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Partner selected for Church Street regeneration

Westminster City Council has confirmed Mount Anvil as the preferred joint venture partner at a meeting, kick-starting the borough's largest regeneration scheme. The partnership will deliver more than 400 new homes, near Edgware Road on Site A, transforming the area with a new library and library garden, high quality public realm and improved market infrastructure.

Mount Anvil has committed £1 million from day one of the partnership to ensure lasting legacy through employment and skills initiatives, as well as wider social value opportunities. The developer has also outlined its ambitions to deliver more council homes for social rent than are currently detailed in the planning consent, without increasing the height of the blocks.

Church Street residents have taken an active part in ongoing engagement and the assessment of bids.

Significant investment will be made to Church Street's historic market, library, retail, and commercial spaces, providing an opportunity for Church Street to meet the needs of all residents today and in the future.

Mount Anvil, has also shared its own targets to reduce 2,500 tonnes of CO2 equivalent from the scheme through material and construction efficiencies, while also delivering biodiversity net gain in the area.

Planning for the three sites was awarded in June 2023, following 73% of residents voting in favour of the proposals in a residents' ballot.

Two new bookable parking bays are to be launched in Westminster to enable electric freight vehicles to pre-book loading in advance for up to 90 minutes. The scheme is in collaboration between Westminster City Council and Grid Smarter Cities, which provides the booking platform, including a driver app.

The bookable bays are on Abbey Orchard Street and Russell Street near the bustling shopping and business districts of Victoria Street and Covent Garden. This is a first for the capital and will allow electric LGV and HGV drivers to pre-book loading and unloading space in advance for 90 minutes with a goal of "greener, smarter deliveries for EV fleets" in the borough.

This "innovative" scheme has many

potential positive impacts from reduced freight congestion and emissions to improved road safety. The bays are bookable 24 hours per day and the scheme is set to run for an initial 18-month period.

The key aims, Westminster City Council says, are to improve the access and dwell times of freight operators in the area and reduce congestion. The booking platform enables a more streamlined approach to freight deliveries by providing surety of space in advance for delivery drivers. A pre-booked slot leads to reductions in idling and search time from freight vehicles and a more efficient delivery process. The ability to book longer delivery slots ranging from 30, 60, 90 minutes will also encourage more onward deliveries by greener modes, such as by foot or cargo bike.



London's First EV bookable loading bay scheme launched in Westminster



Civic Leadership Programme launched to improve representation in local politics

Operation Black Vote and Westminster City Council launched their civic leadership programme as 32 future leaders began their journey of exploration into civic life. The evening was an opportunity for the new cohort and senior leaders from the council to come together with key stakeholders from Operation Black Vote and celebrate the positive steps participants have already made in terms of moving into a more active civic life.

There was a chance to hear directly from global majority individuals who have seen success in local government as well as to connect participants with local leaders who have positively impacted their respective areas.

The aim of the programme is to

encourage individuals from global majority communities to engage with decision making in their local area. In doing so, the future leader's cohort can work on matters important to them such as education, health, and employment and politics on a local or national level.

After graduating from the scheme, future leaders will have the knowledge and networking skills to be more active within their chosen area of public life and for some, put themselves forward for elected or public office. Westminster City Council, is leading the way for other local authorities, who serve diverse communities by increasing resident involvement and decision making by being more transparent and delivering on fairer Westminster objectives.

N News

Mayor launches UK's first targeted air quality alert for healthcare professionals

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has written to all London GP practices and NHS emergency departments announcing plans to improve the way that healthcare professionals are informed about incidents of poor air quality in the capital.

Developed by the Mayor, NHS England and other partners, new alerts will directly notify clinicians in GP practices and emergency departments across the capital via email about high and very high pollution episodes. This is the first healthcare air pollution alert of its kind in the UK. It hopes to help recipients increase their patients' awareness about the health impacts of air pollution and better support those at greater risk, such as adults and children with heart or lung problems.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared that air pollution is the single biggest environmental threat to human health. It impairs children's lung growth, increases the risk of lung cancer, heart and

lung disease, and causes premature death. Short-term exposure to high levels of pollution can trigger or worsen people's asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) symptoms. In London, asthma is one of the top three causes of emergency admission to hospital each year for children, underlining the need to better support health professionals in communicating the adverse effects of air pollution to patients.

The new alert has been informed by the best available evidence and extensive engagement with a broad range of stakeholders and experts, including academics, clinical networks, third sector partners, behavioural scientists, ethicists, and clinicians. The alert provides information for health care professionals to use with patients, including on inhaler use and physical activity during high pollution episodes as well as advice on the steps individuals can take to reduce their contribution to air pollution.



Hundreds of musicians audition to busk on the Tube

Stations across the TfL network have 'come alive' with the sounds of music as auditions for a new cohort of buskers are underway after applications opened in late 2023 for the first time after the pandemic.

Around 280 talented musicians performed to a panel of judges at Bank, Blackfriars, Canary Wharf, Farringdon, and Southwark stations, shortlisted from more than 450 applicants. Musicians from all genres were encouraged to apply in the autumn to reflect the cultural diversity of London. Each prospective busker has a 10-minute slot to convince a panel, which includes a professional musician and station staff. The audition will assess each

musician's repertoire, musical ability, and performance styles.

Around 30 musicians were put through their paces each day. The process is managed by TfL with support from Found in Music, which runs Busk in London, a programme supported by the Mayor of London. The newly selected musicians will join more than 200 existing buskers later in the spring and play at more than 40 pitches on the Tube, Overground and Elizabeth line networks, including two pitches that opened at Bond Street station last year.

TfL's Licensed Busking Scheme has been running for more than 20 years, with auditions opening to new musicians every few years.



City of London Guildhall becomes Safe Haven for women and girls

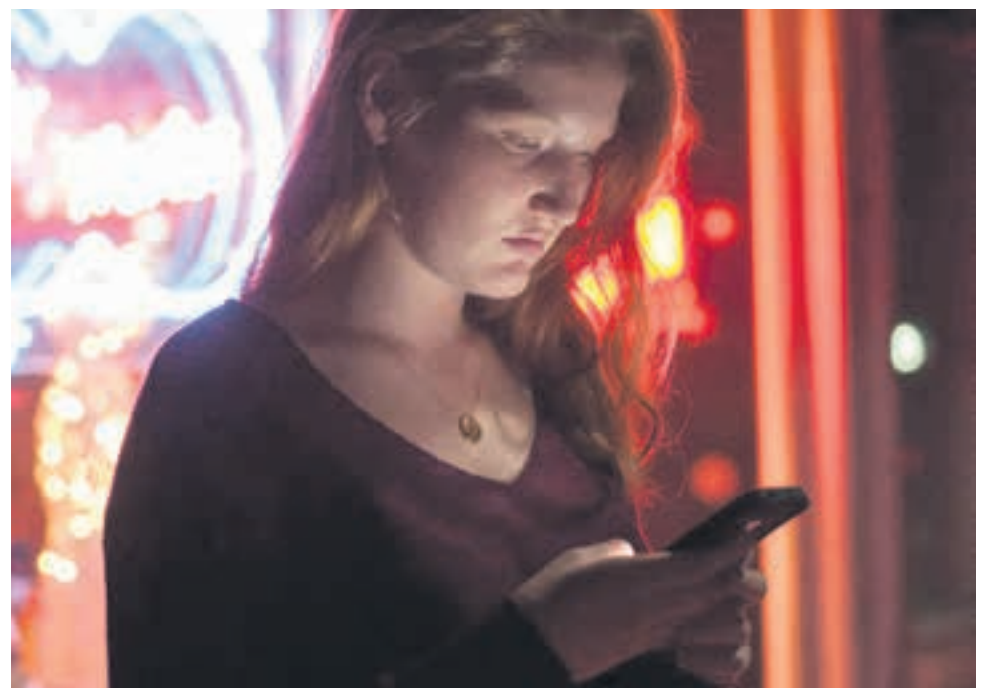
The City of London Corporation's, Guildhall headquarters, has been designated a 'Safe Haven' for women and girls in the Square Mile. Safe Havens are a UK network of businesses and other organisations who help any member of the public who feels unsafe, harassed, or in a vulnerable situation.

Trained staff support people by contacting emergency or specialist services on their behalf, and providing water, Wi-Fi, telephones, toilets, and other facilities. The City Corporation's Safer City Partnership, has worked with the Safer Business Network, which helps businesses tackle crime, violence, and antisocial behaviour

in UK cities and towns, to achieve the accreditation.

City Corporation staff at Guildhall have undergone specialist training and the building will be signposted to the public with door and window stickers at the venue. A list of 'Safe Havens' in the Square Mile can be found on the City Corporation's website and on the Safe Havens app for Apple and Android phones.

They will be able to help people by providing a friendly face and reassurance, can call the police, family, or friends, or simply give directions or public transport information.



Five areas bid to be next Scottish national park

Five areas are bidding to be the next national park in Scotland. The Scottish Borders, Galloway, Lochaber, Loch Awe and Tay Forest have all placed bids before the deadline. The Scottish government pledged to create at least one more by the end of this parliamentary session in 2026.

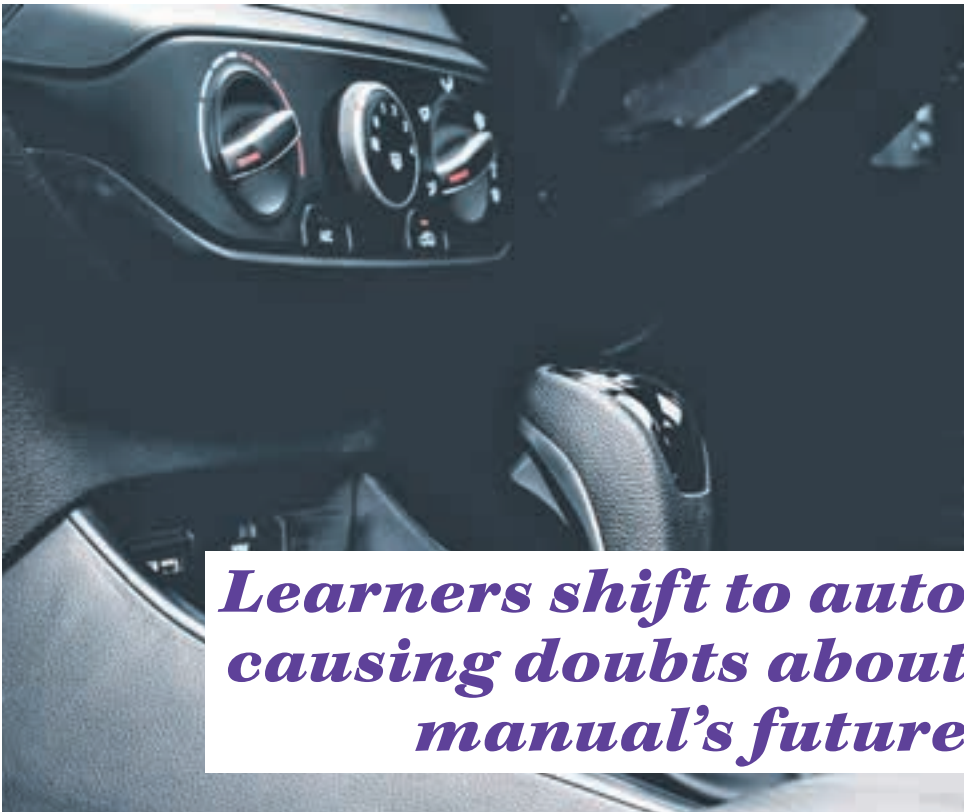
Multiple areas had already decided not to move their proposals forward after community consultation. Scotland is currently home to two national parks, the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, but it has been over two decades since a new one was created.

A power-sharing deal between the SNP and Scottish Greens agreed that “at least one” would be designated by the end of the

current parliamentary session. The nomination process opened in October 2023 with the window to submit applications closing at midnight on, 29th February.

The five remaining bids will be appraised before a detailed investigation is carried out by NatureScot and legislation is introduced to create the new park. The full list of contenders has been announced by the Scottish government. They are at the Tay Forest, Loch Awe, Lochaber, Galloway and the Borders.

These proposals will be appraised by Scotland’s government against its published criteria and a further consultation will be held once a preferred site or sites is identified. This is expected to be in the summer.



Learners shift to auto causing doubts about manual’s future

Over the past decade, driving tests in automatic cars have increased by 238%, with last year seeing a record high of over 325,000 tests, according to the DVLA. Around a fifth of tests are taken in automatics but with auto cars making up 71% of all registrations last year, there seems to be a trend away from manuals.

Experts believe this trend is down to young people seeing little need to learn in a manual, which can be more difficult and expensive. The average cost for a driving lesson is between £25 and £30 per hour, and can be as much as £45 in London according to the RAC. It takes an average of 45 hours of lessons to pass the test, amounting to over £2,000.

The popularity of autos is also thought

to be due to car makers’ and engineering trends and an increased demand for electric cars, which lack a traditional gearbox. More instructors are also making the shift, with the AA saying that two in five people trained to be an instructor in an auto rather than a manual car.

Despite it being easier, pass rates for autos are lower than manuals with 43% of tests taken in an automatic resulting in a pass compared to 50% of manuals. It seems that while learning to drive may be quicker and easier with an auto, insurance costs may be higher due to the more complex parts, which cost more to repair. However, with modern technology, automatics may offer better fuel economy, saving money for drivers.

Rare Jungle Book watercolour to go on display

A rare watercolour painting from The Jungle Book will go on display at the author’s family home, 130 years after the story was first published. Bateman’s in Burwash, East Sussex, was a sanctuary for renowned author, Rudyard Kipling. The National Trust has since acquired one of the stunning watercolour paintings, which originally brought the tale to life and have put it on display in the 17th century house.

The Return of the Buffalo Herd, dated 1901, is one of only four illustrations known to have survived among the original set of 16 painted by the Detmold brothers.

