Food bank to provide Christmas for 5,000 children

While others celebrate festive season with £995,000 crackers

BY GEOFF BAKER
geoff@londonweeklynews.co.uk

At least 5,000 children in West London will be depending on food banks for Christmas dinner this year – at the same time as other Londoners will be spending £995,000 for a box of six crackers.

The shocking tale of two cities is exposed in stark opposites: an emergency meals charity estimates that more than 12,000 West Londoners will be living in Dickensian food deprivation during the “festive” season – while nearby in the capital shoppers are buying ruby-decorated Christmas tarts at £475 each.

But big-hearted residents of Chelsea are rallying to help the children for whom the best that they can hope from Santa this year is not presents but some sort of meal.

The No Crossrail In Chelsea campaigners are mobilising their 6,000 supporters to lead a drive to donate to Trussell Trust food banks for the hungry at Christmas.

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THE paper serving the HEART of London
1,500 call for underground stations to be steps free

BY GEOFF BAKER
g eof@londonweeklynews.co.uk

More than 1,500 people are backing calls for Kensington and Chelsea Council to add its weight to a campaign for lifts for the disabled and elderly to be installed in all of the borough’s Tube stations — because of fears that otherwise someone could die.

Support is growing for the campaign launched by the Kensington Labour group’s disability officer Philip Burke, who started the drive for steps-free stations after saving an elderly woman from falling down the stairs at a local station.

“It is very easy for elderly people to trip on the steps and have a very nasty fall that could have grievous consequences,” said Mr Burke.

“I started the campaign after I was following an elderly lady up the steps as she slipped and fell backwards. Luckily I caught her, but if I had not been there she could very easily have hit the steps and split her head open.

“The lack of lifts at Tube stations in the borough is a big problem for old people and for the disabled. People in wheelchairs can’t use the Tube locally at all. As we have an increasing-ly-aging population, this is going to become a bigger problem so we need Transport for London to install lifts.

“The lack of lifts at Tube stations also creates a big problem for parents with young children as it is extremely difficult to get a baby buggy up or down the stairs. Urgent action needs to be taken by TfL, to help all passengers whose travel is made such a struggle because of the absence of lifts.”

Mr Burke and Kensington councillor Emma Dent Coad are now petitioning the royal borough council to support demands that TfL install lifts at South Kensington, Notting Hill Gate, Latimer Road and Ladbroke Road stations “as a matter of urgency”.

Following two action days at local Tubes, 1,500 people have signed the petition calling for local stations to be made steps-free.

Transport for London says it is actively installing steps-free facilities at Tube stations all over the capital. Sixty seven stations now have lifts, leaving 203 stations to be improved. TfL has promised to make a further 40 stations steps-free over the next 10 years.

Sadiq Khan, Labour’s candidate for Mayor of London, said: “An accessible and efficient transport network is hugely important for the thousands of Londoners who commute every day.

“Kensington and Chelsea could learn from nearby Labour-controlled Ealing council which has recently installed lifts at Greenford station, making it fit for the 21st century.

“Too often disabled and less mobile people are disadvantaged when using our trains and tubes. We need a transport network that is admired across the world and serves all Londoners. As mayor, I’ll make enhancing the accessibility of our tube, trains and buses a priority.”

Chancellor offers hope at last for flexible councils

The Chancellor’s recent Autumn Statement felt different. It felt big. It was certainly chock-full of announcements.

But it can take weeks for the mists to clear and the real impact to be understood. We are not there yet so what I am about to say is hedged with caveats and qualifications, the biggest of which is that we still need to see the detail of the local government settlement, which usually arrives mid-December.

But, on the face of it, the spending review leaves local authorities in a slightly better place. The axe is still going to fall, of course, but with a bit of luck it may now do so below the neck.

In Kensington and Chelsea we anticipate that the order of savings we will require each year will perhaps be about a third smaller than in recent years. That still leaves a sizeable annual figure to find which will not be easy.

Remember, austerity started in 2010-11 and since then our budget has fallen by about 18 per cent in real terms. Those who say there is still a lot of fat in local government just don’t know what they are talking about, quite frankly.

Even in Kensington and Chelsea, which started from an unusually strong financial position, we didn’t think we could keep going for more than another year or so without having to make some really painful and very obvious cuts.

After the Chancellor’s statement, however, we can see that it might be possible to do better than this. There will still have to be some difficult decisions and here and there the fabric will be so stretched that the odd hole will appear, but in the main our good services could survive.

I hope that proves to be the case and that by 2019 or so public spending will stabilise.

Personally, I am not anti-austerity. As a country we currently owe about £1.5 trillion. Next year our interest repayments alone will be £51 billion. That simply has to be tackled, and especially when you consider that our defence budget is just £28 billion.

But, when austerity is over, I hope the public and perhaps even the odd politician will remember that it was Britain’s local authorities that took the hit so that health, defence, education and now policing too, didn’t have to.

And perhaps local government will at last get a little credit for being one of the more efficient and capable parts of the state.
Death triggers warning over facade stonework

OWNERS and tenants of restaurants, shops and other commercial properties in Victorian or Georgian buildings in Kensington and Chelsea are being urged to check the condition of their facades to reduce the risk of accidents caused by falling stonework.

The safety campaign comes in response to an incident in which a man was killed by stonework that fell onto the terrace of a bar in London.

The stonework had been part of the original structure and fell because the iron straps tying it to the building facade had corroded.

Council health and safety officers are visiting commercial areas in the borough with outside seating to give advice to owners and tenants.

The council believes it is good practice for all buildings to have a maintenance manual or for the owner to have one prepared based on the findings of a condition survey. This is the only way of ensuring that an appropriate maintenance schedule is in place.

It is recommended that frequent visual checks on the condition of the building are made and that these are backed up by a detailed survey carried out every five years by a competent person.

Owners are advised not to fix anything, such as an awning safety chain, bracket sign, or scaffolding fixings and ties to decorative masonry or stonework, which could add strain or damage to the facade.

Tenant and building occupiers can also be responsible for the mainte-

Tale of two cities

FROM PAGE 1

Christmas. The Trussell Trust, which has foodbanks all over West London, anticipates that it will be providing three-day Christmas food supplies to 12,000 people in the area, of whom 5,000 will be children.

“We will be busy,” says the Trust, which has revealed that even teachers are now relying on foodbanks to get them through Christmas.

