Fools" outline their faves:

Invesco EQQQ Nasdaq 100 This fund, with 25% invested in Apple, Microsoft and Nvidia, offers a simple, low-cost way to own the largest growth shares, says Harshil Patel. Nasdaq can be volatile; but over the past decade, the fund has gained "a whopping 460%".

iShares Core EURO STOXX 50 EUR This cross-sector fund tracks 50 of the eurozone's largest stocks. It's "a region with plenty of uncertainty, but just as much quality too", says Gordon Best. One for fans of undervalued markets.

iShares Edge MSCI World Quality Factor ETF Tracks an index of global stocks "with strong and stable earnings", says Paul Summers, returning almost 80% in five years. Features pharma giant Novo Nordisk and "the usual tech suspects".

L&G Cyber Security UCITS ETF If you agree with Warren Buffett that AI-enabled scamming will be "the growth industry of all time", try this ETF, which holds "a basket of cybersecurity giants", says Ben McPoland.

VanEck Semiconductor ETF Invests in the 25 largest US-listed chip companies, ensuring you "spread risk" and hedge your bets in a challenging industry, says James Fox. Up 46% over a year. Recent falls "create an interesting entry point".

Has the Fed turned too dovish?

Katie Martin

Financial Times

Was the US Federal Reserve premature in declaring the war on inflation over? Wobbles in the bond market suggest investors think that it might have “turned too dovish too soon”, says Katie Martin. Prices have been sliding ever since chairman Jay Powell delivered “a supersized interest rate cut” in mid-September, and a strong hint of more to come. Yields on benchmark ten-year US treasuries (the flipside of falling prices) are back above 4%, That matters in a market “which underpins every other asset class on the planet”. Critics argue that by cutting rates, despite strong economic growth, the Fed now risks overstimulating demand – particularly as “China is no longer the great global disinflationary force it once was”. At a certain point, investors may balk at all the extra debt and the persistent threat of inflation. The upcoming UK Budget is “the first big test”. If America ends up with “an inflationary Republican sweep on top of an already hot-ish economy”, expect that argument to grow louder. “It is now largely in the hands of politicians whether this bond market wobble turns into something more serious.”

The markets betting on a Trump win

DealBook

The New York Times

Polls show the US presidential contest as neck and neck, says DealBook. “But a popular new way of tracking the race – and betting on it – is telling a different story.” Prediction markets, which allow punters to trade contracts on the outcome of world events, show Donald Trump with a big lead over Kamala Harris. Kalshi, which recently won court approval to allow betting on US elections for the first time, has the odds of Trump winning at 55%, versus 45% for Harris. Rivals Polymarket and PredictIt are showing a similar gap. Wall Street proponents of prediction markets claim they’re “better forecasters” than polls because they pick up faster on breaking news and debates, though this is questionable. Sceptics, pointing to a number of recent big pro-Trump bets, “wonder if someone has been trying to move these markets”. Some suggest that Elon Musk might have encouraged Trump’s supporters “to jump in” when he posted about his lead in prediction markets earlier this month. At any rate, there’s much “more than bragging rights” at stake here. Some \$1.9bn has so far been wagered on the presidential race on Polymarket alone.

A case of good Cop, bad Cop

Jim Armitage

The Sunday Times

After a golden period for green investment, the cost-of-living crisis, war in Ukraine and a surge in populist politics have left the sector flagging, says Jim Armitage. The Cop29 conference, which opens in Baku next month, is “symbolic of the apathy”. While last year’s event in Dubai attracted some 70,000 attendees, only 40,000 or 50,000 are heading to Azerbaijan; and corporate attendance looks “diminished”. JPMorgan, Lloyds, Bank of America and Standard Chartered are “among the financial powerhouses declining to send their top brass”. At the same time, some green stocks are being hit hard. The Investment Association reports the UK public pulled a net £343m out of “responsible and sustainable” funds in August. On the other side of the ledger, the amount of money going into green projects is still rising, hitting a record \$1.8trn last year. And if Cop29 is smaller and more “meaningful” than Cop28, so much the better, says one organiser. Maybe we place too much emphasis on bums on seats. It’s supposed to be about advancing efforts to lower CO₂ emissions, after all, not a “corporate bunfight”.