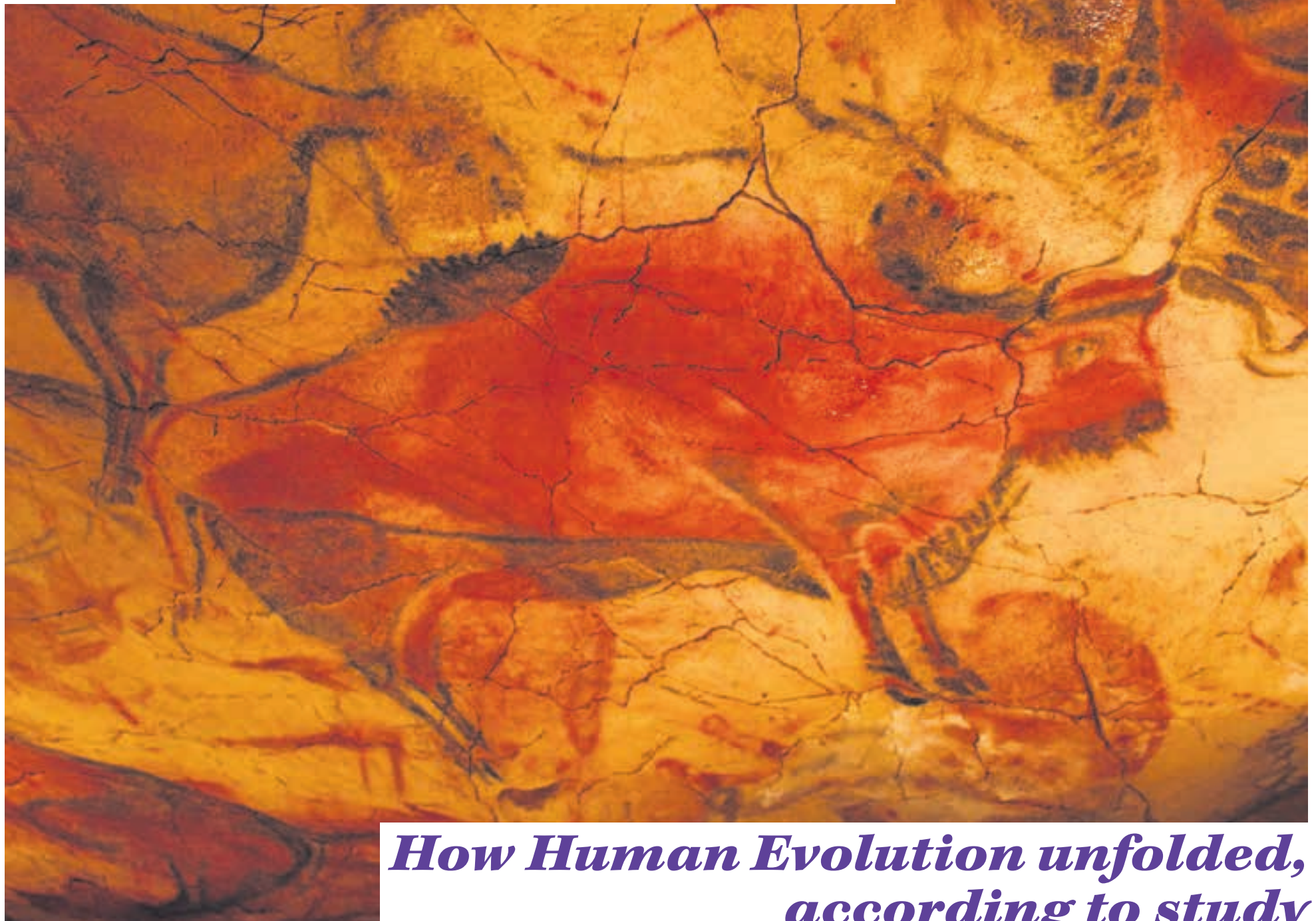
The Detmold twins were prolific book illustrators in the first half of the twentieth century. This illustration includes a monogram, EJD, in black within a green circle. This means that it was the work of Edward Julius Detmold (1883-1957).

“The dark sentiment of the illustration lends a surprising contrast to lighter, modern interpretations of the story,” the National Trust says. “It depicts a post-climactic scene, where protagonist Mowgli returns a herd of buffalo back to the village after using them to trigger a stampede that crushes his foe, the murderous tiger - Shere Khan.”



London Home Football Traffic Watch		Compiled & edited by Fahad Redha	
Women’s		Men’s	
March 15, Chelsea v Arsenal, 19:00	March 31, Arsenal v Bristol City, 14:00	March 12, Arsenal v Porto, 20:00	March 30, Tottenham v Luton, 15:00
March 17, Tottenham v Leicester, 14:00	March 31, Tottenham v Chelsea, 14:00	March 16, Arsenal v Chelsea, 12:30	April 2, Arsenal v Luton, 19:45
March 27, Chelsea v Ajax, 20:00	April 7, Fulham, Dartford, 15:30	March 16, Fulham v Tottenham, 17:30	April 3, Chelsea v Man United, 19:45
		March 20, Chelsea v Burnley, 15:00	April 6, Fulham, Newcastle, 15:00
			April 6, Fulham v Nottingham Forest, 15:00

Gradual advancements rather than sudden revolutions



How Human Evolution unfolded, according to study

A recent study from Japan sheds new light on the cultural evolution that occurred between 50,000 and 400,000 years ago, aligning with the dispersals of human populations across Eurasia. By examining stone tool technology from this era, researchers have challenged the commonly held notion of a rapid cultural and technological 'revolution' that supposedly propelled *Homo sapiens* beyond other human species, including Neanderthals.

The findings unveil a more intricate evolutionary process that unfolded gradually over an extended period, with changes occurring at various intervals. This challenges established theories about the timing and nature of cultural transitions during this pivotal phase in human history.

Led by researchers from Nagoya University Museum in Japan, the study promises to reshape our understanding of the cultural evolution of humanity during the initial dispersal across Eurasia, spanning from 50,000 to 40,000 years ago. Published in *Nature Communications*, it offers fresh insights

into stone tool technology, refuting the idea of a singular 'revolution' in culture and technology. Instead, it presents a nuanced and intricate scenario for the era.

The research team focused on the Middle-Upper Paleolithic period, ranging from 250,000 to 40,000 years ago, a critical juncture in human evolution. During this time, anatomically modern humans coexisted with Neanderthals and other human species, sharing similar stone tool technology, such as the 'Levallois methods,' which involved striking stones with hammer-like tools.

Subsequent to this period, the Upper Paleolithic era (from 50,000 to 12,000 years ago) witnessed the expansion of anatomically modern humans into new territories, accompanied by the extinction of many human species. This era introduced novel cultural elements, including advancements in tool technology, new methods of food acquisition, seafaring, and artistic expression through ornaments and cave paintings, exemplified by renowned works in France.

Traditionally, scholars viewed the

transition from the Middle to Upper Paleolithic period as a sudden shift characterised by the emergence of new cultural elements, possibly driven by abrupt neural mutations enhancing early humans' cognitive abilities. This was thought to enable them to outcompete and ultimately supplant other human species, including Neanderthals, who disappeared around 40,000 years ago.

However, the new study challenges this narrative. Examining the productivity of stone tools over a 50,000-year span across six cultural phases, researchers discovered that significant increases in innovative productivity did not precede or coincide with the widespread dispersal of humans in Eurasia. Instead, they occurred afterward, aligning with the development of early blade technology in the Early Upper Paleolithic.

Lead researcher Professor Seiji Kadowaki emphasised that the cultural transition was a multifaceted evolutionary process involving various aspects and unfolding over an extended period. "In terms of cutting-edge productivity," he stated, "*Homo sapiens* did

not trigger the spread to Eurasia through a rapid revolution in stone tool technology; rather, the innovation in 'cutting-edge' productivity occurred later, alongside the miniaturisation of stone tools like bladelets."

The migration of early humans unfolded gradually across Western Africa approximately 200,000 years ago, reaching the Middle East around 100,000 years ago, settling in Europe around 40,000 years ago, and discovering eastern Asia 70,000 years ago. Subsequently, they reached Australia after 20,000 years and North America through the land bridge connecting eastern Russia to Alaska around 15,000 years ago, taking another 3,000 years to reach South America.

Despite these migrations, several landmasses remained unknown until modern times. Madagascar was first discovered in the first millennium AD by Austronesian people, Iceland in the mid to late ninth century by the Vikings, and New Zealand by the Maori people between 1200 and 1300 AD. Remarkably, the Roman Empire had risen and fallen long before some of these places became known to humanity.

SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENT by Natalie Shanahan

Plastics, a resource of modern invention, have only been a part of our world for just over a century. Yet, in this short time span, this highly versatile material has shaped our modern lives. From the 30 million tonnes produced in 1988, the annual plastic output skyrocketed to a staggering 359 million tonnes by 2018, with projections hinting at a tripling of this figure by 2060.

The story of plastic's impact doesn't end with its production boom. In the 1970s, the first inklings of trouble emerged as small plastic fragments surfaced in our seas. However, it wasn't until 2004 that the term 'microplastics,' was coined, describing fragments measuring up to 5mm in diameter. Nanoparticles are even smaller at less than 1000 nm in size, which slip through filtration systems in sewage and wastewater treatment plants, adding another layer to the problem.

These resilient particles can be found in a wide range of surprising locations, from fields, oceans, rivers, and mountaintops, and are known to float around in the Earth's atmosphere.

They drift through the air we breathe, seep into the soil our crops grow in, and have even found their way into our bodies,

detected in human breast milk and lurking within our organs. The concerning possibility of microplastics breaching the blood-brain barrier has spurred ongoing studies, raising questions about potential links to neurological disorders.

The pervasiveness of these minuscule pollutants underscores the urgency of finding solutions. But nature, it seems, might hold the key to remedying the mess we've made.

According to a recently published report by The Rivers Trust - The State of our Rivers - even the clearest-looking waters in the UK can contain microplastics, industrial chemicals, hydrocarbons, fertilisers, and pesticides, and even pharmaceuticals.

For the past two decades, science has been looking to nature to find a cost-effective and eco-friendly solution. Microorganisms, such as fungi, bacteria, and algae, can biodegrade microplastics via a complex physio-chemical transformation of polymers into smaller units. By tapping into the natural mechanisms of these microorganisms, researchers are unlocking innovative solutions to combat microplastic pollution and mitigate its detrimental impacts on aquatic ecosystems.

Just over a decade ago, Yale made

headlines with the discovery of a fungus in Ecuador, *Pestalotiopsis microspora*, that has the ability to digest and break down polyurethane plastic, even in an air-free (anaerobic) environment—which might even make it effective at the bottom of landfills. This process came to be known as mycoremediation. Fungi are adaptable organisms and can thrive in diverse environments. Researchers are exploring how different types of fungi can be harnessed to target specific types of microplastics, depending on the environmental conditions and types of plastics present. Peter McCoy, a self-taught mycologist and author of *Radical Mycology*, was able to "train" *Pleurotus mycelium* to digest used cigarette butts by phasing out other food alternatives. Over time, this fungus "learned" how to digest them, giving rise to its fruiting body, the oyster mushroom. This may be due to DNA encoding the necessary enzymes that have laid dormant for generations, only to be activated out of necessity. Alternatively, it might involve an enzyme destined for something else that was repurposed. There are many nonspecific fungal enzymes, such as lignin peroxidases, that can allow the fungus to metabolise different compounds with similar structures.

The Victorian government of Australia will be utilising this technique to condition the humble oyster mushroom to break down toxins and microplastics in up to 1.2 million butts that have been diverted from landfill. If this proves successful, it will no doubt inspire other governments and organisations to follow suit. Over the last few decades, the development of environmental DNA analysis and sequencing techniques has allowed scientists to identify all species in a given area by their individual genetic sequence. This has led to the discovery of nearly 2000 new species of marine fungi, most of which are microscopic.

There is still a great deal that is unknown about these fungi, but given their incredible resilience and adaptability at surviving the salinity and high pressures beneath the sea, they could offer us undiscovered waste management solutions. Fungi have been found living among the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, using the plastics as a food source. By pretreating these microplastics with chemicals such as nitric acid and sodium hydroxide, the rate of biodegradation can be accelerated for some species of fungi on certain types of plastics.

Microscopic algae are known to colonise the plastic surfaces in wastewater streams. These microalgae produce enzymes and toxins that could serve as effective microplastic degraders. Some have been made into genetically modified microalgal cell factories, which are capable of producing and secreting enzymes required for plastic degradation. In the future, we may see more genetically enhanced microorganisms that can effectively get the job done with minimal harm to the environment.

Bacteria can work in a similar way, producing enzymes that catalyse microplastic breakdown. Scientists have genetically engineered a microorganism from two bacteria to break down polyethylene terephthalate (PET), a plastic used in everything from water bottles to clothing that is a significant contributor to microplastic pollution in oceans. The first, *Vibrio natriegens*, thrives in saltwater and reproduces very quickly. The second bacterium, *Ideonella sakaiensis*, produces enzymes that allow it to break down PET and eat it. The resulting microorganism expressed both these traits.

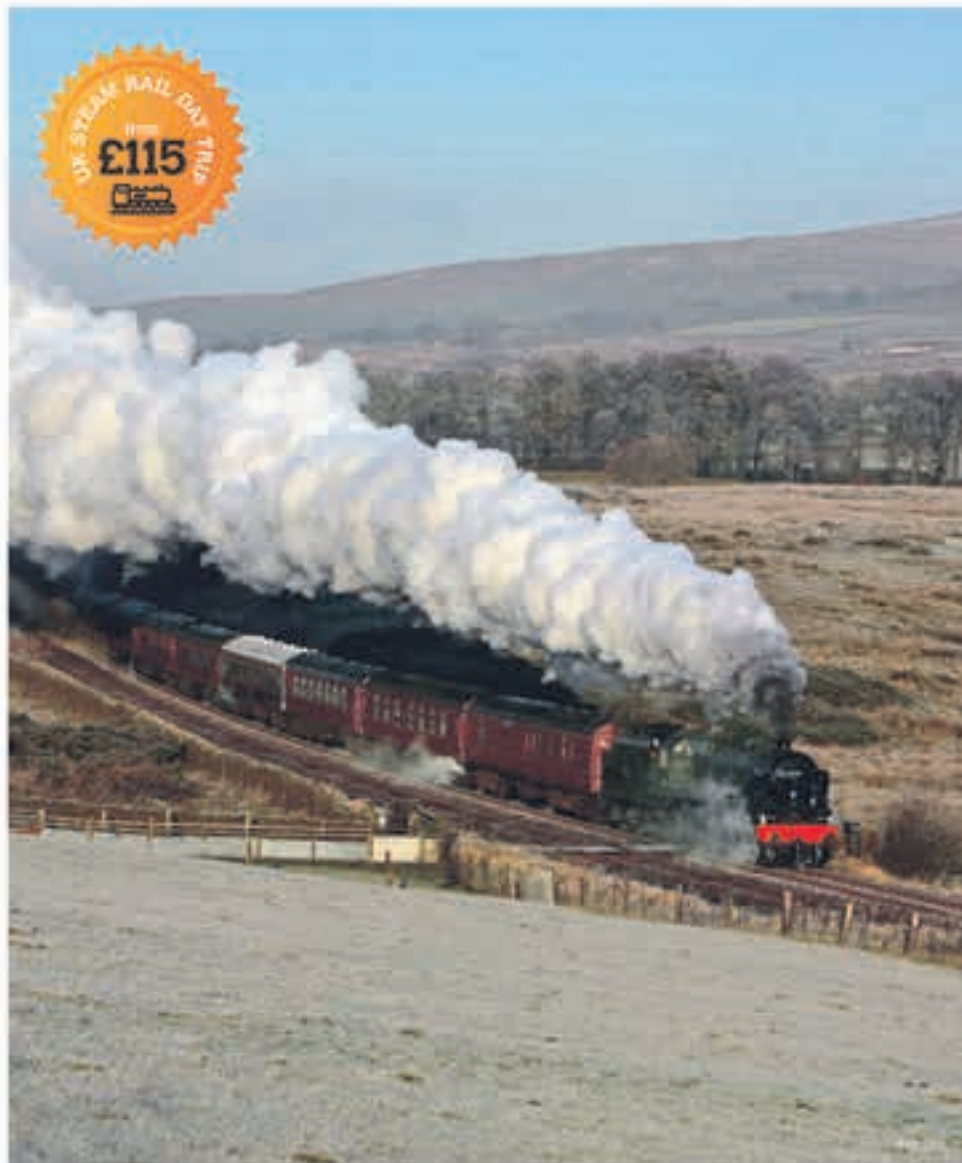
Given the complexity and pervasiveness of plastic pollution, elimination of microplastics from our ecosystems will require a combination of approaches. Bioremediation, bioengineered organisms, nanotechnologies, and chemical solutions will all be required. Biodegradable alternatives are not a fool-proof solution. They have a slightly lower fossil fuel footprint than conventional plastics but can still take years to break down and need controlled industrial conditions to do so completely.