“The Trust has seen huge rises in referrals to foodbanks, it’s surprising how fast a crisis can strike. We’ve seen professionals like nurses and teachers referred to foodbanks – people who you might not expect to need help,” said the Trust’s chief executive, David McAuley. “Many households are managing their finances perfectly well on a day-to-day basis, but as soon as an unexpected bill or cost comes in, such as a broken boiler or funeral costs, the impact on finances can be devastating.”

Often, a referral to the foodbank helps people to bridge the gap when the unexpected hits and gives them breathing room to break out of crisis.

“Winter is often the hardest time of year for people in poverty, with many having to choose between heating and eating. That’s why we are so grateful for the donations which will help stop hunger this Christmas.”

On hearing of the new crisis this Christmas, the No Crossrail

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Call to banish all traffic from ‘overcrowded’ Oxford Street

BY GEOFF BAKER

SAFETY calls are growing for the next mayor of London to ban all traffic from Oxford Street after shocking statistics emerged that revealed at least one person is knocked down there every week.

The Living Streets group has launched a campaign for the next mayor to pedestrianise Oxford Street so that it becomes an iconic, safe and enjoyable place to shop.

Sarah Williams, Living Streets’ London Campaigns Manager said: “The situation is about to reach breaking point on Oxford Street. As it is, it’s horrendously overcrowded but with Crossrail due to open in 2018 we’re looking at a significantly bigger problem. We must act now to reduce overcrowding, sky high pollution levels and an unsafe environment.”

The 1.2-mile stretch is already Europe’s busiest retail street and Living Streets says every six days someone gets hit by a vehicle there.

“For many, the experience of crowds and crowds of people on Oxford Street puts them off going altogether, especially at Christmas,” said Sarah Williams. “Oxford Street is a very uncomfortable place for pedestrians, leaving them feeling restricted and people say the change they’d most like to see there is less traffic.”

“Those who do take a trip along it end up feeling flustered, frustrated and fed up. What is this going to mean for future Christmas shopping on Oxford Street if nothing changes?”

“Current projections by TfL are that without a radically different approach to our transport system, there will be increases in congestion of 60 per cent in Central London by 2031.

So will London be a mega city choked by traffic, polluted, hazardous town centres and streets?

Or will it be a world-leading city with the freedom to walk, breathe fresh air and experience our iconic streets, public spaces, and fantastic, thriving town centres. Walking offers a simple solution for our future. By rethinking our attitude towards transport and prioritising and investing in walking, London can be a world-class city to live, visit and do business in.

“A new mayor has the power to make this vision a reality and the first step is by pedestrianising Oxford Street.”

As you would expect, as a plumber, my priority is to get more skilled tradesmen through the apprenticeship route, but I recognise that the apprenticeship model of professionally-verified assessment of skills gained on the job, matched with recognised qualifications that relate directly to the profession is applicable pretty much across the board.

It doesn’t matter if an employee uses a wrench and spanner or a mouse and keyboard, if the apprenticeship model will have a greater benefit to the individual and the business rather than plucking someone off the college and university conveyor belt then, for me, there’s only one choice.

As Priti Patel said at Pimlico: “Employers have a vested interest in making sure the next generation of workers has the skills to succeed. You know what works best for your business and the sort of talent you need to thrive.”

So, the message is clear. If you run a business and you have any sort of focus on the future, apprenticeships are the answer.

Not only do they develop skills, they also breed loyalty and buy-in to company ethos, which has a significant impact on staff motivation and the quality of service offered to customers.

Perhaps then the 5% Club will become the 50% Club and the army of Osborne’s Apprentices will lead this country forward.

Call to banish all traffic from ‘overcrowded’ Oxford Street

Apprenticeships given the credit they deserve

S regular readers will know, apprenticeships are at the top of my agenda.

However, since the Chancellor put the gloss on his Autumn Statement with the details of his Apprenticeship Levy, there is a real feeling that momentum is growing behind vocational training.

Recently I welcomed Priti Patel MP, the employment minister, to Pimlico Plumbers where we hosted a conference for the 5% Club, the campaign to encourage businesses to have five per cent of their workforce made up by apprentices.

Priti and her government colleagues have done a fantastic job to support apprenticeships and their commitment to deliver three million apprenticeships starts in England by 2020 will go a long way to increase the opportunities for young people and address the skills challenges faced by UK employers.

She spoke with passion about how apprenticeships offer young people the chance to reach their potential, achieve a successful career and keep earning. She also made the important point that apprenticeships provide the higher-level technical skills employers need to improve productivity.

It was great to hear and her message has to resonate with young people and employers up and down the country and pick up the pace and perception of change. For too long apprenticeships were seen as a second-class route into a career for those who couldn’t make it on the academic route of further and higher education.

Thankfully that perception has shifted quite a bit and we have seen the upturn in young people wanting to do apprenticeships and within industries companies are recognising that the model is the best way for them to discover, nurture and develop talented workers.

“Don’t get me wrong, we’ve not reached the ‘Promised Land’ yet. There is a big desert to cross and on that journey we need to get more employers to join our caravans.”

Writing for the London Weekly News every week, London’s most outspoken entrepreneur Charlie Pipes Up!

Apprenticeships given the credit they deserve

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Perhaps then the 5% Club will become the 50% Club and the army of Osborne’s Apprentices will lead this country forward.
Transport bosses accelerate plans to reduce traffic jams

BY LWN REPORTER
editorial@londonweeklynews.co.uk

NEW measures are being introduced in a bid to minimise disruption on London’s roads while major work to improve the network continues.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson MP, tasked Transport for London with developing new strategies to ease congestion while they transform the capital’s roads through the £4 billion Road Modernisation Plan.

Last week he visited TfL’s Traffic Control Centre to see for himself the work that is keeping the city’s capital’s roads moving.

The innovations include:

- **Trials of new technology** – for the first time on the TfL road network a new generation of digital road signs will provide live traffic updates with real-time information on journeys using major routes into London.

- **A new smart parking app** - will initially be trialled on the A12, A13 and A40. TfL is also trialling a new operating system of temporary traffic lights that can be remotely controlled from TfL’s traffic control centre. This will mean the temporary traffic lights can be changed quickly and efficiently by staff at the control centre to manage traffic flow and cut delays through roadwork areas.

- **A London 2012 Games-style communication campaign** – each day TfL keeps its 450,000 @tfltrafficnews followers and website users up-to-date with the very latest traffic information and traffic cameras so people can plan ahead.