Cultivated meat: a “grotesque misadventure”

Andrew Orlowski

The Daily Telegraph

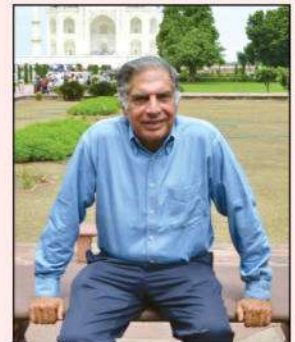
Great news for foodies, says Andrew Orlowski: “the alternative proteins bubble has burst”. Since the first “lab-grown burger” was unveiled more than a decade ago, billions of pounds have been thrown at the technology. Wealthy backers, including Bill Gates and Richard Branson, piled in to the “cultivated meat” market (a euphemism for “extracting cells derived from animal foetuses” and then cultivating them in “bioreactors”). We were told it would “transform how we eat and farm”, but even industry figures are admitting the game is all but up. Lab-grown meat is proving to be a “grotesque misadventure”. “The economics were always stacked against meat bioreactors”, which involve intensive, expensive nutrients and long timescales. But the real reason the experiment has failed is not so much economics as lack of demand – in the form of public disgust. “Our attitudes to food have been shaped by psychology, culture, family and tradition. Only weirdos are impressed by cells from a bioreactor.” The answer to humane meat is better farming, “not Silicon Valley Frankenfood”.

City profiles

Poppy Gustafsson

“Labour used to claim Rishi Sunak was a wannabe tech bro,” said Jamie Nimmo on Bloomberg. Now they’ve hired a tech leader of their own, former Darktrace CEO Poppy Gustafsson, as the new investment minister. Gustafsson, 42, is certainly on message: “I have always been drawn to growth,” she writes in *The Guardian*. “I’ve taken a company public... faced down short-seller attacks” and made deals “with leading US private equity firms”. A protégée of the late Mike Lynch at Autonomy, Gustafsson sold Darktrace, an AI-based cybersecurity specialist, to Thoma Bravo for \$5.3bn this year, “pocketing a lifetime of financial security”, said *The Times*. The Government wants to help mature startups (or “scale-ups”) to keep growing rather than selling up, as Darktrace did.

Ratan Tata



The death of India’s most celebrated industrialist, aged 86, has cast the country into mourning. But Tata, who parleyed his family conglomerate into a global empire, also made his mark on Britain, said *The Daily Telegraph*. Starting with the acquisition of Tetley Tea in 2000, the group became “one of the biggest foreign investors in the UK” – losing “a fortune” on British steel, but transforming Jaguar Land Rover into the country’s biggest carmaker. Noted for his “philanthropic generosity and courtly manners”, Tata was born into an “illustrious Parsee family, descended from Zoroastrian priests”. A shy, rather solitary figure, he lived in a “modest book-filled seafront home” and drove a small Tata car. “His best friends were, by his own admission, his dogs.” The company’s Mumbai HQ had “a special kennel” for strays.

Who's tipping what

The week's best shares

Bellevue Healthcare Trust*The Daily Telegraph*

This trust invests in the "dynamic" US healthcare market – focusing on therapeutics and diagnostics firms, and next-gen weight-loss meds. The sector has been shunned, but sentiment should improve. Buy. 147p.

Diageo*The Daily Telegraph*

Weak operating conditions have hit the Smirnoff, Johnnie Walker and Guinness owner – but its brands command customer loyalty. Rate cuts and lower inflation should catalyse demand and boost profits. Yields 3.1%. Buy. £25.43.

Good Energy Group*The Mail on Sunday*

This green-energy firm's broad mix of ops includes sourcing solar energy from small-scale suppliers – from farmers to factories – and installing heat pumps and storage batteries in homes and businesses. Growing fast, and profitable. Buy. 264p.

Pearson*The Times*

The textbook publisher, which majors on tests, qualifications and virtual learning, is focusing on AI to penetrate the huge global education market. It has cut costs, and margins are improving. A big growth opportunity. Buy. £10.21.