Even if effective new solutions to tackling plastic waste are developed, we still have the issue of reducing the volumes of new plastic being produced. Currently, it is estimated only around 10% of plastic is recycled globally. This is, in part, due to the thousands of chemicals that give it its diverse properties, making it impossible to remix. If we are to make an impact on plastic pollution, then considerations must be made at the design phase, looking at minimising the use of plastic, looking at alternative eco-friendly and low-carbon materials, and ensuring products can truly and easily be recycled. This is a huge feat that can only be accomplished by a coordinated effort of governments, organisations, industry, and academia.

Could our problems with plastic have a solution in nature?



The use of fungi in the removal of microplastics



The Winter Cumbrian Mountain Express

Saturday 17th February and 16th March 2024

This trip provides a wonderful opportunity to get out and about during the winter months, with the added bonus of steam haulage over the Northern Fells, including the spectacular Settle & Carlisle Railway. We have a high speed journey down the West Coast Main Line to Carnforth, hauled by a blue Class 86 electric locomotive. We then enjoy a circular steam tour outwards via Shap to Carlisle and back via the Settle and Carlisle line.

Join us from London Euston, Watford Junction, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Rugby, Nuneaton, Crewe and Preston to visit Carlisle.

There are three classes available:

Premier Dining includes a full English breakfast and a four course dinner freshly prepared on board and silver served at your seat.

First Class includes morning tea or coffee with a bacon/breakfast roll and a muffin and an afternoon service of tea or coffee with a savoury of the day followed by a scone with butter and jam.

Standard Class includes a reserved seat usually at a table for four.

Fares	Adult	Junior	Family	Have a great day – The Safe Way – your welfare is our priority. Our travel procedures are available on our website. Refreshments available to purchase on board. Tables for two can be guaranteed in First/Premier for a £30pp supplement subject to availability. Organised by The Railway Touring Company.
Premier	£295	£205	£898	
First	£195	£135	£593	
Standard	£115	£85	£358	

The Railway Touring Company UK Day Trips 2024

The White Rose

Saturday 24th February

Join us from London Kings Cross, Stevenage, Huntingdon and Peterborough to visit York.

The Cheshireman

Saturday 2nd March

Join us from London Euston, Watford Junction, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Rugby and Nuneaton to visit Chester.

The Whitby Flyer

Wednesday 20th March

Join us from London Kings Cross, Stevenage, Huntingdon, Peterborough and York to visit Whitby.

The Bath & Gloucester Steam Express

Saturday 27th April

Join us from London Paddington, Slough, Reading, Newbury to visit Bath or Gloucester.

The Cumbrian Mountain Express

Saturday 11th May and 22nd June

Join us from London Euston, Watford Junction, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Rugby, Nuneaton, Crewe and Preston to visit Carlisle.

The Cumbrian Coast Express

Saturday 1st June

Join us from London Euston, Watford Junction, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Rugby, Nuneaton, Crewe and Preston to visit Carlisle.

The Tynesider

Saturday 8th June

Join us from London Kings Cross, Stevenage, Huntingdon, Peterborough and York to visit Morpeth.

The Swanage Belle

Wednesday 26th June

Join us from London Victoria, Staines, Woking and Basingstoke to visit Swanage.

The North Wales Coast Express

Saturday 6th July

Join us from London Euston, Watford Junction, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Rugby, Nuneaton and Crewe to visit Llandudno Junction or Holyhead.



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Ski chalet prices continue to climb in Europe



Knight Frank's newly released 2024 Ski Property Report has found that the price of European ski chalets increased by 4.4% on average in the 12 months to June 2023. It represents the strongest rate of growth since 2014, excluding the pandemic.

The Ski Property Index revealed that Swiss resorts lead the rankings for the second year in a row while three German resorts, Klosters (16%), Davos (13%), and Andermatt (9%), hold the top spots. A lack of infrastructure improvements as well as stock in each resort are among the reasons for prices being higher.

Chamonix (7%) holds on to its position as the best performing resort in the French Alps. The year-round resort sees populations surging from 10,000 to 130,000 during peak season, attracting broad groups of people including skiers and mountain bikers, hosting a busy calendar of sporting events. All of this helps drive up investor demand.

In 2023, two trends emerged in the Alps. High-altitude resorts, including St. Moritz, Val d'Isère, Courchevel 1850, and year-round resorts such as Chamonix and Verbier outperformed. Buyers either prioritised 'snow-sure' resorts with longer skiing seasons or chose locations that offered a mix of ski and non-ski activities, hoping for a livelier resort in the summer months.

"The pandemic-induced Alpine mini boom is ending with a fizzle rather than a bang," Kate Everett-Allen, head of global

residential research at Knight Frank said, "as limited supply keeps a floor under prices in most markets. Across three key French resorts, listings are down 56% on average compared to before the pandemic and this is set against a backdrop of robust demand. There are clear challenges ahead for ski resorts, not least climate change, the need to upgrade infrastructure and strict planning rules. However, the market is evolving, attracting buyers from further afield (Asia and the Middle East) and from southern Europe, as recent heat waves prompt some second homeowners to pivot northwards."

As part of the report, Knight Frank ran its second annual Alpine Homes Sentiment Survey. The survey gauged the views of over 320 Knight Frank clients in 34 countries or territories including homeowners, prospective buyers, and "those with a passion for the mountains."

It found that buyer motivations are diverging as both the proportion of those wanting a base just for skiing and those wanting to enjoy the mountains has increased year-on-year. Nearly three-quarters said that the resilience of ski resorts affected their decision to buy and 60% expect the price of an Alpine property to rise in the next year. More than a third said that the cost-of-living has affected the budget they would allocate to an Alpine home.

Last year, property sales fell by a shocking £141 billion, outlining the magnitude of the market contraction in 2023.

As much as £154.7 billion worth of property was sold throughout England last year compared with £295.7 billion in 2022, the analysis of Land Registry data from estate agency platform eXp UK.

"2023 was a challenging year for the property market and higher interest rates coupled with wider market uncertainty caused many buyers to remain sat on the fence, while those who did take the plunge did so tentatively," Adam Day, head of eXp UK, said. "While this did result in an annual reduction in the average house price, the decline seen was far more marginal than many had anticipated and, all things considered, the property market has stood very firm. However, when viewing the market based on the total value of homes sold, these marginal reductions soon add up."

This reduced spending comes amid more challenging market conditions including higher interest rates squeezing buyers' purchasing power. This not only reduces the price they pay but the number of buyers committing to buy.

The average house price across England as a result finished -2.1% down annually. London was the worst hit of any region, seeing the largest annual decline with the average value of a home falling -4.8%.

"The good news is that, with interest rates frozen, inflation falling and a base rate reduction on the horizon," Day added, "the market is already seeing a return to form as buyers return to the fold. As a result, we expect the total value of homes sold in 2024 to rebound from the annual decline seen last year."

Zoopla research has found that buyer demand had risen by 11% while the number of sales rose by 15% in February from the previous year as many sellers are accepting

lower offers on their properties. As a result, house prices saw a reduction of 0.5% year-on-year.

"February sustained the new life we saw breathed into the market at the start of the year," Sarah Coles, head of personal finance, Hargreaves Lansdown, said, "with some buyers and sellers returning to the market, and sales picking up again. However, while

this is much-needed good news for sellers, it's worth highlighting that prices are dropping, asking prices are being cut, and the market faces some serious hurdles."

However, she highlighted the regional variation. "The picture varies a great deal across the country," she added. "Unfortunately for many, it's still grim down south. In the south, excluding London, we're seeing the

impact of relentless eye-watering price rises over the past few years. As a result, affordability is a major problem, and we're still seeing asking prices drop significantly.

"London is an exception, because prices didn't rise as far or as fast as elsewhere in the south, so incomes have caught up a bit. It's one of the strongest areas for sales right now.

Property prices fall by millions in 2023



THE BOTTOM LINE *by Doug Shanks*

HMRC

IN CONTEXT

For most of its customers, as it refers to taxpayers in the current vernacular, HMRC is either that seemingly increasing blot on a PAYE slip, vaguely menacing demands for extra tax on P11D benefits-in-kind (which are often anything but a benefit), or for that phalanx of IR35, terrorised self-assessment soldiers, around 13% of all taxpayers so a significant minority.

We are bombarded with politicised statistics from the lies and damned lies school of economics, so it is useful every now and then to put tax in context. The message from the Public Accounts Committee's 2022-23 Report focuses on the short-term challenges following the redeployment of 4,000 compliance-staff to work on the government's new COVID support schemes. The report's summary claims, 'without sufficient numbers of prosecutions, HMRC cannot demonstrate a credible deterrent effect.' The regular reader, if there is such a person, will know that statistical evidence demonstrates that honey catches more than vinegar, and that street wisdom tells us that it is the fear of being caught rather than draconian punishments that is the most effective deterrent.

PAC 49th Report of Session 2022-23 shows us where the political masters of His Majesty's Revenue & Customs think we should be going. Have a look for yourself. You might be surprised by the number of recommendations with which His Majesty's Government disagrees with the professional tax collectors.

The PAC does not seem to focus on the tax gap. This is the area where tax accountants find themselves at odds with the Revenue. Routine compliance goes smoothly. Whether because 'a firm's

unique selling point is its integrity' as my firm's website claims, or because we have a healthy fear of being caught, our own clients' Returns are subjected to considerable scrutiny. We are no different from any other firm in that regard. It is not worth our reputation to risk claims the client is unlikely to obtain. In any tax planning exercise, the most important word a client will hear is "no". That means the tax gap is all the more important to define. Almost all contentious enquiries will take place in the tax gap. The tax gap is the amount of tax that should be collected statistically by taxing the economy and comparing the amount that is collected.

The gov.uk website has a useful summary of the tax gap and its components. The headline figure is 4.8% of total theoretical tax liabilities or 35.8 billion pounds. The tax gap has fallen from 7.5% in 2005-2006 and while the constituent parts have fluctuated within that, presumably HMG regards the trend (and it is a trend) positively.

Some commentators including Richard Murphy of Tax Research UK argue that a broader definition of the tax gap indicates a far greater problem. Murphy claims that the hidden economy, legal (including borderline legitimate tax havens) and illicit (proceeds of crime) are underestimated in the official figure by a factor of three or four times.

The emphasis on tax prosecutions is worrying. Punishments are unlikely to achieve a positive result. Presumably those breaking other than tax laws will be prosecuted for the originating crime first before the ancillary crime of tax evasion. The PAC Report on 2002-23 may have preceded the escalation of The Great Post Office Scandal, but Chair Dame Meg Hillier must have been aware

of the serious damage being done to taxpayers' and indeed all citizens' faith in state institutions including the entirety of the legal system and HM Revenue & Customs following the harrowing tales of loan charge persecutions. Has the country had enough of simplistic populist solutions?

HMRC's Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23: performance analysis strategic objection 3: maintain taxpayers' consent through fair treatment and protect society from harm. Really?

My client invested hard earned and fully tax paid money in software development businesses. They made that decision knowing that the several hundred thousand pounds, if lost, could be offset against income in future years. After they had made the decision, HMRC restricted the loss relief to £50,000. This was arbitrary, retrospective taxation and in my opinion unconstitutional. There aren't many votes in protecting middle class investors from state-initiated tax theft, but the tax profession will look askance at HMRC's claim of fair treatment. The hairdressers probably will win their fight against the crippling VAT burden that the usually independent firms face. If your salon turns over £85,000 you do not pay VAT. If your turnover rises to £86,000 you pay £17,200 in VAT whether or not your business makes a profit. This is on top of the jobs tax, 12% employers' NI and of course business rates, profitable business or not. Time and again we see clients mortgaging their family home to fund rates and national insurance over and above start-up trading losses as they invest everything in their dream. Then as often as not it's the government agencies that shut them down.

The PAC and HMRC documents refer to tax cheats. Well quite.

Enquiring Minds

Compiled & edited by Fahad Redha

Adult Education Courses

Language

British Sign Language City Lit

British Sign Language (BSL) is an officially recognised language in its own right, with a unique grammatical structure. Using BSL will enable you to communicate with Deaf sign language users. Progression to advanced levels can also open up a range of employment opportunities to work with Deaf people. City Lit offers the fullest range of courses, enabling you to progress from introductory or beginner level right through to advanced level 6 with courses available both in-person and online. All courses are live, interactive, and taught by expert tutors.

1-10 Keeley St, London WC2B 4BA
citylit.ac.uk

[See website for dates](#)

Science, Technology, Engineering, & Maths

Motor Vehicle

London South East Colleges

If you are interested in a career in the motor industry, this course could be a great place to start. This custom-designed motor vehicle workshop is of industry-standard and is regularly updated with support from car manufacturers. This means that all students can work on vehicles and systems using the latest test equipment. It also provides you with the opportunity to develop your own interests in the motor vehicle field, including customising and repairing your own vehicle. There are a range of jobs within the industry, from MOT examiners to technicians. This will equip you with the skills you need to succeed in this sector.