Now four years old, the account is one of the most followed traffic news accounts in the world, with more followers than all the major London travel feeds combined.

The website has also recently been updated with a rainbow-based alert to alert people to delays on key arterial roads, as well as having detailed maps with anticipated disruption for the coming months, particularly during peak times.

The predicted traffic impact of works is also clearly highlighted to residents and businesses through maps and leaflets, while companies can search on a postcode-by-postcode basis to ensure that any potential delays are factored into their planning of deliveries.

- **Expanding the use of road junction technology**, including the world-leading ‘Split Cycle Offset Optimisation Technique’ (SCOOT) to optimise traffic light timings in outer London.

The introduction of SCOOT has proven to reduce delays by up to 12 per cent at each junction where it has been installed. By May 2016, almost 4,000 sites will be using this technology across London – double the number since the Mayor came to power in May 2008. By 2018, more than three-quarters of London’s 6,000 junctions will be upgraded with SCOOT, helping to manage and reduce congestion.

- **Moving story** - for Transport for London has announced new measures to reduce congestion.

- **Moving with sat-nav companies** – the Mayor and TfL are encouraging firms to take advantage of the latest technology by using TfL’s extensive data feeds to update sat-navs so motorists can be provided with real-time Tfl information as they drive, ensuring they can take the most appropriate routes.

- **Dynamically managing London’s road network using the 24/7 traffic control centre** – the team manages traffic 24 hour a day, utilising state of the art technology to ensure junctions and routes are managed effectively in real-time.

- **Managing incidents and congestion** - through the new Roads Policing Units - targeted police enforcement is carried out at the busiest locations and known hotspots to boost safety for all road users and reduce delays.

- **Working with the freight industry** - to retine deliveries to avoid the busiest times - an online road impact tool allows freight operators to see works up to 12 months ahead to understand the impact for each set of works. With 90 per cent of goods moved around London by road, TfL also continues to provide tailored advice to businesses, operators, businesses and others to help them re-time deliveries to avoid the peak times of 07:00-13:00 or route them away from the busiest locations.

- **A ‘Lane Rental scheme’ which targets roadworks at the busiest locations and bus times** - it is already seeing over 90 per cent of work carried out during quieter periods – massively reducing disruption.

All surplus money raised through the Lane Rental scheme is reinvested into measures to further reduce the disruption. These include the trials of the temporary traffic signals announced today, new Automatic Roadwork Monitoring cameras to allow TfL to better determine whether work is taking place and better use of rapid cure reinstatement materials to help reopen roads quicker, signalling a new era for roads.

Now that the implementation of the Road Modernisation Plan has begun, there have already been a number of improvements.

- **TfL says** that its ‘Road Modernisation Plan’ includes hundreds of projects to improve the streets as the capital grows in size.

- **Telegraph** - says “Across London, improvements are being delivered day and night as new cycle routes are created, traffic signals, pavements and highways are upgraded; new public spaces are made; and junctions are re-designed to make them safer.”

The current phase of improvements has been half way point, and with the summer period now over on Londoners are being thanked for their continued patience with more work due to start.

Benefits of the work are already being delivered with the redesign of the regional Elephant & Castle roundabout to a new peninsula with two-way traffic; and segregated cycle superhighways; improved junctions, to separate cyclists from traffic on Vauxhall Bridge and Whitechapel.

Further projects include major refurbishment work to the Hammersmith Flyover, Fore Street Tunnel and Chiswick Bridge.

- **In the coming weeks** major improvement work will begin to redesign Stockwell Gyratory, with segregated cycle lanes and more public space; and deliver pedestrian improvements and more public space at Bow Roundabout.

By summer 2016 work on both substantially segregated East-West and North-South Cycle Superhighways will be completed, as well as the major redesign of junctions such as Stockwell, Oval and Apex Junction in Shoreditch to make them safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

TfL is also looking at long-term measures to tackle road congestion in the coming decades. In January, it will host an extensive exhibition outlining the latest plans for strategic measures to tackle congestion and cleaning London’s air. This will include plans for new tunnels and fly-unders that open new areas up for redevelopment, as well as more strategic measures to help keep freight deliveries serving the capital while also reducing congestion at peak times.

Garrett Emmerson, Chief Executive of Surface Transport at TFL, said: “When we began work to deliver these improvements earlier this year, we promised the public it was possible to keep London working and moving. We are now delivering on our promise on Chiswick Bridge, the Hammersmith Flyover and the first sections of the North-South Cycle Superhighway will be opening in the next few weeks. But there is a lot more to do yet, and we’re asking all Londoners to bear with us whilst we complete these important projects.

Just as we did during the London 2012 Games, we’re working around the clock to innovate and deliver on our pledge to best manage the road network. By providing accurate and detailed information to all, we’ll continue to ensure Londoners, businesses and road users can plan ahead to avoid the hotspots and minimise disruption.”

To help Londoners plan for the delivery of the Road Modernisation Plan, TfL has undertaken a massive programme of communication and stakeholder engagement, designed to provide everyone affected with the detailed information they need – including maps, leaflets and online resources – to plan their journeys and avoid delays.

- **For detailed information on the impact on central London and north west London, or for advice on how to plan travel options, visit www.tfl.gov.uk/roadtraVelTube.

In addition to the above, TfL has accepted a bid for a legal bid for the use of private equity and the building of a West London mega-basement.

It is reported that Jon Hunt and his wife have already started work at their Chelsea home in a commercial mansion at 10, Kensington Palace Gardens – the former Soviet Embassy Mission which is next door to the French embassy in Kensington.

According to the Property Resource website, they were first granted planning permission and listed building consent in March 2008, and a smaller scheme was given listed building consent in 2010.

In 2011, the freehold owners Crown Estates granted a limited licence to allow certain works of excavation to go ahead.

At a recent hearing before a judge at the High Court, the French government challenged the validity of certificates of lawfulness granted by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea last April to allow completion of the property tycoon’s project.

Mr Robert Griffiths QC, appearing for the French authorities, had argued that the listed building and lawful development certificates were both flawed and that the reasons and should be quashed. But last month Mr Justice Hoggalice, sitting in London, announced that he had dismissed the French’s action to quash the certificates.

Paul Brown QC, for the Hunts, told the judge that had the case been heard in the case earlier in November “They are acting lawfully. They have permission to build.”