Publicis Groupe*The Daily Telegraph*

The French ad giant has adapted to a changing market by buying firms that specialise in individualised consumer profiling, data and analytics, and influencer marketing. Gaining market share and beating forecasts. Buy. €97.46.

Sage Group*The Daily Telegraph*

Sage provides payroll, finance and accounting technology to businesses. "Sound", with solid finances for M&A and an "excellent" competitive position. Should benefit from an improving economic environment. Buy. £10.03.

Directors' dealings

M&C Saatchi

After a turbulent period, the ad group has been "finding its feet" – organic sales are up; it's making "headway" on costs. New directors seem confident: CEO Zaid Al-Qassab and CFO Simon Fuller have boosted their holdings by £99,988 and £64,986 respectively.

SOURCE: INVESTORS' CHRONICLE

...and some to hold, avoid or sell

Baillie Gifford US Growth Trust*The Times*

This tech-stock-focused fund owns "some of the most exciting" names on the market: including Nvidia and Amazon. Exposure to unquoted firms looks risky, and returns have disappointed, but the discount is narrowing. Hold. 211.5p.

British Land Company*The Daily Telegraph*

Investors remain wary of commercial property – meaning this Reit trades at a discount to net asset value. Has recently bought seven high-occupancy, earnings-accretive retail parks. Yields 5.4%. Hold. 423p.

Card Factory*The Times*

The greetings card retailer has 1,000-plus shops and trades via a website and app. Strong margins built from mass-production have been eroded by high labour costs. But still cash-generative while adjusting to higher costs. Hold. 95.6p.

Flutter Entertainment*The Times*

Relaxed US sports betting laws have fuelled soaring revenues for the betting behemoth – an industry leader in a "highly competitive" sector. Strong UK growth could be hit by a tax raid in the Budget. Not cheap. Hold. £180.25.

Harworth Group*The Mail on Sunday*

The regeneration specialist navigates complex planning systems to turn former industrial sites into homes, shops, restaurants, schools and business hubs. Fast progress has rocketed profits. Hold. 185p.

J.D. Wetherspoon*Investors' Chronicle*

The market-leading pub chain has announced its first dividend in five years after site disposals and strong sales. Debt is down £150m against the pre-pandemic position. Potential to up its pubs from 800 to 1,000. Hold. 723p.

Form guide

Shares tipped 12 weeks ago

Best tip

Endeavour Mining
Investors' Chronicle
down 0.67% to £17.85

Worst tip

Bango
Investors' Chronicle
down 29.31% to 102.5p

Market view

"It would seem that investors' initial enthusiasm for the potential stability of a new government has waned."
Victoria Hasler, Hargreaves Lansdown, on the 11% drop in HL's investor confidence index. Quoted on City AM

Market summary

Key numbers for investors

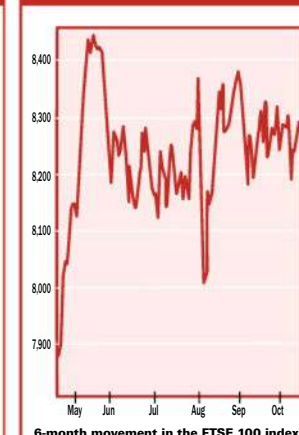
	15 Oct 2024	Week before	Change (%)
FTSE 100	8249.28	8190.61	0.72%
FTSE All-share UK	4509.11	4477.04	0.72%
Dow Jones	42901.99	42026.05	2.08%
NASDAQ	18321.12	18154.43	0.92%
Nikkei 225	39910.55	38937.54	2.50%
Hang Seng	20318.79	20926.79	-2.91%
Gold	2654.90	2640.95	0.53%
Brent Crude Oil	73.47	77.36	-5.03%
DIVIDEND YIELD (FTSE 100)	3.56%	3.59%	
UK 10-year gilts yield	4.23	4.26	
US 10-year Treasuries	4.03	4.02	
UK ECONOMIC DATA			
Latest CPI (yoy)	1.7% (Sep)	2.2% (Aug)	
Latest RPI (yoy)	2.7% (Sep)	3.5% (Aug)	
Halifax house price (yoy)	4.7% (Sep)	4.3% (Aug)	
£1 STERLING:	\$1.299 €1.194 ¥193.847		Bitcoin \$66,560.00