Multiple campuses, see website for more information

lsec.ac.uk

[Next course starts in September](#)

Sport & Fitness

Become a Football Referee Football Association

The FA Referee Course is designed to equip new referees with the key skills and knowledge they will need to be able to referee grassroots football matches safely and effectively. It is for people aged 14 and over who want to referee mini soccer, 9 v 9 and/or 11 v 11 football. The course comprises online learning on the Laws of the Game and face to face training. To qualify as a referee, you must also referee five games after you have attended the face to face training. You will then receive a certificate and an FA Referee badge. You are supported through those five games by your County Football Association (CFA). As you continue your refereeing career, you will then be able to access further training opportunities, both online and face to face.

thefa.com

[See website for more information](#)

Business & Law

Data: Law, Policy and Regulation London School of Economics

Gain the skills to navigate and critically analyse the changing legal environment that is shaping data law and policy. On completion of this course, you'll walk away with contextualised knowledge of foundational legal principles and concepts related to data and technology regulation. The course promises to teach insight into the challenges that digitisation poses for the legal environment. The ability to critically assess topical case studies and current data regulations, including the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is another important topic covered here. You should gain knowledge of possible policy solutions to the future of data regulation and new technologies.

Online Course

onlinecertificatecourses.lse.ac.uk

[See website to book](#)

Culinary

Cajun, Creole, and Soul Food Morso Vegan

Explore the food and flavours of the American Deep South. With influences from Spanish, Italian, African, and Caribbean cuisines, to name but a few, the food of the southern US states is full of flavour. In this class you will cook distinctive dishes guaranteed to be crowd-pleasers. End the day with a sit down meal around our dining table to enjoy the food made. Please bring a plastic container if you wish to take some of your food home with you. You will leave with a full recipe pack so you can recreate the dishes at home. You will make recipes including Gumbo, Jambalaya, and Collard Greens.

6 Terrace Walk, Bath, BA1 1LN
morsovegan.co.uk

[Day course](#)

Arts

Forge a Kitchen Knife The Boneyard

In this two day class you will forge a kitchen or chef's knife to a pattern of your design. This will be a high carbon steel knife, forged on the anvil from a stock piece of steel. This knife will be forged with a hidden tang and will be fitted with a stabilised wooden handle. Typical blade length will be between 6 - 8", perfect for use in the kitchen as an all-rounder. At the end of the course you will go home with a fully finished and sharp kitchen knife that you have made yourself, suitable for a lifetime of use in the kitchen. Depending on available stock on the day, options to upgrade the blade steel (i.e. Damascus) or handle (Colours, Bolster style etc) will be available. Units 25 & 26, Railway Arches, Pope's Grove, Twickenham, TW1 4JW
boneyardlondon.com
[See website for dates](#)

Education

Home schooling on the rise

The number of parents choosing to home-school their children has increased in England. As many as four times more children in Somerset and Wiltshire are being home-schooled compared with 2013 while in Gloucestershire that number has risen by 15% since 2021 during the pandemic.

For the last decade, councils across the West of England alone have seen the number of pupils home schooled increase by three or even four times. The surge is thought to reflect a growing national trend.

It could be difficult for parents to find the best school for their children if they have additional needs, says Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Education and Skills at Wiltshire Council, Councillor Laura Mayes. "We can't always do it immediately so I think there are those parents who are choosing to home educate their child because they think that is absolutely the best and right thing to do," she said. "There are others who are struggling to find the right place for their child and are therefore home educating them for that reason."

Families are visited regularly to monitor the quality of education and a report is produced which is shared with the parents, says Councillor Paul May, cabinet member for Children's Services at Bath and North East Somerset Council (BANES). "The council

supports all children and young people in B&NES in education, whether learning in school or at home" he said. "Should any actions be needed then a clear timescale is put in place, as well as a further visit."

A Department for Education spokesperson said in a statement: "We support the right of parents to educate their children at home, but all children should receive a suitable education regardless of where they are educated."

More than one in 100 children in England were homeschooled in the last summer term as many parents cite changes in lifestyle or "philosophical reasons" for doing so. The figures suggest that the surge during the covid pandemic is at risk of being permanent with only 4% citing health concerns as being the main factor behind their decision.

Shadow education secretary Bridget Phillipson is planning to introduce legislation that would make a compulsory register of any children not enrolled in school. The government has said it would support a private member's bill with the same goal. This is opposed by supporters of home-schooling who fear it could lead to further restrictions.

As ministers urge schools to do more to improve attendance, school funding levels continue to suffer in spite of an increase in support.



Bellmans

FINE ART AUCTIONEERS

Featured: DEMETRE CHIPARUS (1886-1947): AN ART DECO PAINTED AND SILVER GOLD PAINTED BRONZE CHRYSELEPHANTINE FIGURE OF THE DANCER OF KAPURTHALA, Circa 1925. Estimate £10,000 - £15,000 and a group of pendants including Liberty & Co. and James Cromar Watt

The Purple Shop

The Anthony Gardner Collection

Auction Date: 16 April | London Preview: 12th March & 13th March

4 Cromwell Place, South Kensington, London, SW7 2JE

Bellmans, Wisborough Green, West Sussex, RH14 0AZ | 01403 700858 | sussex@bellmans.co.uk

bellmans.co.uk

Ongoing

Where?

April 2024

Tidy

Polka Theatre

Pete the badger likes everything to be neat and tidy: the flowers, the leaves, even the other animals. But, when autumn comes, he gets a little bit carried away with cleaning up the forest and accidentally destroys his own home! Based on the much-loved children's book by author and illustrator, Emily Gravett, Tidy is a gentle but cautionary tale about the value of the world around us and what happens if we don't look after it. With beautiful puppets, original music and a touch of silliness, this playful story will delight young audiences, as it explores how everyone needs a little bit of wild chaos in their lives.

240 The Broadway SW19 1SB

polkatheatre.com

Until March 24

Behind the Scenes: Making The Secret Life of Reptiles and Amphibians

London Zoo

The nights may be drawing in, but work isn't slowing down on London Zoo's main lawn. If you've visited recently, you may have noticed the building work going on next to the Diana monkeys and mangabeys. By spring next year the Terrace Restaurant, Zoo Shop and Giants of the Galápagos will share Barclay Court with London Zoo's newest major exhibit: The Secret Life of Reptiles and Amphibians. The new exhibit will house 26 species and use the latest technology to bring to life eight different habitats – from the steamy forests of South

America to the mountain jungles of Asia. For now though, the building is a jungle of wires, step ladders and spotlights, populated by hard-hatted builders, zookeepers and horticulturalists intent on building the perfect home for some of the world's most threatened reptiles and amphibians.

Outer Circle NW1 4RY

londonzoo.org

March 29 – April 30

FILM & PHOTOGRAPHY

Earth From Space

Royal Observatory

Each day, over 1,000 satellites constantly image and analyse Earth. The data collected, encompassing observations of everything from volcanic eruptions to traffic jams, is shaping our modern world. From space, Earth's fragile beauty is most obvious. Its changing climate is unmistakable, as habitats retreat and oceans warm. But the data gathered is also helping to turn things around. Earth from Space takes a closer look at our world through the satellite's lens, opening up a perspective that only a handful of humans have experienced themselves. Through astrophotography, video and interactive elements, the exhibition at the Royal Observatory Greenwich explores satellites' vital role in tackling climate change, and reveals a truly unique, living planet: our home in space.

Blackheath Avenue SE10 8XJ

rmg.co.uk

Ongoing

Werner Herzog: Radical Dreamer

BFI

In this compelling new film, Werner Herzog's extraordinary life and work are brought into focus through clips from his finest films and interviews with those who know him best. This fascinating and insightful documentary explores the career of the auteur director, writer and poet, whose adventures in filmmaking are

TALKS, TOURS & WALKS



Austentatious Arts Theatre

The award-winning smash-hit comedy, as heard on BBC Radio 4, opens at the Arts Theatre. The all-star Austentatious cast improvise a hilarious new Jane Austen novel every night! Inspired entirely by a title from the audience and performed in period costume with live musical accompaniment - it's a riotous, razor-sharp show where swooning is guaranteed. The revolving Austentatious cast

include numerous, award-winning TV and Radio starring performers, including Rachel Parris (The Mash Report, Live at the Apollo), Cariad Lloyd (QI, Inside No.9, Griefcast, The Witchfinder), Joseph Morpurgo (Radio 4, Edinburgh Comedy Award nominee), Andrew Hunter Murray (No Such Thing As A Fish) and more. 6-7 Great Newport Street WC2H 7JB artstheatrewestend.co.uk Ongoing

often as extraordinary as the stories they tell. Visits to his early family home and interviews with his brothers and partners offer personal insights into the formation of the young man who would go on to become a key German New Wave director, while contributions from collaborators and admirers, including Chloe Zhao, Wim Wenders, Nicole Kidman, Robert Pattinson and Joshua Oppenheimer, offer testament to the lasting appeal of this unique artist.

Belvedere Road SE1 8XT

bfi.org.uk

March 20, April 3, 6

MUSIC

The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King in Concert

Royal Albert Hall

Experience The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King in concert in 2024 as part of the Royal Albert Hall's Films in Concert series. In the saga's final chapter, The Return of the King, Gandalf and Aragorn lead the World of Men against Sauron's army to draw his gaze from Frodo and Sam as they approach Mount Doom with the One Ring. This screening will see the music of Middle-earth come to life, with Howard Shore's epic Academy Award-winning score performed live by a symphony orchestra. Considered one of the most ambitious projects in film history, it took eight years to bring The Lord of the Rings to the screen. The result was an artistic and popular success of the highest order, with the trilogy winning a total of 17 Academy Awards®, and all three films among the highest-grossing of all time.

Kensington Gore, South

Kensington SW7 2AP

royalalberthall.com

March 14-17

Spirited Away

London Coliseum

Studio Ghibli's Oscar-winning Spirited Away, created by legendary animator and director Hayao Miyazaki is re-imagined

for the stage by Olivier and Tony award-winning director of Les Misérables, John Caird. The original Japanese cast perform this extraordinary production with wildly imaginative puppets, dazzling set and costume designs and a live orchestra playing the magnificent original film score by Joe Hisaishi. A masterpiece of storytelling and stunning visuals, Spirited Away tells the enchanting tale of Chihiro who while travelling to a new home with her family, stumbles into a world of fantastic spirits ruled over by the sorceress Yubaba. When her parents are turned into pigs and she is put to work in a magical bathhouse, Chihiro must use her wits to survive in this strange new place, find a way to free her parents, and return to the normal world.

St Martin's Lane WC2N 4ES

londoncoliseum.org

From April 30

THEATRE

The Play that Goes Wrong

The Duchess Theatre

The longest running comedy in the West End and continues to tickle audiences after 9 smashing years at the Duchess Theatre. You all know the classic whodunit story, there has been a murder at a country manor and an inspector is set on the case to find who the culprit is. However, when this plot is given to the accident-prone thespians at The Cornley Drama Society, everything that can go wrong... does! The actors and crew battle against all odds to make it through to their final curtain call, with hilarious consequences! Do you ever find out who murdered Charles Haversham? You'll have to see for yourself! Experience total mayhem and enjoy the perfect slice of escapist comedy, guaranteed to leave you aching with laughter.

3-5 Catherine Street WC2B 5LA

theduchesstheatre.co.uk

Ongoing

TALKS, TOURS & WALKS



Depot Family Tours

London Transport Museum

Exclusively for family groups, join us at our London Transport Museum Depot in Acton, west London to uncover the stories of some of the very special vehicles in our collection. From the tons of poop that accompanied the first Horse Buses, to why trains have bogies, this highlights tour of our bus and train shed may surprise you! One of our knowledgeable and engaging

learning facilitators will take you around part of the Depot to discover some of our favourite vehicles and the stories of the people behind them. Family tours are aimed at family groups with children aged 5-9 years old. All visitors under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

London WC2E 7BB

ltmuseum.co.uk

See website for dates

Antiques & Art by Anthony J. Lester, FRSA

lesterartcritic@eyeonlondon.online



On 6th February, The Cotswold Auction Company, in Cheltenham offered for sale a set of false teeth. Estimated at £5,000-8,000, the dentures attracted frenetic bidding from buyers in the UK and

America and were finally 'snapped up' for £23,184 (including premium). Why? Well, they were Sir Winston Churchill's false teeth. This is yet another classic example of the enduring demand for objects having a direct association with luminaries. Such idealisation goes back thousands of years with religious relics – among the most celebrated being the Turin Shroud (Chapel of the Holy Shroud, Turin), Buddha's Tooth (Temple of the Tooth, Kandy, Sri Lanka), which allegedly was taken from Buddha's funeral pyre in 543 BC, the blood of Saint San Gennaro (Naples Cathedral) and the

Holy Foreskin of which eighteen different churches have laid claim to having the skin from the infant Jesus.

Today the 'relics' in demand are often items associated with actors, popstars and sporting heroes – examples being the £3.9m paid for the flesh-coloured dress worn by Marilyn Monroe when she delivered the "Happy Birthday" serenade to President Kennedy and the £288,000 paid for Sir Gareth Edward's jersey worn at the 1973 Barbarians versus New Zealand rugby match.

However, caveat emptor! In July 2012, ten months after Sir Jimmy Savile died, his mementos and personal belongings went up for auction in Leeds. A Jim'll Fix It badge sold for a staggering £2,000 but it was his Rolls-Royce that many devotees wanted. Procured for £160,000, the new owner planned to hire it out for weddings and children's parties. However, as soon as Savile's abuse allegations hit the headlines, the car's value was deemed "worthless."

Association with luminaries

I have always had an endearing passion for watercolours, which, in 2019, resulted in me writing *Then and Now: Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours* (ISBN: 978 1 906690 70 0). Founded in 1831 the RI staged their 212th Annual Exhibition from 28th March to 13th April at the **Mall Galleries**, The Mall, SW1, and I am privileged to be responsible for selecting one work for an award. This show offers such a diverse range of subjects and styles, plus, with prices starting at £350, this is an event which offers something for everybody.

Turning the clock back to 2013 and again, I had the daunting but congenial task of choosing one picture out of 424 at the RI Exhibition, which I deemed "best in show." My choice – a striking and meticulously rendered composition by Thomas Allen (b. 1989). Since then, he has received several other prizes and I have no hesitation in acclaiming him to be an artistic prodigy. I ardently advocate a visit to his solo show taking place between 15th March and 19th April at the **Ronchini Gallery**, 22 Dering Street, Mayfair, W1S 1AN. Entitled *The Hand that Feeds*, Allen underscores the impact of mass consumption and overpopulation has on the land we inhabit. He cogitated upon these concepts during the pandemic: "I spent a year living in a small cabin in ancient woodlands, cooking my meals over an open fire and doing coppicing woodcraft work during the day. As well as teaching me about sustainable land management, the experience planted the seed for the work in this exhibition." The lively and idiosyncratic compositions, mostly generated over the past year, have a salient theme but are incredibly alluring – for example, *Locust Breeder*, echoes the flattened figuration of Ancient Egyptian art, enhancing a layer of mystery to this disconcerting figure who encapsulates notions of gluttony, hunger and panic. Given Allen's consummate draughtsmanship and originality, the price band of £1,500 to £11,000 seems restrained! Another artist making waves in the art world is Tushar Sabale (b. 1979), who was born in India in 1979 and is now based in London. He primarily paints *en plein air* and is a member of The British Plein Air

Painters, The London Plein Air Group and the prestigious Wapping Group of Artists. Until 23rd March, Sabale displays 50 of his vibrant paintings at **Green & Stone Gallery**, 251 Fulham Road, Chelsea, SW3 6HY. All the compositions have been captured at various locations in London, with prices ranging from £650 to £2,500, although a few small works are being offered at an enticing £375.