The French authorities had taken legal action against the bid, because “they don’t want (Mr Hunt) to complete the basement.”

Night Tube negotiations

TALKS between union leaders and Transport for London bosses are under way in a bid to resolve issues blocking progress with the Night Tube.

London Underground bosses are being pressed by their trade union to sign off on the proposed Night Tube plans with pay changes.

The updated offer included an extension of the three-year pay rise offer to four years.

All staff on the Night Tube lines, Victoria, Central, Northern, Piccadilly and Jubilee, were also reported to have been offered an additional £500 bonus.

Memorial for victims

A GARDEN space created in memory of the victims of domestic violence in north west London on the Lillingston and Longmoore Gardens Estate has been named.

Councillor Nickie Aiken, who declared the poignant feature officially open last year, told guests at the opening ceremony in September that the garden brought together nine organisations - from FPW to domestic abuse specialists, to domestic abuse services for the BME and LBFT community under one service.”
Alzheimer’s trial seeks volunteers

A TRIAL into a promising treatment for Alzheimer’s disease is looking for participants in London.

The drug, called iraglutide, is already used for the treatment of diabetes and has shown promising results in laboratory tests for Alzheimer’s and in a small preliminary study in people with the condition. The trial is funded by a number of organisations, including Alzheimer’s Society and Imperial College, with support from other charities, pharmaceutical companies and the NHS.

Evidence suggests that there is a strong link between type 2 diabetes and development of Alzheimer’s disease. Diabetes occurs when cells in the body cannot properly process a sugar known as glucose. It is thought that in Alzheimer’s disease, brain cells cannot use glucose properly, which may stop the cells from being able to function.

Volunteers in the trial will take the drug iraglutide or a placebo drug for a year. The researchers will use a variety of brain scans and memory tests to see the effect of iraglutide on the brain function and memory.

The current treatments available for Alzheimer’s alleviate the symptoms for a while but do not treat the underlying causes of the disease. It’s been over a decade since the last Alzheimer’s treatment was approved for use. The advantage of testing an already-licensed drug as a dementia treatment is that the drug has already passed many of the required safety tests. This means that if the drug is shown to benefit people affected by dementia, it can be brought to those who need it sooner.

The trial is being led by Dr Paul Edition of Imperial College London. He said: “We are asking people who have mild Alzheimer’s disease to take part in this trial to find out whether iraglutide has any effect on the condition. Volunteers to take part in trials is a vital aspect of research and we very much appreciate the time and effort that our participants have put into this study already. The more people that take part, the quicker we will understand the potential effects that this drug may have on Alzheimer’s disease.”

If you are interested in taking part in the study, please contact the team at 0208 383 3704 or 0208 383 1969 or email: memory@imperial.ac.uk

www.alzheimers.org.uk/researchandstudy

Bridge project seeks backers

LONDON could get a £90 million bridge over the River Thames between Canary Wharf and Rotherhithe -- if the scheme can attract sufficient investment.

Reports say it will be designed by ReForm Architects and will have a central span of 184 metres, with ramps rising from each bank. Plans include building two five-metre-wide decks to provide separate routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

Nik Randal of ReForm Architects, said: “Our work has demonstrated that whilst other opening bridge types present problems for this location, it is possible to design a bridge that meets these challenges with an elegant, welcoming and unique structure.

“Our design (will respond to the significance of its setting), creating an internationally recognisable landmark. Its unique and elegant form and operation will become an attraction for visitors. It will enhance the views along and across the Thames, providing scale and interest in the way that the ships on the river itself do.

London Mayor Boris Johnson is reported to have tweeted that he “loves the scheme”.

The architects are now looking for private investors for their project.

Big idea for an advent calendar

CHRISTMAS shoppers and excited children will have no excuse for losing track of time in the countdown to the big day in West London – a giant advent calendar on an LED screen at Marble Arch will tell them exactly how many days there are left to go.

The calendar, believed to be the biggest in Europe, links the retail district of Oxford Street with the Winter Wonderland attraction in Hyde Park. It has been set up thanks to a partnership between Westminster City Council and hi-tech giants Samsung.

The landmark feature will also display a New Year countdown following the Christmas countdown.

Cllr Robert Davis, deputy leader of Westminster City Council, said: “Westminster loves Christmas – and the millions of people that come to the area do as well.

“We have fairs in Leicester Square, lights on Oxford Street and our world-famous Norwegian Christmas in Trafalgar Square – so we wanted to extend the festive cheer even further by hosting an advent calendar at Marble Arch.

“It is an exciting project and we hope residents, businesses and visitors enjoy the display.”

Lifeboat crew rescues rowers

A LIFEBOAT rescued two rowers from the River Thames after their boat capsized last weekend.

Reports said the pair were tipped into the water when one of their oars struck a navigation buoy near Strand on the Green on Tuesday morning.

A resident spotted the oarsmen and called 999. The coastguard sent Chiswick RNLI lifeboat crew to the scene. The two men were able to get to the riverbank and the RNLI team arrived minutes later and gave them blankets.

The four-person volunteer crew included aseeman who was a drama student at Goldsmiths College, where one of the rescued rowers is a student.

The team also recovered the craft onto the lifeboat and returned the scullers and their rowing boat back to Putney Town Rowing Club.
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- londonnewyearseveball.co.uk • 0207 836 1033 -
Salute to the street’s stars

BY GEOFF BAKER
geoff@londonweeklynews.co.uk

A PREDICTED 40 million shoppers will descend on Oxford Street for an estimated combined spend of more than £2.3 billion in Christmas shopping this year.

And to celebrate the festive season, London’s most famous shopping destination is shining a light on what it calls its Retail Stars, the people behind the famous brands who serve the streets’ shoppers this Christmas.

“From customer service veterans with decades of store-front experience, to dynamic up-and-comers who have risen quickly through their company ranks, this year’s Retail Stars shine at our most iconic shopping destination,” said a spokesman for the Oxford Street Association.

Boasting almost 100 years of combined retail experience and exceptional customer service are the Oxford Street Years-of-Service Stars –

- Egbert Barbier, stock movement supervisor, Debenhams – Ensuring that all of Debenhams’ products hit the sales floor and are accounted for year-round, Egbert has been a key member of Debenhams’ stock movement team for the past 32 years.