Best and worst performing shares

WEEK'S CHANGE, FTSE 100 STOCKS		
RISES	Price	% change
Beazley	802.00	+8.50
United Utilities	1072.00	+6.60
Fresnillo	654.50	+5.70
Int. Consol. Airlines	206.90	+5.60
Centrica	122.65	+5.50
FALLS		
Entain	681.00	-10.70
Croda Int	3816.00	-8.30
Sainsbury (J)	277.20	-5.00
Antofagasta	1796.50	-4.80
Spirax	6665.00	-4.00
FTSE 250 RISER & FALLER		
Ti Fluid Systems	181.60	+18.50
Dowlais Group	50.65	-7.80

Source: FT (not adjusted for dividends). Prices on 15 Oct (pm)

Following the Footsie



6-month movement in the FTSE 100 index



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**CAPITAL
GROUP™**

The beach in Ghana where the UK's old clothes end up

There are enough garments in the world to dress the next six generations. Yet the amount of clothing being produced is soaring – and poisoning poorer countries, writes Fleur Britten

This is how the conversation always goes whenever my 12-year-old daughter, Evie, asks me to buy fast fashion for her. “Please, please, *please* can I have this?” she’ll say (it’s usually from Shein). Sorry but no, I’ll reply – I’m sure we can find an alternative on Vinted. “One person buying something new won’t make any difference,” she argues. “And besides, it’s so cheap!” There is sulking (her), tutting (me), and dissatisfaction all round. As a fashion writer focused on sustainability (or lack thereof), I find that my daughter’s pestering grates, yet I sympathise – what tween doesn’t want to fit in? And my role-modelling of wearing the same old clothes to death probably has the opposite effect on her.

So I explain to Evie why buying new fast fashion is a problem.

That it’s exactly because these clothes are so cheap that people buy them without restraint, and then we’re left with too many poorly made, often plastic, clothes in the world – enough to dress the next six generations, according to the British Fashion Council, as I love to tell her. I understand that my reasoning sounds too abstract. But this summer, while visiting friends in Ghana, we found a place – Jamestown beach in downtown Accra – that finally brought my point to life and gave us all pause for thought. Ghana is one of the world’s largest importers of secondhand clothing from the Global North, with 15 million garments arriving every week, according to The Or Foundation. This Accra-based non-profit was founded by the American fashion-stylist-turned-activist Liz Ricketts and her partner, Branson Skinner, in order to tackle fashion’s waste problem, of which a disproportionate amount ends up on Ghana’s shores – quite literally.

First though, the garments head to Kantamanto market, a sprawling, 18-acre covered site, a mile from Jamestown beach. As one of the world’s largest secondhand markets, it sells what the locals call “*obroni wawu*”, or dead white man’s clothes, the implication being that someone must have died to offload so much stuff. Forty per cent of what comes in is deemed unsaleable and leaves the market as trash. But Accra doesn’t have the waste infrastructure to cope with it, so it’s mostly dumped in gutters and unauthorised tips, much of it ending up at a textile mountain next to an informal settlement two miles away, by Korle Lagoon, from where it flows into the Atlantic and onto Accra’s shores.

Shein, the Chinese company which is now the world’s largest fashion retailer, had donated \$15m to The Or as part



Clothing waste pollution on the Accra coast

“You could barely see the sand for metre-high mounds of degraded clothes and plastic bags, while the waves continually washed up more”

This took us to Jamestown one hot, muggy day this July. The Or team had warned us to wear clothes and shoes that we didn’t mind getting dirty, but none of us were prepared for the fashion graveyard that awaited us. You could barely see the sand for the metre-high mounds of degraded clothes and shredded plastic bags, while the waves continually washed up more. I’d naively packed our swimming costumes, but swimming was not an option.