An artist needing no introduction is Sir Peter Blake, who, in June celebrates his 92 birthday. A prominent figure in the pop art movement, he is, perhaps, best-known for co-creating with Jann Haworth the sleeve design for the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. A less familiar aspect to his creativity is sculpture and until 13th April, **Waddington Custot**, 11 Cork Street, W1S 3LT, throws the spotlight on Blake's three-dimension work. Quirky and endearing, these conceptual creations of assemblages of found objects are elevated to fine art status.

Concluding on 13th April is *Yoi*, an exhibition of works from the Munupi Arts and Crafts Association, located along Melville Island's north-western coastline, north of Darwin. Taking place at the **JGM Gallery**, 24 Howie Street, Battersea, SW11 4AY, London's leading specialists in Aboriginal Australian art, the show features nine Munupi artists. Mainly painted with natural ochres, the canvases possess a unique textural materiality and are irrepressibly powerful and emphatically striking. Prices start at £1,050 for a work by Christine Daisy Puruntatameri (b. 1983), and at the top, £9,800 for a large and characteristically complex composition by Simplicia Tipungwuti's (b. 1979).

The London art market is renowned for showcasing the work of artists from around the world so here are two for your deliberation. On view until 13th April, the **Stephen Friedman Gallery**, 5-6 Cork Street, W1S 3LQ, presents the first solo exhibition in the UK of American artist Woody De Othello (b. 1991). His zany work encompasses sculpture, painting and drawing and includes glazed ceramics, carved wood, bronze, ink and oil paint. The hanging



Coquelicots à la Frontière (£10,500), oil on canvas by Jean-Marie Toulgouat, David Messum Fine Art



Locust Breeder oil on linen by Thomas Allen, Ronchini Gallery



Milimika II, ochre on canvas (£1,950) by Josephine Burak (b. 1977), JGM Gallery



Making Plans, oil on canvas by Thomas Allen, Ronchini Gallery

at **David Messum Fine Art**, 12 Bury Street, St. James's, SW1Y 6AB, until 5th April, offers a rare opportunity to inspect recently rediscovered artworks by Jean-Marie Toulgouat (1927-2006). He was the great-grandson of Claude Monet and was born, raised and died at Giverny, Monet's former house and studio. Toulgouat vibrant oil paintings (£4,850-£42,500) of the flowers and gardens at Giverny serve as a subtle yet distinctive link to the French Impressionists. Between 13th March and 24th April, **The Garden Museum**, 5 Lambeth Palace Road, SE1 7LB, in collaboration with Messum's, will display a further selection of Toulgouat's paintings.

Westminster Abbey:



Marriage of Henry of Navarre and Marie de Medici at Notre Dame, 1572



Effigies in the Abbey's Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries, with Catherine de Valois in the foreground

Notre Dame de Paris, The Augmented Exhibition

At aperitif time in the early evening of Monday, April 15, 2019, a fire caused by an electrical short or a cigarette broke out in the roof space of France's national treasure, Notre Dame de Paris. By the time the flames were extinguished, the roof and spire had gone, the upper walls were badly damaged, and there were real fears that history's Gothic style exemplar would have to be demolished.

The world was transfixed by the television shots of the blaze that almost troyed one of the best-loved cathedrals in the world, and here thoughts turned to our own Notre Dame counterpart, Westminster Abbey. It could so easily have happened here, perhaps in the equivalent roof space, the triforium, now occupied by a museum.

However, the French were determined that the cathedral would be rescued, and with a budget of around £720 million, President Macron set a five-year target to bring Paris's lady back to life. At the end of this year, it will reopen, its place in France's fractured history restored.

Her English cousin, the Abbey, is telling Notre Dame's story in an exhibition in its Chapter House, *Notre Dame de Paris, The Augmented Exhibition*, a modern exhibition, one with almost no objects, but a digital revelation of the cathedral's story up to and including its near destruction, created by the virtual exhibition specialists at Histoverly.

Notre Dame was built on the site of the old and inadequate Saint-Etienne Cathedral, whose bishop, Maurice de Sully, envisioned a token of the country's growing prosperity, supported by the king, Louis VII. Using some of the stones from the old building and with foundations up to 30 feet deep, work began in 1165, and we watch

the preparation of the site, meet some of the craftsmen who would spend much of the rest of their lives on the project, and even turn the pages of a master builder's notebook showing his calculations, his architectural decision-making, sketches of animals, and construction machines.

We watch the stonemasons, the aristocrats of the medieval building site, as they shape and smooth the blocks, and create ornaments such as the gargoyle water-spouts. By the 1220s, the three great rose windows were in place, bringing the light of dusk through the facade of the building, delivering their lessons of morality and spirituality.

We don't know the name of the master builder, but we see him here giving his orders, and the cathedral he built for de Sully is a work of genius, dwarfing any other church of its time, with its new Gothic flourish, its experimental rib vaulting, and flying buttresses to support its gigantic forms, its sculpture, its stained glass, and its famously huge bells. It took almost a century to complete.

In 1239, Louis IX – St Louis – spent half the country's annual budget to acquire the most prestigious relic in the world, the Crown of Thorns, for Notre Dame (later moved next door to Ste-Chapelle, the architectural jewel box he built for the purpose). It was at Notre Dame in 1572 that Charles IX caused outrage by marrying his sister to Henry of Navarre, a Protestant and future Henri IV. A few days later, between 5,000 and 25,000 French Protestants were slaughtered in the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre. And in 1804, Napoleon sought to unite his empire and establish Paris as France's capital by having himself crowned in Notre Dame as, post-Revolution,

different cities were vying for national supremacy.

Unlike Westminster Abbey, Notre Dame was never the customary site for the crowning of monarchs; that was at Reims. The Abbey, on the other hand, has seen the coronation of 40 monarchs and the interment of 18.

There was originally a Benedictine monastery on the site, rebuilt by Edward the Confessor and then, like St Etienne, replaced by an opulent Gothic statement, this time by Henry III and consecrated in 1269, 25 years after work on it started. The Abbey's triforium housed an extra floor built above the aisle for chapels for specific worship, but they were never created. For more than 850 years, the space had been used as a kind of attic to store monuments, sculptures, pieces of masonry, and other objects hidden from the public, but in a £22.9m transformation, it became a museum telling the story of the Abbey both as a place of worship and a venue for royal spectacles. It was opened by Elizabeth II in 2018 as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries.

More than 300 objects, many of them never before on public display, were put on permanent exhibition, including the Liber Regalis, the 14th-century document laying out the rules for a coronation; the Westminster Retable, England's oldest altarpiece; Henry V's saddle, shield, sword, and helmet; and a 13th-century monk's shoe.

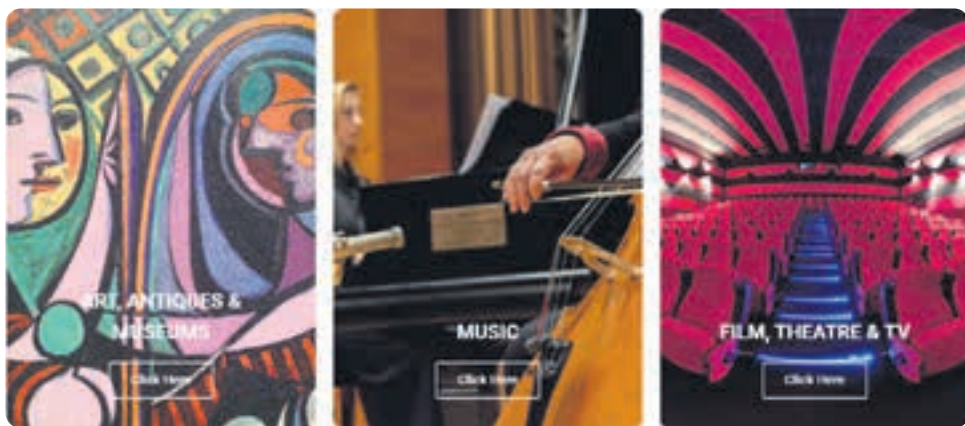
However, the highlight is the collection of effigies of monarchs carried at their funerals and laid out here for the first time. These are intriguing, enlightening, fascinating, and in many cases, the precise portraits from an age when portraits were not

fashionable. Many have disappeared over the centuries, others were damaged in the Second World War, and only parts of some have survived. In the 18th century, the Abbey's choirmen augmented their income by charging to view the effigies and bought some more to widen the appeal, such as wax effigies of William and Mary, William Pitt the Elder, and Lord Nelson, based on a portrait painted of him just before his death and bought in 1805 to counter the attraction of his actual tomb in St Paul's.

Here too, is Edward III, without the familiar flowing beard and his drooping mouth showing the stroke that killed him in 1377; Richard II's wife Anne of Bohemia, also made from a death mask; Henry V's wife Catherine de Valois in a glorious red dress; a plaster Henry VII; his beautiful wife Elizabeth of York; the surprisingly voluptuous body of Mary I. There's an 18th-century waxwork of Elizabeth I, but also her actual corset, and a strangely weird wax Charles II with too short legs and Svengali fingers that might be reaching out for a plump orange.

Westminster Abbey is telling us the stories of two great churches, both World Heritage Sites, one of which came close to destruction, the other a Royal Peculiar that comes under the jurisdiction of the sovereign and is a showcase for both worship and pageantry. Both are supreme accomplishments of mediaeval art and craftsmanship, giving a fascinating insight into the Middle Ages as they were lived.

Notre Dame de Paris, The Augmented Exhibition runs until 1st June.



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Cinema Club *by Henry Scott-Irvine*



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Covent Garden WC2B 5PQ.
2 Cinemas
thegardencinema.co.uk/about-us**

This two-screen Indy cinema opened in March 2022 after some delays due to the COVID crisis of 2020 to 2021. There are two screens - a 76-seater and a 40-seater. A third is promised. The programming boasts that The Garden is "A new kind of Independent Cinema". It is indeed a hybrid of new International Art House Films, members' voted choices, thematic seasons, and director fortnights. Add to that exemplary Film Festivals that are hand-picked by the team, which break the mould, and are refreshingly well-curated. The building has utilised Art Deco fixtures that look as if they were rescued from the former 'Art Deco' Embassy Rooms in Tottenham Court Road, while the basement bar area has a wine vault feel about it, with choice bottled Dutch 'Bok' Beers and Craft Lagers, all at good prices. Add to that a friendly staff and well-priced tickets. This cinema needs your support. Please go there.

The Best Family & Volunteer-Run Cinema

**The Lexi Cinema, 194 Chamberlayne
Road, Kensal Rise NW10 3JU.
2 Cinemas
thelexicinema.co.uk/TheLexiCinema.dll/Home**

This voluntary-run Indy of some 75 seats only opened in 2008. It is housed in a former turn-of-the-20th-century community hall, which retains some of its original Edwardian decor. Former Soho cinema manager, movie aficionado, and cinema historian, Ken Roe, reviewed it thus, "The Projection is digital and the programming promises to be an eclectic mix of mainstream and Art House films, both new and old releases. Staffed by volunteers, it is operated by the Pinkham Lighthouse organisation and any profits go to charities. The name 'Lexi' is the owner of Sally Wilton's daughter's name. On 17th May 2021, a second screen with 30 seats was opened". Situated near to Kensal Rise and Kensal Green Stations where Overground and Underground lines will take you back into the West End and south of the river.

The Best Community-Run Cinema

**The Rio, 107 Kingsland High Street,
Dalston E8 2PB.
2 Cinemas
riocinema.org.uk/home**

The last independent cinema of its kind in London with its original balcony remaining fully intact, The Rio dates back to the Silent Cinema era. It opened as a movie theatre in 1915 as The Kingsland Empire. It was remodelled as an Art Deco styled cinema by architect Frank Ernest Bromige in 1937 when it became a Classic Cinema, screening repertory films. During the 1960s it changed its direction and became The Classic Cartoon Cinema. In 1970 The Jacey Tatler chain of cinemas acquired it as The Tatler Cinema Club, peddling their mantra

of 'champions of continental cinema', a euphemism for softcore porn viewed by hardcore corn lovers. The corn got even better during the intermission when strippers wandered around selling 99's and raspberry ripples. Two years later the cinema went 'bust', but not in the hardcore sense. An Independent local businessman bought the building and opted for screenings of Elvis Presley movies, Kung-Fu classics, and Bollywood. Two years later The Rio closed.

Since 1979 The Rio has been continually community-run. It was taken over by a cooperative of local residents as a not-for-profit cinema. They received National Lottery funding in 1996 to restore the cinema from Flea Pit to fully reupholstered glory. Yet, oddly, painting the interior blue and pink. The Rio Cinema became a Grade II Listed building in 1999. Mayor Khan aided the Rio cinema in 2017 with GLA funding, in order to fully restore the exterior and

Independent Cinemas

Standard



add-on a 31-seat cinema in the basement. The cinema is now visited by people from all over London. The Rio has a vast repertory program running weekly, mixing "First Runs" with major movies of past and present. Many of which are discussed on stage by experts and those involved in the films in question. The Rio is served by two nearby train stations, Dalston or Dalston Kingsland. The cinema still needs your continued visitor support. Please go to The Rio and enjoy being inside an old school movie theatre. Almost the last of its kind in London.

The Most Enjoyable Cinema Experience in a Museum

**The Cinema Museum, Elephant & Castle,
2 Dugard Way, Renfrew Road SE11 4TH.
2 Screens. 1 operative.
cinemamuseum.org.uk**

The Cinema Museum has been screening films since 1998 at its current historic location - His Master's House & Buildings - a workhouse where Charles Chaplin was forced to work as a young boy alongside his

mother. The museum houses a vast collection of cinema artefacts, movie memorabilia, books, and cinema magazines. Where else could you pick up a mint condition copy of a November 1972 edition of *Films & Filming* for two quid? Nowhere! This quirky Cinema Museum screens films from multiple formats such as Super & Standard 8mm, 9.5 mm, 16mm, 35mm, and digital formats. It is run by volunteers who are all experts in their chosen areas. The Museum has been fighting to gain funding to stay afloat. Recently they said, "At last, we can buy our home! After 15 years of campaigning, The Cinema Museum's future looks bright. At last, we have a chance to secure a permanent home for the Museum and save our well-loved, unique heritage building. We just signed a 4-year lease with our landlords, Anthology (part of the Life Story Group) with an option to purchase the Master's House buildings for £1 million. Do

built for the sole purpose of silent motion picture screenings. It remains of huge historical significance. The Electric's nearest cousin was The Electric Palace, now called The Gate Picturehouse aka The Gate, Notting Hill, which opened in April, 1911. Besides these two, there is only The Electric Palace Cinema, Harwich, which opened on 29th November, 2011. Portobello's Electric is similar to The Electric Palace, Harwich, which is the oldest purpose-built cinema to survive completely intact in Britain. Portobello's Electric has equal cultural importance.