- Munasinghe She, customer assistant, Boots – Loyal to Boots for more than three decades, Munasinghe has delivered exceptional service to customers in various Boots stores for more than 35 years. Munasinghe was in Sedley Place in 2005 when Boots opened its Oxford Street store – she is now gearing up for her 10th Christmas serving customers at the store.

- Family-footsteps Retail Stars – sprin kled along Oxford Street are also a number of second and third generation Retail Stars following in their families’ footsteps.

- Zack Stone, managing director, Steven Stone – Grandson of Steven Stone founder Al Stone. Zack spearheads the expansion of his family’s 78-year-old jewellery brand as managing director of Steven Stone’s newly launched London store at St Christopher’s Place. In addition, Zack heads up the company’s Hale showroom and recent expansion into the US via its Palm Beach showroom.

- Claire Constantine, manager, Lush – Daughter of Lush cosmetics co-founders Mark and Mo Constantine, Claire has spearheaded the planning and launch of Lush’s flagship Oxford Street store. In addition to building and managing a team and delivering premium-level customer service, Claire has helped develop some of Lush’s 200 exclusive Oxford Street products and will help Lush put a bath bomb in the water at least 23,808 times in December.

- Abigail Clapich, sales manager, Debenhams – Abigail is following in her grandfather’s retail footsteps, working her third Christmas on Oxford Street in the same store, where her grandfather supplied coats and ladies suits to the then Debenhams and Freebody in the late 1940s until the 1970s.

Unexpected Retail Stars – other unique Retail Stars behind Oxford Street’s exceptional product and service offering include:

- Ming-Chau Nguyen, Senior sales advisor, Miss Selfridge – one of the unsung heroes of Miss Selfridge’s festive fashion offering, Ming-Chau single-handedly processes 200 embellished party dresses per week, preparing for the busy Christmas party season.

- Isabella Rocha, senior sales advisor, River Island – championing Christmas cheer to River Island during the day, 19-year-old Isabella moonlights as a competitive national cheerleader by night. In between all of this, she finds time to pursue academic interests, undertaking a degree in Portuguese and Brazilian studies at Kings College.

- Tom Morely, sales manager, Debenhams – Tom is your quintessential British fellow, with a love of driving classic British motor cars.

However, Tom is the man who knows his cosmetics from his cars, as he proudly works behind the Debenhams cosmetic counter for his ninth Christmas after 15 years at Debenhams.

School’s tribute to Matilda

A REMARKABLE 10-year-old girl collected a very special prize at the British Dyslexia Association’s Annual Dyslexia Awards recently. Matilda McEwan, from Peterborough, won the Child Award, sponsored by Fairley House School, one of London’s leading independent day school for children with specific learning difficulties.

Before she attended the awards dinner in The Hall, at Gray’s Inn, London, Matilda visited Fairley House School. There she met pupils who, like her, need special help to overcome their lost confidence because of dyslexia.

Matilda also met the headmaster, Michael Taylor, and other staff, toured the school and took part in the school day. She then joined in one of the classes to experience the unique trans-disciplinary style that Fairley House follows.

On judging the Child Award – for young people aged 12 and under – Mr Taylor said: “Matilda is a wonderful example of how the right educational approach can overcome almost all barriers presented by dyslexia. Her story matches the ethos of our school and we’re proud to be giving her this award. She is an outstanding ambassador for raising dyslexia awareness.”

Fairley House senior school is based in Pimlico and its junior school in Lambeth Road.

Could you care for him?
We are looking for ordinary people to take on an extraordinary role

✓ 24/7 support and mentors
✓ An allowance of up to £502 per week per child

Come along to our information evening on 15 December, 6:30pm at Morden Baptist Church.

Foster
Call us today 0800 073 0874
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MERTON COUNCIL

Ben can’t live at home

Foster
"Tis the season for grant giving

Angela McConville, Chief Executive of Westway Trust, launches the second round of the Community Grants programme

In January we are making a second round of grant funds available as part of the Community Grants programme to small community organisations to celebrate the culture and heritage of the area, support a diverse range of local talent, improve community health and well-being and increase economic well-being.

This investment is in addition to the tens of thousands of pounds we distributed earlier this year, building on our commitment to supporting local organisations, projects and people to thrive.

This year we’re offering grants of up to £2,500 each to small community organisations in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Grant making has always been an important part of our work at Westway Trust and one we plan to expand in the coming years.

The vast majority of our funding for grant making comes from the rent we get from commercial tenants on the estate.

A portion of that rental income is then distributed to an incredible collection of local organisations and charities.

The talent and potential of the local community is obvious to anyone who spends any time here and often what’s needed is simply some funding to help that potential to be realised.

Many of the grants we made last year are already bearing fruit.

Young black women trained in dance and choreography are given a platform to showcase their own original works by one of the organisations we made a grant to last year.

Another is running art classes for children, including in carnival costume making and photography, serving the community’s heritage and capturing the life and personalities of the area.

The latest production, Rise and Fall, a reworking of Julius Caesar, has been receiving rave reviews from audiences, with one saying it was “refreshing to see young aspiring actors from this generation making a difference” and another saying “I understood more about the play in two hours than at school.”

We appreciate that our contribution is relatively small and that the organisations and projects support already do a fantastic job at providing opportunities for people.

Nevertheless, we are proud to play our part in providing an extra funding boost, particularly in these austere times, to help organisations and projects to reach and provide opportunities to even more people.

The window for applications for the next round of funding is open in January and I hope that once again we are able to support a variety of projects.

Anyone who is interested should visit www.westway.org where they will find information about how to apply.

In the following round we hope to introduce a bigger funding pot and larger grants to support longer term projects and new cultural events that harness the heritage, creativity and diversity of the area.

Use the map above to find your favourite participating shops and traders. The colour of each business corresponds to the colour on the map. Don’t forget to get a sticker for every £5 you spend (limited to 2 stickers per business).

For full details please see www.rbkc.gov.uk

Charity carols

With the generous support of residents, local businesses, celebrity readers and pupils from a local school, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Mayor, Councillor Robert Freeman, raised nearly £13,000 for his mayoral charity at a carol service held at Our Lady of Victories Church in Kensington on Thursday evening.

The mayor’s charity is supporting lung cancer research at Royal Marsden and The Royal Brompton hospitals.

The packed congregation heard poetry, prose and readings from the Bible given by Lady Ella Windsor, Penny Junor, Cerys Matthews, Andrew Pierce, Melanie McDonagh and Liz Arnold. Soprano Marie Macklin delighted the audience with a solo piece, accompanied on the piano by her husband, Timothy Teague (who also played the organ for the evening).