Evie was shocked and upset – trips to the seaside aren’t supposed to look like this. I took her arm in mine and gently led her towards The Or’s 60-strong team wearing hi-vis vests and gloves. The taskforce, a mixture of volunteers and paid helpers mostly from local communities affected by the waste, was divided by gender. Evie’s nine-year-old brother, Zac, got stuck in with the men filling sack after reusable sack with clothing waste and plastic rubbish, which were then carried up the cliff to an awaiting lorry. Evie and I were asked to help the data collectors, an all-female team equipped with clipboards and scissors, to remove whatever legible clothing tags we could find. These labels would then be added to The Or’s database, providing the evidence with which to ask fashion brands to pay their dues.

Evie and I started collecting garments, and she quickly saw she could be helpful. “This one’s Tu – it’s from a British supermarket,” she told the data leader. We also found clothes by Next, Primark, Pretty Little Thing, Marks & Spencer, Adidas and Nike, even a Paul Smith raincoat in perfect condition. But mostly the clothes were disintegrated, discoloured and torn, their seams bloated with sand; often even the labels had eroded. As we tried to disinter

of its “extended producer responsibility” (EPR), a strategy for holding companies accountable for the end-of-life impact of their products. While in Accra, I wanted to meet Ricketts, 37, and she agreed to show me around the market. As we picked our way through the labyrinth of clothing stalls, Ricketts, dressed in a locally upcycled shirt, explained that the Shein fund has enabled The Or Foundation to increase its staff from six to more than 50. It now has teams addressing everything from improving the market’s safety standards, to upskilling local workers, to political advocacy, to recycling and repurposing (to date, it has diverted more than 40 tonnes of textiles from landfill). Not to mention pressuring other fashion brands to commit to their EPR and organising weekly beach clean-ups. I asked if we could volunteer too.

the garments, some would rip in our hands, weighed down with sand and knotted to a network of deeply buried clothing – “textile tentacles” – often metres long. We also found many single trainers, flip-flops and cow horns and hooves. We even found Nemo (well, a polyester version).

Marine life is badly affected. According to Solomon Noi, Accra’s head of waste management, the volume of textile waste makes it “very difficult for the native turtles to deposit their eggs – if we can’t find a solution, this species will go extinct”. Meanwhile, the local fishers struggle to make a living. Using motorised canoes, they can only travel about three nautical miles into the sea. “Unfortunately, that is where the textile waste is,” he says. “The fishermen harvest a lot of plastics and polyesters.” The clothing waste on the shores and in shallow waters is just “the tip of the iceberg”, Noi adds. “The heavy stuff – jackets, jeans, bags, shoes, belts – sinks to the bottom of the ocean, impacting aquatic life and damaging the ocean floor.” He predicts this will become “a whole-world problem” in the case of a tsunami or typhoon, when “the waste will flow to the Mediterranean”.

It’s hard not to feel guilty coming to Ghana as a British citizen. Every local guide will tell you how, historically, we waged war to ensure UK rule, seized its land, exploited its resources, looted its treasures, forced its people into slavery. And now, according to The Or, the UK, as the largest exporter of used clothes to Ghana, is the biggest culprit of “waste colonialism”, where wealthier countries export waste to poorer countries that are ill-equipped to handle the burden. “There’s a colonial legacy for all the trade routes,” Ricketts explains. “Secondhand clothing started coming here from the UK under colonialism, because people were required to wear Western-style clothes to enter certain buildings, get certain jobs, or even to go to school.”

And now our fast fashion discards have crowded out the local market. “When Kantamanto started in the 1950s,” says Ricketts, “it was a blend of secondhand and locally made products. Now it’s been taken over by foreign products. It’s the legacy of 25 years of unregulated fast fashion, and that’s all that is being donated to charity shops in the Global North.”

Over the course of four intense, sweaty hours, 20 tonnes of trash were collected from the beach and driven to a “sanctioned dumpsite” about 50km inland. “There is no engineered landfill available,” says Ricketts. “But it’s better than having it burnt out in the open.” As we left the beach, you could now see the impact we’d had – a patch of bare, dirty sand about the size of a volleyball court. Ricketts tells me that, during the rainy season, this would most likely be covered again with market waste within a week, because the rain pushes it out of the lagoon. It’s why The Or runs a market-wide waste-collection and haulage programme, collecting hundreds of tonnes of textile waste, thus preventing it from entering the environment.