Decades of decline occurred, however, while the Portobello Electric Cinema was usurped by London's grandiose Picture Palaces with spectacular balconies. By the 1960s, The Electric was reduced to being nicknamed 'The Portobello Flea Pit'. Nobody went there. Salvation came in the shape of a 1969 weekend repertory Film Club, creating 'All-Nighter' screenings. These film shows were curated by Peter Howden. His programming was second to none. As a consequence, the owner asked him to take over the cinema full time. Howden did so right through until 1983. These were the glory days of this venue. Along with The Essential Cinema in Wardour Street, Soho, these cinema venues became the template for The Scala's programming in Charlotte Street and later Kings Cross. Two clever examples of Howden's Electric double billing? Joseph Losey's *The Servant*, doubling-up with Woody Allen's *Zelig*, or Michaelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-up*, coupled with Nic Roeg & Donald Cammel's *Performance*.

The late 1980s saw economic difficulties for The Electric and the fight to save it from closure went on for the best part of 20 years. In 2001, a local philanthropic businessman, the founder-owner of Monsoon, Peter Simon, donated 2 million pounds to fully restore the cinema to include upgrading the projection and sound facilities. In addition, the cinema's seating was reduced to include 98 brand new bespoke leather armchairs with adjacent tables, plus two leather sofas to the rear. The Electric Cinema was reopened and operated by Cityscreen, a small cinema chain that exhibited mostly independent Art House films. Trouble, however, struck once again when a restaurant next door burned down, causing smoke and fire damage to the cinema. Nick Jones's 'Soho House' empire offered a rescue package via a takeover, acquiring the venue building, adding an upstairs members club, an adjoining restaurant, a new in-house cinema bar, plus additional sofas as front-row seating. There was massive interior redecoration and restoration. Soho House now owns the Electric 'brand' and has opened another three-screen version of The Electric inside the former BBC TV Centre in White City, incorporating member-only screens and member-only facilities.

If ever there was a litmus test for the times we live in? The Electric's regeneration is just that. The yuppification of Portobello Road is now complete. The trustafarian sons and daughters of the executive classes can now enjoy a new playground that is a plush cinema of significant cultural heritage. Thereby ruining the cinema experience for the rest of us. "Why?" I hear you ask! Soho House wins the big bucks, while the community, ultimately, loses out.

A sign of the times.

'The Trust Fall' is a new Julian Assange documentary, which had its UK premiere on Sunday, 18th February, at Dalston's historic Rio Cinema. The film is directed by Australian filmmaker Kym Staton, a poet who has utilised some of the structures of his poetics to tell this convoluted story of Wikileaks Australian founder, Assange. A man currently in a high security jail often reserved for terrorists. Assange is awaiting a legal decision upon his potential extradition to the USA on what many consider to be trumped-up charges of espionage, rather than being seen via 'The Wikileaks Collective' view.

narrative that had the fully attended Rio Cinema hanging on to every single word. Key investigative journalists and political campaigners such as the late John Pilger are heard offering up pearls of analytical wisdom. Pilger is seen in what may well have been his final filmed interview? He is placed alongside seasoned campaigner Tariq Ali who provides historic context, while Wikileaks 'Editor' Kristinn Hrafnsson tells his story from the 'inside'. Assange's wife since the age of 39, Stella, is seen lobbying on his behalf, tirelessly. A role that she has undertaken full time since 2015.

This documentary is due to open in London officially on 15th March, 2024.

The Trust Fall

by Kym Staton

The documentary presents WikiLeaks' methodology of accessing government files to expose instances of corruption, unnecessary war mongering, and allegations of gerrymandering by public figures. It examines how politicians often present wars as necessary and unavoidable for the public good, using them to justify their actions within a wider global context to legitimise war.

Within the narrative, there's an exploration of authoritarian politicians worldwide, whose decisions often erode democratic principles, driven by concealed Machievallian agendas to mask domestic fiscal failings. These politicians habitually shift blame and evade accountability, characteristics that WikiLeaks sought to uncover. The film underscores WikiLeaks' contribution to awakening public consciousness and shedding light on crucial issues, a factor that has unsettled political authorities in the West.

The Trust Fall opts not to use a chronological timeline and weaves through Assange's history in a compelling

Surfacing in the wake of the Royal Courts of Justice extradition hearings on Tuesday and Wednesday the 20th and 21st February, regarding the potential removal of Australian citizen Julian Assange from Belmarsh Prison, here in the UK, in order to stand trial in the USA on 17 claimed counts of espionage and one of illegal computer access. The Law Court judge's decision is alleged to be around 4th March.

Set against the backdrop of Assange's extradition hearings, the film challenges mainstream media narratives and explores the manipulation of truth by those in power. Claiming that smears and lies have become 'new truths' but are in fact actual lies. There is a clever forensic filmic technique here in getting to the very root of the alleged 'lies'. A combination of interview, archive, animation, captioning, and film montage. Staton takes us on this very involving journey that only gets slightly bogged down, narratively, in the final half hour towards the end. An end which is truly poetic.



you want to help us to make this happen? You can make a donation at <https://tinyurl.com/5wttnpe>".

The upcoming season of films at the time of writing? Bioscope Movies (Classic Silent Movies), Film Noir, Kim Newman's Gothique, 'The Losers' Motorbike Movies, Rock 'n' Roll Movies, Women & Cocaine, and Exploding Cinema's Film Festival. The nearest tube is The Elephant & Castle. The Museum is situated behind Brook Drive near to the former South Lambeth Hospital's actual movie location for Michael Winner's *Death Wish 3* (1986) and Nic Roeg's *Bad Timing* (1980). All since redeveloped into modern housing.

The Oldest Independent Cinema in Britain

The Electric Cinema, 191 Portobello Road, Notting Hill W11 2ED.
1 screen.
electriccinema.co.uk/cinemas/portobello

The Electric opened on 24th December, 1910, as the Electric Cinema Theatre. It was the first 600-seater cinema in the land to be

Health & Wellbeing by Natalie Shanahan

As the old saying goes, “Eat breakfast like a king, lunch like a prince, and dinner like a pauper.”

Intuitively, this makes perfect sense, as you are breaking an overnight fast in the morning and need energy to fuel the whole day. As the day progresses, you need less energy and therefore smaller meals. However, current thinking is changing this view. Professor Tim Spector, founder of Zoe, the personalised nutrition program from the world’s largest nutrition science study, suggests that if you are not hungry in the morning, then don’t eat breakfast. This diet trend, which is a form of intermittent fasting (IF), can have huge health benefits. After all, we didn’t evolve to eat 24/7. The time between our last mouthful and the first mouthful of the following day is when our bodies burn the remaining energy from what we have eaten and go into repair mode, known as autophagy. This is where your body removes and recycles old and damaged cell parts and proteins so your cells can operate more efficiently. This happens predominantly when we have stopped eating and digesting food but also after exercising. In addition, this fasting period allows us to modulate our gut microbiota, leading to a greater diversity of beneficial species, improving obesity, and energy metabolism.

Today’s societal demands mean that most of us have to be up before 6 a.m. for work and then do not get the chance to eat dinner until after 8 p.m., meaning there are less than 8 hours to repair the body. Sleep is then impaired by having a full stomach, and so long-term health issues ensue. Only around 40 years ago, it was quite normal to do a 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. job, eating breakfast at 8 a.m. and dinner at 6 p.m., leaving a 14-hour window! The rise of technology has meant we are constantly ‘on the go’, with most people logging into their work emails the second they wake up and having a last look just before they turn the lights out for bed. For such individuals, skipping breakfast and lengthening their overnight fast to at least 12 hours can be a useful tool to control weight gain, reduce inflammation, and slow the ageing process. In October 2022, ZOE ran The Big IF Study. More than 37,500 people completed a 2-week IF trial using the 14/10 schedule. After just 2 weeks, participants reported, on average, an 18% increase in energy and a 9% improvement in mood. In terms of gut health, around 64% said they had reduced symptoms of bloating.

The problem arises when people who are taking part in intense or long periods of exercise without adequate nutrients and fuel. For weight loss alone, some studies have shown benefits in fasted cardio for men. However, it is a very different story for women. The most common mistake is nutrient timing. Many women will skip breakfast, train fasted, and save their biggest meal of the day until the evening. Others that do have breakfast then skip lunch and have a big dinner, leaving a huge gap without food. So even though they might be getting the right amounts of calories, they are not getting them when they need them, which is around training. This leaves the body in a state of breakdown and exhaustion, known as low energy availability (LEA), even when they are consuming enough calories each day. A similar effect can happen if women reduce their calories too much on the days they are not training, thinking that if they are not moving then they don’t need as much fuel.

However, the body is repairing and



image: Alexandra Andersson, Unsplash

Does When We Eat Really Matter?

building muscle tissue; it needs the energy. The result can be relative energy deficiency (RED-S), potentially leading to detrimental health consequences such as brittle bones, heart disease, and hormonal impairment. Pre-menopause, this is identified by the absence of the menstrual cycle. However, in perimenopause, periods can be irregular, and post-menopause they stop, making it impossible to use this as a marker. Just four days in LEA can start to affect bone formation and thyroid function! Long-term effects are extreme fatigue and thyroid dysfunction. Signs of LEA can be performance plateaus, stress fractures, decreased immunity, IBS, poor coordination, and chronic ‘hangriness’. If you suspect this may be happening to you, then seek out a trainer experienced in working with women with LEA and coordinate their

efforts with your medical professional. Generally, a break from formal training along with a good nutrition plan can help you get back on track.

Exercise physiologist and elite endurance triathlete Dr. Stacy Sims gives a general guide to macronutrient quantities for active women in this phase of life. For example, on a totally sedentary day, a good breakdown would be 2g carbs per kg body weight, 2g protein per kg body weight, and 1g fat per kg body weight. Depending on your sport, duration, and training intensity, macros will increase from here.

If you fall into this category and still want to reap the benefits of intermittent fasting, then the one rule to stick to is to eat before and after your training sessions, ensuring you get adequate protein in each meal. If you train in the morning, then do not skip

breakfast; instead, have an earlier dinner and no snacking after. Alternatively, move your training sessions to the evening, when you have had a chance to fill up with a later breakfast and large lunch. Then eat a lighter dinner after the exercise, ensuring to include some protein.

For men focused purely on significant fat loss, pick a method that fits into your lifestyle, whether that is fasted or fed state short intense cardio workouts. For active men not looking to lose significant body fat, it is wise to fuel your training sessions, especially if you are training to build muscle size, strength, power, or endurance. This will give you the energy to push harder, lift heavier, and move faster, leading to greater athletic gains, whatever your goal may be.



Sports fixtures

March to April

Compiled & edited by Fahad Redha

Welcome to EyeOnLondon's Sports Fixtures page, your go-to-source for the latest in London's sports scene!

From the roar of football stadiums to tennis showdowns, we've got your sports calendar covered.

London Men's Home Football

- March 12, Arsenal v Porto, 20:00
- March 16, Arsenal v Chelsea, 12:30
- March 16, Fulham v Tottenham, 17:30
- March 20, Chelsea v Burnley, 15:00
- March 30, Tottenham v Luton, 15:00
- April 2, Arsenal v Luton, 19:45
- April 3, Chelsea v Man United, 19:45
- April 6, Fulham, Newcastle, 15:00
- April 6, Fulham v Nottingham Forest, 15:00

London Women's Home Football

- March 15, Chelsea v Arsenal, 19:00
- March 17, Tottenham v Leicester, 14:00
- March 27, Chelsea v Ajax, 20:00
- March 31, Arsenal v Bristol City, 14:00
- March 31, Tottenham v Chelsea, 14:00
- April 7, Fulham, Dartford, 15:30

Rugby League

courtesy Sky Sports

- March 7, Hull K R v Warrington Wolves
- March 8, Castleford Tigers v Huddersfield Giants
- March 8, Leigh Leopards v Leeds Rhinos
- March 8, St Helens v Salford Red Devils
- March 9, London Broncos v Wigan Warriors
- March 9, Catalans Dragons v Hull FC
- March 14, Salford Red Devils v Wigan Warriors
- March 15, Leeds Rhinos v St Helens
- March 16, Huddersfield Giants v Hull K R
- March 16, Hull FC v Leigh Leopards
- March 16, Catalans Dragons v Castleford Tigers

- March 17, London Broncos v Warrington Wolves
- March 28, Castleford Tigers v Leeds Rhinos
- March 29, Hull K R v Hull FC
- March 29, St Helens v Wigan Warriors
- March 30, Warrington Wolves v Catalans Dragons
- March 30, Salford Red Devils v Leigh Leopards
- March 31, London Broncos v Huddersfield Giants
- April 4, Leigh Leopards v Wigan Warriors
- April 5, Castleford Tigers v Salford Red Devils
- April 5, Hull K R v London Broncos
- April 5, Leeds Rhinos v Warrington Wolves
- April 6, Hull FC v Huddersfield Giants
- April 6, Catalans Dragons v St Helens

Golf

courtesy BBC Sports

- March 14, The Players Championship, TPC Sawgrass, USPGA Tour, Stroke Play
- March 21, Valspar Championship, Innisbrook Resort, Copperhead Course, USPGA Tour, Stroke Play
- March 21, Singapore Classic, Laguna National GC, DP World Tour, Stroke Play
- March 21, Fir Hills Seri Pak Championship, Palos Verdes GC, USLPGA Tour, Stroke Play
- March 28, Houston Open, Memorial Park Golf Course, USPGA Tour, Stroke Play
- March 28, Indian Open, DLF G and CC, DP World Tour, Stroke Play
- March 28, Ford Championship, Seville Golf and CC, USLPGA Tour, Stroke Play
- March 29, NSW Women's Open, Magenta Shores GC, Ladies European Tour, Stroke Play

- April 3-7, T-Mobile Match Play, Shadow Creek Golf Course, USLPGA Tour, Match Play
- April 4-7, Texas Open, TPC San Antonio, AT&T Oaks Course, USPGA Tour, Stroke Play
- April 5-7, Miami Invitational, Trump National Doral - Blue Monster, LIV Golf, Stroke Play
- April 5-7, Australian Women's Classic, Bonville Golf Resort, Ladies European Tour, Stroke Play
- April 11-14, The Masters, Augusta National Golf Club, Majors, Stroke Play