The church was filled with songs from Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School’s sixth form choir, which earned rapturous applause at the end of the service.

The evening was rounded-off with mince pies donated by the Ivy Restaurant, which is soon to open a brasserie on Kensington High Street.

Guests at the service heard the medical directors of the Royal Marsden, Professor Martin Gore, and The Royal Brompton, Professor Tim Evans, speak of the advances in understanding lung cancer and finding ways to treat it.

Professor Gore said: “The door to finding new treatments isajar and now is the time to push it open. That is why the financial support given by the Mayor’s Charity has the power to make such a difference.”
New firm promises whatever you want in an instant

A NEW personal concierge business that promises to deliver busy Londoners anything from anywhere within central London has had customers making £30,000 orders with the ‘I want it now’ service.

The entrepreneurs are ordering Henchman’s team to fetch them 99p cheeseburgers.

Henchman has a team of drivers based across the capital who promise they can collect any item – from exclusive restaurant dishes to fast food, from alcohol to last minute gifts, from concert tickets and emergency make-up to dry cleaning – and deliver to wherever they are required.

All orders are made through the app or online, and can be placed seven days a week, from 8am until midnight, and 1am on Fridays and Saturdays.

The service costs between £1.99 and £5.99, depending on where the order is from, plus 10 per cent of the value of whatever is ordered – and there is no minimum order.

And the delivery drivers themselves are set to become a focal point on Lon- don’s streets, as each wears full uniform of striking black jacket, shirt and red tie – and always removes his helmet before making the delivery. The bikes, meanwhile, feature distinctive Henchman wings at the back.

Henchman has been trialling in parts of the capital over recent months - and its founders have been amazed at the varied uses customers are coming up with.

Co-founder and chief executive Ryan Perera said: “We say we can de- liver anything, and we look forward to our customers putting that challenge to the test.

My favourite deliveries so far include a fridge, which we delivered within 60 minutes of the order coming in, cinema popcorn to people holding a movie night with friends at home, and more than a few hangover cures in the shape of beroccas, lemsips and chicken soups.

“We even had someone use Hench- man on a sunny day whilst sitting in a restaurant in the City – the sun was shining in his eyes so he ordered a pair of Ray Bans that we delivered to his hands before his second pint.”

Each Tube star will produce a video providing a teaser into what the work experience placement will offer, encouraging young people to sign up in the process.

A host of Barclays Premier League clubs have signed up to the initiative including Chelsea, Manchester City, Tot- tenham Hotspur, Aston Villa, Newcastle United, Southampton and Leicester City.

They are offering opportunities to participants across marketing, coaching, administration, retail, hospitality and catering. All of the clubs will be supporting the scheme through in- ground advertising, programme advertising and social media.

LifeSkills is a free, curriculum-led programme developed to inspire young people to get the skills they need for a better future. The LifeSkills CV Builder supports people through a simple step-by-step process to further populate their CV, providing helpful hints and tips along the way. It can also connect with a young person’s Facebook and Twitter accounts to supercharge their CV.

To find out more about LifeSkills and to apply for work experience of a lifetime you can visit the website www.barclayslifeskills.com/dream-job

Celebrity leads carol concert

TV PRESENTER and Alzheimer’s Society ambassador Ruth Langsford will host a dementia-friendly carol concert at St Paul’s Knightsbridge to raise funds for Alzheimer’s Society.

The special event, one of six being held across the country and Northern Ireland, will start from 7pm on Tuesday, December 15 and include festive readings from Sir Michael Parkinson, Sir Tony Robinson, Lesley Manville OBE and comedian Hugh Dennis. There will also be lively musical performances from leading choir Vasari Singers and a performance from an Alzheimer’s Society choir from the Brain group from Wandsworth.

As part of Alzheimer’s Society’s commitment to creating Dementia Friendly Communities, all of the Carols by Candlelight events will be dementia-friendly, meaning that they will be fully supportive of all people with dementia. It will also be an opportunity for people to listen to the audience attendance through dementia-friendly signage, additional stewards on hand to guide people to seats and volunteers being briefed to ensure that they know some of the key words and phrases for when working with someone with dementia.

Guests are treated to mince pies and mulled wine in a post- concert reception. Visit www.alzheimers.org.uk/carols for tickets, call 0330 333 0804 or email carols@alzheimers.org.uk

Rogue skin creams alert

THOUSANDS of image-conscious Londoners are risking their lives by continuing to use banned skin lightening creams that can seriously damage organs and cause cancer, according to London Trading Standards.

The capital’s trading standards’ association – which works with 33 local authorities – has renewed its health warnings to both the public and retail traders about the danger of using such products this year from hair and beauty salons and shops, highlighting the scale of the problem.

Many of these products contain dangerously high levels of hydroquinone, mercury or steroids which can result in severe skin problems from skin thinning and discoloration to organ damage and even cancer.

“It is an offence to distribute cosmetics which have not been tested and registered by their manufacturer or importer. These traders are not only playing with the lives of their customers, but they also face prosecution, fines of up to £200,000 and even imprisonment on conviction or jail. Most of them know what they are doing is wrong as they hide the products under the counter or in stock cupboards. In the past month, traders in Enfield and Southwark have been successfully prosecuted, with one receiving a suspended jail sentence and another being made to pay thousands of pounds in costs and fines. A number of other prosecutions are imminent. The Cosmetic Product Enforcement Regulations 2013 make it an offence to distribute non-approved cosmetics. Traders are advised by London Trading Standards to check their stock has the required labelling, including an ingredients’ list, EU name and address plus batch number.”
TUESDAY 22 DECEMBER
11AM - 4PM

Join Santa & his reindeer for an afternoon of
FAMILY FUN AT
STAMFORD BRIDGE

It's absolutely FREE!

SANTA & REINDEER
PENGUINS
FAIRGROUND STALLS
ICE SCULPTING
GIVEAWAYS & COMPETITIONS
INTERACTIVE FOOTBALL GAMES
FOOD & DRINK

Stamford Bridge, Fulham Road, London, SW6 1HS.
Nearest tube: Fulham Broadway
Joanna stars at annual tea dance

ACTRESS Joanna Lumley was the special guest at Westminster City Council’s annual tea dance at the prestigious Grosvenor House Hotel on Park Lane.