Our tag count came to 561, with the most frequent brands being Adidas, Nike, M&S, Next and Primark. To date, The Or states it has found more Marks & Spencer items than any other brand. “We’d really like to see Marks & Spencer take responsibility,” says Ricketts. The Or has approached the company and other big fashion brands to help countries such as Ghana manage the waste caused by Global North imports, as part of their EPR. “Most brands don’t yet see it as their responsibility,” she says. A spokesperson for Marks & Spencer told me: “As the UK’s largest clothing retailer, we take our responsibility to provide end-of-life options for our clothes seriously and offer our



Labels are documented as evidence

customers options to repair, resell or recycle their garments, including in-store take-back schemes for clothing and beauty products.” They added that it ensures any unsold stock is redistributed to its charity partners, including Oxfam.

Various UK brands proclaim that they don’t send used clothing to Africa, but in any case, The Or doesn’t believe that banning secondhand imports is the solution. Kantamanto market supports about 30,000 workers, many of whom are already part of the circular fashion solution, repurposing or revamping our castoffs so that they’ll sell. Nor does it blame UK charity shops. “They’re not the problem,” says Ricketts.

“They’re just getting the clothing that people donate.” However, there is more the charity shops could do to be “part of the solution”, she says, adding that they could help to calculate the true cost of cleaning, repairing, reselling and upcycling garments in the UK and Ghana, in order to push for EPR fees “that are high enough to do the job”.

The root issue here, says Noi, is “overproduction of fast fashion in the Global North – brands must ensure their production capacity is reduced”. That’s why The Or is revisiting its Speak Volumes campaign, asking the top 20 brands found in Ghana’s waste stream – among them Marks & Spencer, Nike, Adidas, Primark, George, F&F, H&M, Boohoo and Tu – to publish how many garments they produce each year. The Or’s campaign launched last year, but to date, only Adidas has complied (though plenty of smaller, more conscious brands have).

“We found clothes from Tu, Next, Primark, Pretty Little Thing, Marks & Spencer and Nike; even a Paul Smith raincoat in perfect condition”

“I think they’re afraid because they know it’s the most honest data point,” says Ricketts. “I mean, it’s not complicated – we’re not asking them to calculate their carbon footprint.

It’s a piece of information that everyone has.” Zara already publishes its volume by weight, but, says Ricketts, this “abstract” measure “doesn’t help us get a real picture”. Responding to these claims, Sophie De Salis, sustainability policy adviser at the British Retail Consortium, said: “Retailers take their responsibility to tackle textile waste very seriously, and are investing millions to divert used clothing away from landfill, through take-back schemes, resale marketplaces and donating excess stock to charity.” Of course, the problem here is capitalism’s growth imperative. Last year, Greenpeace reported that the total number of garments produced is expected to rise to 200 billion by 2030, from an estimated 100 billion in 2014. Personally, I no longer view mainstream fashion as an art form, just a cynical vehicle for profit.

So how can we all do our part? Well, for starters, refuse that single-use T-shirt. “The hen night shirt, the 5k run shirt, the conference shirt,” says Ricketts, is “the No. 1 culprit in our research, with no meaning to a secondhand wearer.” We also need to change our relationship with consumption, she says, “embracing secondhand and upcycled garments instead of always buying new”.

The good news is that the beach clean did make Evie “think a lot”. “Maybe I shouldn’t buy stuff from Shein,” she tells me back home. “And it did make me think about overconsumption generally.” I don’t doubt that she’ll ask for new clothing again, but I’m hopeful that she sees that being part of the solution is better than being part of the problem, now she knows what a terrible problem it is.