Tennis

courtesy BBC Sport

- Until March 17, BNP Paribas Open, Indian Wells Tennis Garden, WTA, Outdoor, Hard
- March 19-30, Miami Open, Hard Rock Stadium, WTA, Outdoor, Hard
- April 1-8, Estoril Open, Clube de Tennis do Estoril, ATP, Outdoor, Clay
- April 1-7, Grand Prix Hassan II, Royal Tennis Club de Marrakech, ATP, Outdoor, Clay
- April 1-8, US Men's Clay Court Championships, River Oaks Country Club, ATP, Outdoor, Clay
- April 1-7, Copa Colsanitas, Country Club Bogota, WTA, Outdoor, Clay
- April 1-7, Credit One Charleston Open, Family Circle Tennis Center, WTA, Outdoor, Clay
- April 7-14, Rolex Monte Carlo Masters, Monte Carlo Country Club, ATP, Outdoor, Clay
- April 12-14, Billie Jean King Cup Qualifiers, Fed Cup, Unknown, Unknown

- Formula 1
- March 22-24, Rolex Australian Grand Prix
- April 5-7, MSC Cruises Japanese Grand Prix
- April 19-22, Lenovo Chinese Grand Prix

- Formula E
- March 16, Sao Paulo
- March 30, Tokyo
- April 13-14, Misano, Italy

- World Rally Championship
- March 28-31, WRC Safari Rally Kenya
- April 18-21, WRC Croatia Rally

- UK Marathons
- March 17, Great Welsh Marathon, Llanelli, Dyfed
- March 17, Moyleman Marathon, Lewes, East Sussex
- March 22-24, Jurassic Coast Challenge, Lyme Regis, Dorset
- March 29, Good Friday Marathon, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire
- March 30, Easter Saturday Marathon, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire
- April 7, Brighton Marathon
- April 7, Southampton Marathon

- Europe Marathons
- March 17, Rome Marathon
- April 7, Milan City Marathon
- April 7, Lodz Marathon
- April 7, Paris Marathon

- International Marathons
- March 24, Danang International Marathon, Danang, Vietnam
- April 14, Jin Shan Ling Great Wall Marathon, Jin Shan Ling, China
- April 24, Inca Trail Marathon, Inca Trail, Peru



image: Olga Guryanova, Unsplash



From big cats in Asia and whales in North America to endangered species in Africa, there are plenty of wildlife experiences for any nature lover. Heading off on a wildlife adventure offers a profound connection with nature, allowing us to witness the beauty and majesty of some of the world's most fascinating creatures in their natural habitats. From the snowy peaks of Mongolia to the lush rainforests of Peru, and the sprawling wilderness of the Australian Outback, there are numerous destinations awaiting exploration. So embrace your inner David Attenborough this year and take a walk on the wildside with EyeOnLondon's guide to wildlife adventures.

Advice on What to Pack:

Preparing for a wildlife adventure requires careful consideration of essential items to ensure a comfortable life. Here are some recommendations on what to pack for your upcoming expedition:

Clothing:

Dress in lightweight, moisture-wicking layers suitable for the climate of your destination. Include long-sleeved shirts, breathable trousers, sturdy hiking boots, and a waterproof jacket to stay comfortable in various weather conditions.

Binoculars and Camera:

Bring binoculars and a camera with a zoom lens to capture close-up views of wildlife from a safe distance. Don't forget extra memory cards and batteries to ensure you never miss a moment.

Sun Protection:

Pack sunscreen with high SPF, sunglasses, and a wide-brimmed hat to shield yourself from the sun during outdoor excursions.

Insect Repellent:

Protect yourself against pesky insects and potential mosquito-borne illnesses by packing insect repellent containing DEET or picaridin.

First Aid Kit:

Carry a compact first aid kit with essentials such as adhesive bandages, antiseptic wipes, pain relievers, and any personal medications you may need.

Water Bottle and Snacks:

Stay hydrated on your adventures by bringing a refillable water bottle and energy-boosting snacks like trail mix, granola bars, and dried fruit.

Navigation Tools:

Carry a map, compass, or GPS device to navigate unfamiliar terrain safely. Ensure your electronics are fully charged and protected from water damage.

Safety Gear:

Depending on your activities, consider packing safety gear such as a whistle, pocket knife, flashlight, and emergency blanket for unexpected situations.

Travel Documents:

Keep important documents like your passport, travel insurance, and itinerary in a waterproof pouch or secure bag.

Snow Leopard Tour in Mongolia

Mongolia boasts one of the largest populations of snow leopards in the world. Snow Leopard tours attract many to the central Asian country, with wildlife enthusiasts able to see them from much lower altitudes compared to other countries where they are found. While there's never a guarantee of spotting these elusive creatures, this tour offers perhaps the best chance. Arrive in Ulaanbaatar and visit the Przewalski's Horse, a rare and endangered horse native to the Mongolian steppes, before flying to the west of the country. Spend just over a week in the majestic Altai Mountains in search of one of the rarest big cats.

Places to stay nearby:

Ramada by Wyndham Ulaanbaatar City Centre, a short walk from the Buddhist Monastery, this high-rise hotel is also near the capital's railway station and the

Mongolian Natural History Museum.

Website: wildlifetoursmongolia.com

Whale Watching in Newfoundland & Labrador

This Canadian province offers one of the most stunning whale watching experiences globally, as the world's largest population

Places to stay nearby:

The lodge offers different types of safari accommodation and can house a maximum of 24 people at a time. All types feature air conditioning, ceiling fans, private verandahs, mosquito nets, and more.

Website: rhinoriverlodge.co.za

Outback Tours in Australia

The Australian Outback is a must-see experience for many, offering vast open spaces and unique wildlife. Here, you'll encounter kangaroos, emus, pink cockatoos, multiple parrot species, and various lizard species basking in the sun. This region has been

Take a Walk on the Wild Side



image: Michael Peru, Unsplash



image: Red Charlie, Unsplash

of humpback whales returns annually to feed on capelin, krill, and squid along the coast. Almost two dozen other species of whales and dolphins are also regular visitors, including the minke, sperm, pothead, blue, and orca. From May to September, witness these magnificent animals feeding, frolicking, and even breaching near the shores. Catching even a small glimpse of a whale is a memorable experience whether from the deck of a tour boat, the side of a kayak, or on a seaside trail.

Places to stay nearby:

Sheraton Hotel Newfoundland, overlooking St John's harbour, this hotel is a short walk from Bannerman Park and only a mile from the Signal Hill National Historic Sites. It includes an upscale restaurant, lobby lounge, fitness centre, indoor pool, and hot tub.

Website: newfoundlandlabrador.com

Rhino River Lodge in South Africa

This family-owned and operated safari lodge is nestled within the "magnificent" Manyoni Private Game Reserve in South Africa, a 57,000-acre private game reserve in the heart of Zululand. Days at the lodge begin and end with game drives in the reserve, guided by experienced rangers. While in the bush, lookout for lions, elephants, buffalo, leopard, giraffe, cheetah, and rhino. Keep your eyes peeled for a range of birds, including barbets, rollers, kingfishers, sunbirds, and hornbills.

inhabited by Aboriginal People longer than any other land by any human on earth.

Places to stay nearby:

Two Rivers Motel features an outdoor swimming pool, garden, bar, free Wi-Fi, and barbecue facilities for guests. All rooms are equipped with a flat-screen TV and air conditioning.

Website: tworiversmotel.com.au

Manu Wildlife in Peru

This tour promises to take visitors on a journey deep into the jungle of the country's Manu National Park. The lodges are situated in a family-run nature reserve far from other tourist lodges, offering the chance to sleep in a real treehouse. The colours and sounds of the jungle will stay with you for the rest of your life. Manu tours also work closely with local communities to ensure their tours are sustainable, eco-friendly, and socially responsible. Ideal for anyone wanting to experience a part of the Amazon Rainforest, the National Park of Manu houses over 850 distinct species of flora and fauna while providing insight into the life of native indigenous communities.

Places to stay nearby:

The Treehouse Inn, located inside the reserve, offers an authentic jungle experience and emphasises responsible ecotourism. Employees are exclusively local people, ensuring that money goes towards these communities.

Website: manuwildlifeperu.com

The Wolf Experience in Sweden

Take a journey with skilled wolf trackers to learn about the art of tracking and observing wolves and wildlife. Guides tirelessly monitor wolves year-round, offering you a firsthand experience. Gather by the campfire and listen to the haunting howls of wolves echoing in their natural environment. While there's a chance you may not encounter wolves during much of the trip, the anticipation adds excitement. At night, venture deep into wolf territory and set up hammock camps. Join wildlife enthusiasts from around the world and share in this unique experience.

Places to stay nearby:

Hotell Gillet overlooks the Köping River in the town centre. This cosy hotel, with an understated charm, is a short walk

can participate in events and even get close to these feline beauties!

Places to stay nearby:

Tsushima Grand Hotel overlooks the Sea of Japan. This hot spring hotel, with an annex, is conveniently located near the Kaneda Fortress Ruins and the Izuhara ferry terminal.

Website: japan.travel

Florida Everglades

Explore the famous River of Grass, considered one of the wonders of the world. This vast subtropical wilderness and wetlands have been designated as a World Heritage Site, International Biosphere Reserve, and Wetland of International Importance. Along the Tamiami Trail lies the 720,000-acre wilderness of Big Cypress National Preserve, where alligators rule over the



image: Andrew Ly, Unsplash



image: Dustin Humes, Unsplash

surrounding area to the observation tower. Experience a canoe tour to spot aquatic life, including piranhas, followed by a Brazilian churrasco-style picnic lunch on the riverbank. Venture deeper into the Pantanal with wildlife stops along the way. Boat trips offer a chance to see jaguars and giant river otters up-close, providing a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience. Keep an eye out for capybara, caiman, and various bird species, including kingfishers and storks.

Places to stay nearby:

There are several hotels along the way that ensure a fun and comfortable trip. Visit the website for more information.

Website: brazilnaturetours.com

The Greater Coa Valley in Portugal

Experience the natural landscape of this valley, which has recovered in recent

decades, forming large extensions of oak woods. Flourishing natural meadows and ash groves are now home to returning wildlife, including red and roe deer and the mythical Iberian wolf. The valley is particularly renowned for its diverse birdlife, especially birds of prey, which thrive in the flattened landscape along the river valley. Visitors can explore prehistoric traces of humans alongside wildlife and historical mediaeval castles and ancient walled villages.

Places to stay nearby:

The modern Cro Hotel Rural features a barn-like exterior and offers therapeutic thermal spas along the Coa River, close to the picturesque Ponte Medieval de Sequeiros Roman-style bridge and the Vila do Touro. Minimalist rooms and suites feature balconies offering stunning views of the Portuguese countryside.

Website: wildlifeportugal.pt



from Köping train station and not far from the Hedströmmen River. Rooms feature Wi-Fi and TVs, while upgraded quarters boast bright, minimalist decor, with some offering whirlpool tubs.
Website: wildsweden.com

Tsushima Island in Japan

Discover the remote and beautiful Japanese island of Tsushima, boasting a special natural environment. Nearly 90% of the island is covered in forest, creating a unique ecological system and providing a habitat for wild animals found nowhere else on earth. Most famous among them is the Tsushima Leopard Cat, whose numbers are sadly declining due to roadkill and habitat changes. The island's wildlife conservation centre works to protect all of Tsushima's wildlife, including the leopard cat. Visitors

swamp. Travel the 25-mile Loop Road, leading off the main highway into the deeper parts of the Everglades.

Places to stay nearby:

Bordering Everglades National Park, the Miccosukee Casino & Resort off US-41 offers proximity to tours with Gator Park or the Miccosukee Golf and Country Club. The resort features four dining options, from casual to upmarket, along with three bars, a 24-hour deli, and a concert venue. It also boasts a spa, indoor pool, fitness centre, kids' club, gaming arcade, and a 24-hour casino.

Website: visitflorida.com

Jaguar Safari Tour in Brazil

Upon arrival at Cuiaba airport, head to the Pantanal wetlands, taking in the local flora and fauna before taking a hike through the



CROSS CODE

11	18	3	6	5	2	6	5	13		13		19
	11		13		6		18	5	7	2	11	25
13	2	6	25		18	20	10	5		20		5
	20		11		14		13	8	20	18	8	13
24	25	5	5	23	5	13		6				6
25	5	11	22		13	21	11	18		16	15	10
11		13		12		5		14		11		5
7	25	1		15	19	11	22		19	22	11	18
5				20		25	5	26	20	5	13	2
22	6	23	11	25	10		14		18		4	
5		5		18	11	17	5		18	11	6	9
2	4	25	15	11	2		18		5		5	
13		15		22	11	20	10	11	2	15	25	1

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17		N		U		21	22	23	24
25	26											

Each number in our Cross Code grid represents a different letter of the alphabet. You have three letters in the control grid to start you off. Enter them in the appropriate squares in the main grid, then use your knowledge of words to work out which letters should go in the missing squares.

As you get the letters, fill in other squares with the same number in the main grid and control grid. Check off the alphabetical list of letters as you identify them.

MAGIC SQUARE

NOT NEON PROM, OK KEN?

Using all 16 letters of the phrase above, form four words each of four letters which will fit in the grid to form a magic square in which the words can be read both horizontally and vertically.

Quiz Challenge

1. The US gangster Al Capone was eventually jailed in 1931 for what crime?

2. In which sport might a Limerick, Aberdeen and Octopus be used?

3. What is fermented to make the alcoholic drink mead?

4. What S is a type of snake and the name of an air-to-air missile?

5. Actor Ralph Fiennes played archaeologist Basil Brown in which 2021 film set in Suffolk?

6. Which hit musical tells the story of an American Founding Father?

7. TV presenter Anita Manning is known as an expert in which field?

8. Who wrote the best-selling novel The World According to Garp?

9. What was the name of the House of Windsor prior to 1917, and why was it changed?

10. Who became Ireland's first woman president in 1990?

NONAGRAM

WORD PYRAMID

Spell out a 15-letter word or phrase by moving from one chamber to another within the pyramid. You may only enter each of the chambers once and may only proceed through openings in the walls. The first letter may appear in any chamber.