A thousand guests from across the City of Westminster danced the afternoon away to music from The Red Stripe Band as well as enjoy dancing performances and afternoon tea courtesy of Grosvenor House. The event took place on Sunday, November 29.

Ms Lumley chatted to guests throughout the afternoon and also presented a hamper, donated by Fortnum & Mason, to Evelyn, who at 99-years-old was the oldest guest at the event. Evelyn said: “I’ve had the most fabulous time. I only wish that I could get up and jitterbug too!”

Ms Lumley said: “There was dancing and jiving, eating and talking. So many smiles and so many people connecting. It’s fantastic. Think of older people and remember them, love them and help them to join in.”

The tea dance is hosted by councillor Christabel Flight, Lord Mayor of Westminster, who founded the event to help tackle loneliness amongst older people.

She said: “The tea dance is a chance for older people to get out of the house and enjoy a glamorous afternoon of dancing and companionship. It’s a great way for people to get together with friends, make new ones and have a fun afternoon. The volunteer police cadets were on hand to dance with those without a partner so everyone could join in.

“Loneliness can have a devastating effect on people’s lives as well as their physical and mental wellbeing and we hope that the tea dance goes a little way in helping to alleviate it, even if just for an afternoon.”

Martin Cobblah, 66, from Queen’s Park, was one of the guests at the event and said: “Bringing people together creates community spirit for local people.”

Bernadette McCarthy, 84, added: “When you live on your own you have no reason to dress up so events like this are important.”

Henry Maguire, 72, said: “The most splendid generous festivity. I can’t refrain from dancing! It makes me feel to terribly welcome.”

The tea dance is supported by the Sir Simon Milton Foundation, a Westminster-based charity which works to tackle loneliness amongst older people; The Daily Telegraph; Grosvenor House, a JW Marriott Hotel and Shaftesbury.

The London Weekly News Thursday, December 10th 2015 editorial@londonweeklynews.co.uk

The queen of the forest, from Norway with love

The countdown to Christmas in London has well and truly started – with the raising of the world’s most famous Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square.

Each year since 1947, the 25-metre tree has been given to the people of London from the people of Norway in gratitude for Britain’s support for Norway during the Second World War.

For people right across London and the UK, the Christmas tree and carol singing in Trafalgar Square signal that the countdown to Christmas has begun.

This year’s Norwegian Spruce is 55 years old and was carefully chosen as a future Trafalgar tree 25 years ago, earning its nickname “the queen of the forest”.

It was cut down in November in the forests surrounding Oslo by the Lord Mayor of Westminster and the mayor of Oslo. The tree then embarked on a 1,000-mile journey across the North Sea to central London. It was raised off the back of its truck using an hydraulic crane and then decorated in traditional Norwegian fashion, with 300m of lights – amounting to almost 770 energy-efficient light bulbs.

The tree was officially illuminated on Thursday, December 3. The Lord Mayor of Westminster hosted the ceremony with special guests including the mayor of Oslo and Norwegian and British ambassadors, and the Deputy Mayor of London, Roger Evans.

Norwegian soprano Ann-Helen Moen sang Silent Night and the Children’s Voices Choir and the Choir of St Martins-in-the-Fields also performed, with music provided by the Regiment Hall Band of the Salvation Army. Three children from St Clement Danes Primary School read The Secret Song of the Tree, a poem by Ian McMillan grown from the ideas, images and lines of London primary schoolchildren. The event culminated in the switching on of the lights by Her Highness Princess Astrid of Norway to press the button.

The Lord Mayor of Westminster, Councillor Christabel Flight, said: “I would like to thank the people of Oslo for this remarkable tree. As well as being a wonderful festive occasion, this is a great opportunity to celebrate 68 years of our partnership with Norway.”
First night nerves as Harry gets lead role

PRINCE Harry reportedly told ITV chiefs that he was nervous about taking the spotlight at the Royal Command Performance with Sir Elton John and One Direction – but he’s been commanding performances from pop stars since he was at primary school.

Harry’s first rock show dates back to when the 31-year-old prince was only eight, when he and his brother and their mum snuck in as the only guests at a gig by Sir Paul McCartney.

Maccab holds the Guinness world record for playing to the largest indoor crowd in history, set in 1990 when he performed to 184,000 at Rio’s Maracana Stadium. But in 1993 he set another record for his smallest crowd when he played to just the royal trio at Pinewood Studios.

Sir Paul, his wife Linda and their band were rehearsing at the studios for his New World Tour and his security team was told that the gig was off-limits to everyone and nobody, not even the head of his record label EMI, was to be allowed in.

But the strictly-no audience rule had to be broken when Princess Diana made a surprise visit to tour the studios with a little prince in each hand.

Maccab stopped the arranged show, which was being filmed by an eight-camera crew directed by Aubrey Powell, to welcome the unexpected royal party, and then gave the

Cell, cell, cell... Prince receives jailhouse shock

THE Prince of Wales is facing a problem over one of his properties with an unusual “cell by” date – Dartmoor Prison, owned by the Duchy of Cornwall, is to close.

The notorious granite institution, leased to Her Majesty’s Prison Service at a rent of £1.2 million a year, is to end its long history as one of Britain’s most infamous jails.

The prison, which opened in 1809, is to cease to be because the Ministry of Justice has given notice that it will not renew the lease as part of a Government programme to incarcerate villains in more modern jails. Although the lease does not run out until 2024, the closure presents a problem for the Duchy as the prison at Princetown provides jobs for around 300 people.

Now the Duchy will have to consider an alternative use – possibly knocking down the prison and redeveloping the site as homes on the lines of the Prince of Wales’s model village at Poundbury, just outside Dorchester, or converting the building into a hotel.

Although the building currently sleeps 641, it is believed that a major – and costly – modernisation would have to be done before many of the 2.4 million tourists who visit the moor each year could be persuaded to check in, despite the vast number of bars.

However, Dartmoor may have a future as a hostel. Developers in Holland and Sweden have successfully converted old prisons into cheap accommodation for backpackers. Another option is the example of Malmaison in Oxford, where the 95-room former jail in the city’s Castle Quarter now operates as a chic hotel with rooms from £120 a night.

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Harry takes centre stage at command performance

FROM PAGE 13

Harry said: “Jack Whitehall makes me nervous” and he was wise to be anxious as he came in for some of Whitehall’s affectionate lip.