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THE WEEK CROSSWORD 1436

Two Connell Guides and three Week-branded items will be given to the sender of the first correct solution to the crossword and the clue of the week opened on Monday 28 October. Send it to The Week Crossword 1436, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR, or email the completed grid/listed solutions to crossword@theweek.co.uk. **Tim Moorey (timmoorey.com)**



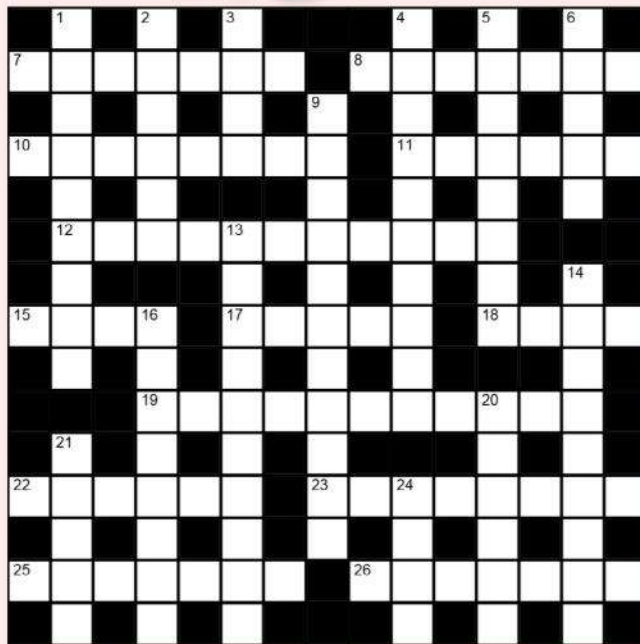
This week's winner will receive Week-branded items including a notebook, coffee mug and tote bag, as well as two Connell Guides (connellguides.com).

ACROSS

- 7 Fall back asleep surprisingly after run (7)
- 8 Leave sailor to reverse a difficult situation (7)
- 10 Simplest works put down in error (8)
- 11 One refuses to admit some yarn? (6)
- 12 For this embarrassing situation Grannie flat's preposterous! (2,9)
- 15 Awful housing left bare (4)
- 17 A tart recalled in US city (5)
- 18 Son in the end underwent school tests (4)
- 19 Stadium chief is a weed (6,5)
- 22 Turn against one splitting party from the beginning (2,4)
- 23 Lethargic needing an inventory? (8)
- 25 Person who may assist better parking on street after row outside (7)
- 26 Nice boats making cricketer duck so to speak (7)

DOWN

- 1 Making the King late, detectives in one large convertible (9)
- 2 Central partner in France with service provided (6)
- 3 An inch of chamois leather (4)
- 4 It's often unused after the match (6,4)
- 5 Old Bob messes about with difficult tasks (8)
- 6 French composer's journey not started (5)
- 9 Moll left inside alone with alarm (11)
- 13 Sort of moonstarer? (10)
- 14 Use raptor wrongly as an extinct reptile (9)
- 16 Place of disgrace for your setter (8)
- 20 Leeds very shortly to arrange digs (6)
- 21 Fabric extracted from the south (5)
- 24 One not striking in banking service gets rise (4)



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

Clue of the week: What held up fleet heading for Troy? (6,3 first letters A&S) *The Times*

Solution to Crossword 1434

ACROSS: 1 Drachm 4 Pam Ayres 10 Mount 11 Eyebright 12 Caballero 13 Norma 14 Availed 16 Demobs 19 Hewing 21 Jacksup 23 Attic 25 Major Domo 27 Hobgoblin 28 Saint 29 Leathery 30 Bengal
DOWN: 1 Democrat 2 Adumbrate 3 Hotel 5 Adenoid 6 Agronomic 7 Roger 8 Sat-Nav 9 Legend 15 Loincloth 17 Bestowing 18 Uprootal 20 Gambler 21 Jejune 22 Warhol 24 Tabla 26 Rosie

Clue of the week: Musician who may require a grand opening? (7)
Solution: PIANIST

The winner of 1434 is Rob Peel from York

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

Sudoku 978 (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 977

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

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Charity of the week

Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation is the leading UK lung cancer charity dedicated to helping everyone affected by the disease: from diagnosis, through treatment, living with the disease and end-of-life care. Since 1990, we have funded millions of pounds of essential lung cancer research. We raise awareness, prevent future generations from getting it, and challenge the misconceptions of lung cancer. Our ongoing commitment and innovation in this field have now paved the way for significant investment from NHS England to fund targeted lung-health checks – an early-intervention project designed to detect lung cancer before symptoms even appear. **Please visit roycastle.org to find out more.**

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