A	R	O
D	O	B
E	V	R

	N							
	E	X	O					
	S	X	P	X	T			
	F	X	T	X	U	X	I	
	O	Y	O	I	Y	N	Y	T

FIVE ALIVE

FS	LO	RA	NT	TE
IC		OL		UR
AE	ND	AT	EP	RT
LB		RO		EU
DS	AU	MR	PE	SD

Here are two miniature five-square crosswords using the same grid – but the letters have been mixed up. You have to work out which letters belong to which crossword.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

1		2		3		4	5		6		7
					8						
9							10				
11									12		
	13	14					15				
16											17
18				19					20		
21						22					
23							24				

ACROSS

DOWN

1. Unruly rascal becomes a sailor (6)

4. He drew horses with stunted tails, say (6)

9. Old cab makes an angry sound (7)

10. A statuette of Wilde perhaps (5)

11. Minister to those who have been ordained by the human race (9)

12. Send friend back around the track (3)

13. Being this, one has no grave doubts presumably (4,7)

18. Drink out of a glass upwards (3)

19. Chew gum and eat junk (9)

21. Smell coming from eastern European river, say (5)

22. Child learning to beg (7)

23. Most of the best Greek city (6)

24. Said to be the path of weddings (6)

1. Will left it, for example, in Los Angeles city outskirts (6)

2. Expressed as part of a wheel (5)

3. Presumed to have included branch in new deal (7)

5. Spike has time on a musical instrument (5)

6. Minute causes of ill-feeling (7)

7. Fiddle when in an awkward predicament (6)

8. Prime minister to embark on division (11)

14. Learn about old prince with new role (7)

15. Stumbling tourist? (7)

16. Companion is cold in store, shivering (6)

17. Food that comes in instalments, one hears (6)

19. Girl scholar, one in the engineers (5)

20. Audibly permitted? Yes, audibly (5)

SUDOKU

Easy

Each row and each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9, and so must each 3 x 3 box.

Hard

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

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

EQUALISER

15	8	
8	6	4
5	3	
12	6	5
2	2	

Place the four signs (add, subtract, multiply, divide) one in each circle so that the total of each across and down line is the same.

Perform the first calculation in each line first and ignore the mathematical law which says you should always perform division and multiplication before addition and subtraction.

This puzzle page is supplied by Sirius Media Services Ltd.

To try our new puzzle, Zygolex, go to www.zygolex.com

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QUICK CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
					8		
9						10	
11		12			13	14	15
17				18			
			19				
20	21		22		23	24	
25				26			
				27			28
29				30			
		31					
32				33			

ACROSS

DOWN

1. Ignominy (8)

6. Nervous (4)

8. Annoy (3)

9. Family member (8)

10. ---- and ends (4)

12. Teams (5)

14. Was unwell (5)

17. Competition (4)

18. Detached (mus.) (8)

20. One-storied house (8)

24. Highest point (4)

25. Scornful expression (5)

26. Fall away (5)

29. Half (4)

30. Cosmos (8)

31. Help (3)

32. Object of worship (4)

33. Pub game (8)

2. ---- of March (4)

3. Sporting defender (inf.) (6)

4. Crops up (6)

5. Always (4)

6. Foreign (6)

7. Useful device (6)

11. Larvae (5)

12. Setting (5)

13. Backless chair (5)

14. Playing card (3)

15. Spear (5)

16. Wooden pin (5)

19. Container (3)

21. Straighten (6)

22. Affable (6)

23. Elk (6)

24. Facet (6)

27. Lather (4)

28. Detached landmass (4)

SOLUTIONS

(1) ACROSS – Forfe: Enter; Dared.

(2) DOWN – Slant; Adapt; Sumps.

DOWN – Scabs; Alarm; Tutus.

NONAGRAM:

abode; above; adobe; adore; adorer; arbor; board; boarder; bode;

boored; boor; bora; border; bore;

bored; bore; bravo; broad; broader;

bro; brood; broader; dobra; dobro;

door; door; drove; driver; over;

oared; oboe; order; oread; orra; over;

OVERBOARD; overdo; read; road;

road; roared; robe; robed; rode; rodeo;

rood; rove; roved; rove; rover.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD:

Across – 1 Lascars; 4 Stubbs; 9 Growler; 10 Oscar; 11 Clergyman; 12 Lap; 13 Dead certain; 18 Sup; 19 Masticate; 21 Odour; 22

DOWN – 1 Legacy; 2 Spoke; 3 Alleged; 5 Thom; 6 Bacilli; 7

Scrape; 8 Premiership; 14 Explore; 15 Tripper; 16 Escort; 17

Cereal; 19 Marie; 20 Abund.

QUICK CROSSWORD:

Across – 6 Edgy; 8 Vex; 9 Relative; 10 Odds; 12

DOWN – 1 Disgrace; 2 Spoke; 3 Alleged; 5 Thom; 6 Bacilli; 7

Scrape; 8 Premiership; 14 Explore; 15 Tripper; 16 Escort; 17

Cereal; 19 Marie; 20 Abund.

WORD PYRAMID:

Put one's foot in it.

8 1 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

11 4 5 6 7 8 9

12 5 6 7 8 9

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Although I have fairly regularly thought that since Magnus Carlsen stepped down from defending his World Championship title and crown, at any point subsequently he would retire from chess and only be seen on those stately occasions when museums and their like, such as St. Louis, praise the history of chess, and that his name would be celebrated along with the other greats, such as Kasparov, Karpov, Fischer, and so on.

How wrong can one be when he jumps right back into contention not just by inclusion into a world-class tournament but by actually winning it! I went into some depth in my last article with the 2023 annual chess awards where the figure of Carlsen ran high, winning several categories, including Player of the Year. Yes, he's succeeded yet again, winning the opening tournament of this year's elite competitions, The Chessable Masters Grand Final. He won Division 1 of the 2024 Champions Chess Tour Chessable Masters at the beginning of February. It wasn't all plain sailing as the French GM, Alireza Firouzja, won the first set of the Grand Final, succeeding in the first two games in a row.

Carlsen, however, who has always impressed throughout his career when backed up against the wall and pressed in a drawn and lost position, has summoned up reserves of ingenuity and waves of attrition to force a game win or draw, and a traction to go on and win the competition. He did nothing less in The Chessable by winning the second set, and the match reset with a 2-0 clean sweep. These recent successes add to his astonishing results in this annual competition. It is his 14th victory in seventeen appearances in the CCT finals, and he finds himself \$30,000 richer, gains 100 tour points, and admission with direct entry into Division 1 again at the start of this annual event and finals at the end of the year. The French number 1, Alireza Firouzja, at 20 years old, is 13 years younger than Carlsen at 33, and had met Carlsen only once before in the 2023 Grand Final encounter, the Julius Baer Generation Cup, which Carlsen won. Nevertheless, in set one, as above, in their latest encounter, the underdog clinched the first 2 games back to back, but commentators felt that the huge effort Firouzja had used to succeed sapped him of the energy required to continue in such form for the continuum, which Carlsen with in-depth energy won! David Howell, our commentator on the scene, stated, "We couldn't have hoped for a more exciting beginning to this game," that is game 1. And, Firouzja, "... shocked the commentators and fans alike in game 2, by outplaying the world's endgame maestro in, yes, the

The Challenge

The chess puzzle has been referred to in the above article and is where Carlsen as White, after his setback against Alireza Firouzja, in The Champions Chess Tour Chessable Masters, refound his tenacity and guile and went on to win the tournament. In this game Alireza as Black has played 40.....Ka7, moving his King out of check from Carlsen's Rook. What move did Carlsen play in response, which, though not obvious, effectively neutralised his opponent's ability to mount any significant defence or counterattack as the game unfolded?

The solution is opposite

Carlsen puts up the good fight, outplaying the outplayed, and doesn't fail to delight

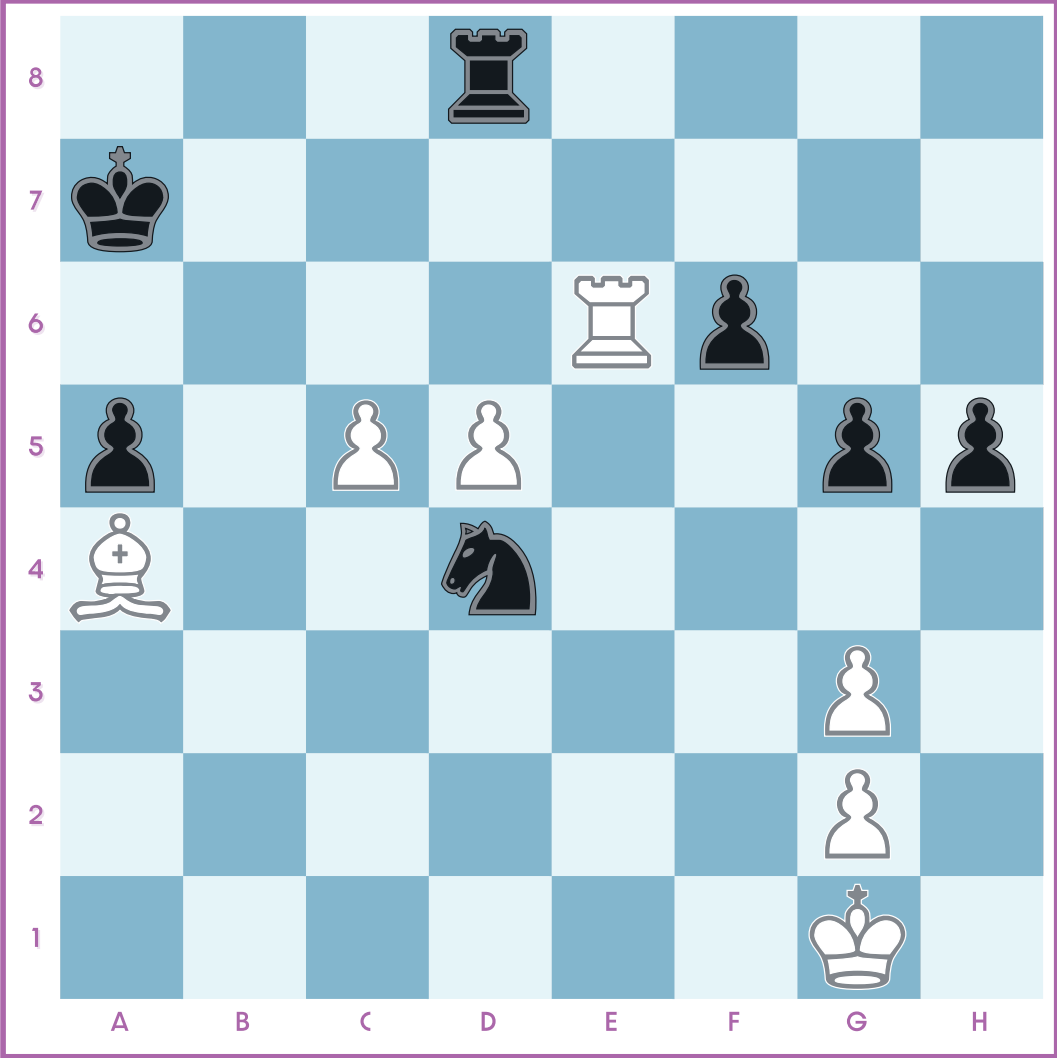
endgame." Carlsen later said, "He outplayed me completely," and, "... it's easy to appreciate the way he activates his King from move 34 to 38, so that it becomes a leader in threatening checkmate." Following the decisive wins Carlsen made later to win the tournament he said, "It was not a sparkling event for me by any means, but it feels awesome to win."

The subject of this month's puzzle is the result of one of Carlsen's wins in the final session of The Chessables. Carlsen pursued his "awesome to win" sensation and revisited it in his next outing, The Freestyle G.O.A.T Challenge, recently played at the Weissenhaus resort in northern Germany, featuring eight of the world's top players. Fresh from his fine win at The Chessable Masters, Carlsen went on to win the G.O.A.T and an additional \$60,000 first prize pot, and "didn't fail to delight" His adversaries, including Alireza Firouzja (again), Nordinbek Abdusattorov, and Fabiano Caruana, were among other players.

Like The Chessable Masters, Carlsen began cautiously in the starting Rapidplay section. Only in the Classical Knockout section did he become alive and proceed as the triumphant overlord, slaying all before him, "outplaying the outplayed!" The slow rise of interest in Chess960 (Fischer Random Chess), the rules for this tournament, is partly due to the abandonment of opening theory, which is allied to the historical development of classical chess and is the cornerstone (touchstone) of every chess player's understanding and development.

It's rather like moving to a new home and not knowing where to go, and when there, not knowing the values, customs, and topology of this new land and place, but the demand is to become accustomed to it. Questions raised and hoped for by the organisers include: Will the new setup change the style of play for each player and allow individual expressive possibilities not realised before? Would the nature of games change and in what way? These and other characteristics are thought to be open to question with new tactics replacing the standard opening theories tied to classically played chess.

Certainly, Carlsen demonstrated in two particular games in the contest that he was on top of the thinking required to measure up to the new positional tactics and thoughts needed. In the semi-final against Abdusattorov and the final against Caruana, Carlsen played what many have called "positional masterpieces" In the latter game, Carlsen's starting position had his White Queen placed on h1, and by playing the Grob Opening, hardly seen in Classical Chess these days, that is, pawn to g4, his Queen was already attacking



Caruana's unprotected black pawn on b7. These games can be fully followed on Chess.com under their G.O.A.T Challenge presentation.

Two further chess fixtures that capture the mind and eye are the ongoing Four Nations Chess League and, of global concern, the forthcoming Toronto-based Candidates Tournament in April. In this event, eight players will vie for the chance to challenge the current world champion, Ding Liren. Among the eight contestants, three are Indian superstars, including Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa, aged 18, from Chennai, the epicentre of India's resurgence in chess prestige. Pragg became a Grandmaster at 12 years old, and if he were to win the Candidates, he would enter the fray against Liren with very good chances, especially since he has won both of their recent encounters.

At a more local level, the Four Nations Chess League, which includes Ireland and the UK, is fully underway. However, this season (2023-24) presents a changed outlook in Division 1. The reason is the absence of the perennial champions, Guildford, who often fielded the entire English Open Chess team. I captained two teams successively in this division in the 1990s and can attest to the very strong level of play and ambition displayed by all the teams striving to win

the title. The absence of Guildford has provided an opportunity and ambition for other strong teams to take the initiative and battle it out, knowing they have a chance to claim the top spot. Wood Green in North London had secured a 2-point lead earlier this year, with Manx Liberty, Cheddleton, the Sharks 1, and Wood Green Youth in close pursuit! The latest results after six rounds show Wood Green with 6/11 points, The Sharks 1 with 5 points, Manx Liberty with 5 points, Wood Green Youth with 4 points, and Oxford 1, with 0 points, languishing in the bottom position among the 12 teams.

The Solution

40. ...Ka7. 41. Re7+Kb8. 42. d6,Rc8. 43. Re4,Nf5. 44. Kf2,... ...a computer analysis at this point stated that any move by White wins in this position, as Black as the opponent has no counterplay. 44. Kf2,Rxc5. 45. Re8+Kb7. 46. d7,Rd5. 47. d8=Q!Rxd8. 48. Rxd8!... 1-0.



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Lupus Street
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NW8 8LW



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