Kicking off the show, Whitehall said Harry was one of his heroes, adding: “He may only be a prince but when it comes to banter, all hail the king.”

He added Harry was the kind of man who, if his friend passed out drunk, he would say: “Stand back, I’ve got this. You get a Sharpie. You take out a camera phone. You hand me that razor. Those eyebrows are coming with me.”

He also quipped that in honour of Harry they would turn the venue into a nightclub after the show and at one point Whitehall looked up at the Royal Box and said: “It was a tequila you ordered wasn’t it, your Royal Highness?”

Whitehall also told the crowd: “His Royal Highness has quite a few fans back there. I don’t want to mention any names ... ahem Kylie Minogue ... ahem ... Ricky Martin.”

Whitehall, who went to the same school as Harry’s sister-in-law, the Duchess of Cambridge, has used his links to Kate and Marlborough College in his past performances, telling of his mother’s disappointment that he failed to marry the former Miss Middleton.

Having greeted Harry after the show, Whitehall said: “He said that the first and last time he’s going to laugh at me. I went in for the handshake and he pulled the other way.”

WHERE TO SEE A ROYAL THIS WEEK

FULL details of Royal events are on www.royal.gov.uk but here’s the London schedule for the week ahead

December 8

- The Countess of Wessex, as Grand President, St John Ambulance in the Priory of England and the Islands, will attend a Service of Lessons and Carols for Christmas at The Priory Church followed by a reception at St John’s Gate, St John’s Lane, Clerkenwell.
- The Princess Royal, as Colonel, The Blues and Royals (Royal Horse Guards and 1st Dragoons), will attend the Household Cavalry Foundation Carol Concert and Reception at Guards Chapel, Wellington Barracks, Birdcage Walk SW1.

December 9th

- The Prince of Wales, as President, Business in the Community, will attend a Leadership Network event at The Trexy, Tower Hamlets.
- The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, as Patrons of SkillForce, Place2Be and SportAid, will attend ICAP’s 23rd annual Charity Day at ICAP, Broadgate EC2.
- The Princess Royal, as President, Animal Health Trust, will hold a Fellowship Reception at St James’s Palace.
- The Princess Royal, as President, The Mission to Seafarers Limited, will attend a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at St Michael Paternoster Royal, College Hill, and a reception at Skinners’ Hall, London EC1.

December 10th

- The Princess Royal, as President, Voluntary Service Overseas, will attend a Christmas Concert and Reception, Central Hall Westminster, Storey’s Gate SW1.
- The Princess Royal, as Renter Warden, the Fishmongers’ Company, will attend a Committee of Wardens Meeting, a General Court Meeting and a Luncheon at the Fishmongers’ Hall, London Bridge.
- The Duchess of Gloucester, as Royal Patron, The Lullaby Trust, this evening attend a Christmas Carol Concert at St. Columba’s Church.
- Princess Alexandra, as Patron, will visit St Christopher’s Hospice, Lawrie Park Road, Sydenham.

December 11th

- The Duke of Kent, as Patron, The British Rowing Foundation, will attend an Annual General Meeting and Presentation Evening at The Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospitals Charity Christmas Concert in St. Luke’s Church, Sydney Street SW3.
- The Duke of Kent, as Colonel in Chief, will attend The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Regimental Dinner in the New Armouries at the Tower of London.

December 14th

- The Royal Family, as Athletics Trust, will attend a Carol Service at Crown Court Church, Russell Street WC2.

December 15th

- The Duke of Gloucester, as Joint President, Cancer Research UK, will attend a Christmas Carol Concert of Carols, Music and Readings at St Paul’s Cathedral.
Keen-eyed Kate puts family life into focus

BY GEOFF BAKER
geoff@londonweeklynews.co.uk

THE Duchess of Cambridge is set for a new royal role – as the monarchy's official "monkey".

Palace aides are believed to be considering whether properly-trained Kate should take all, or at least many, of the royal family's photographs following wide professional acclaim for the high standard of her recent pictures of her children.

Experts say she could easily step into the shoes of the late Patrick Lichfield, the earl and cousin of The Queen who was renowned for his official royal portraits.

Lord Lichfield, who took the formal pictures at the wedding of Prince William and Kate in 2005 and ever since the royal family has had to rely on photographs by celebrity or Press Association snappers for special occasions when a professional picture is issued.

Although Buckingham Palace will have picture approval rights on any photographs made public, the drawback is that due to the copyright laws the photographer owns the pictures – unless the royals operate a system popular with many celebrities of expensively buying the copyright.

But the problem of how to keep royal photographs "in house" could be solved if Kate becomes the palace "monkey" – a term used by Fleet Street veterans to describe newspaper staff photographers.

The term is widely believed outside newspaper circles to be pejorative, but it is in fact affectionately used, although its derivation has long been a matter of dispute.

Daily Mirror photographer Andrew Stenning claimed the term came from photographers following Prince Charles on foreign royal trips in the Seventies and Eighties, when they had a habit of climbing up trees to get a better shot. Charles was annoyed about this and is said to have once given a packet of peanuts to some reporters with the comment that the foreground becomes sharper.

However, the Duchess is not the only one with "the eye" at the palace. The Queen has long been an enthusiastic photographer, as is the Duke of York – who published a 160-page book of his own pictures in 1985. And for more royal photographs check out the Royal Collection, which houses 450,000 pictures in the Round Tower at Windsor Castle.

"These photographs were acquired by British monarchs, their consorts and other members of the Royal Family from 1842 to the present day. They consist of portraits of royalty from Britain, Europe and beyond; portraits of celebrities and statesmen and photographs taken by members of the Royal Family," said a spokesman.

"Queen Victoria and Prince Albert laid the foundations of the collection during the 1840s. Queen Victoria was particularly keen to acquire portraits of people from all walks of life but Queen Alexandra, consort of King Edward VII, was the most celebrated royal photographer of her time.

"Her photograph albums are unique personal diaries, providing a fascinating insight into the lives of the royal families of Europe from the 1880s to the First World War. With her camera she recorded her friends and family, and the places she visited on her extensive travels."
Auntie’s Christmas tonic

by Geoff Baker

This week’s celebrity is an embattled force facing the threat of euthanasia on its 90th birthday next year, which is a shame, because all of the stars of British showbusiness — world showbiz, even — she was once the brightest, the cleverest and the most adored. She was the benchmark, the standard to which all others aspired and she knew everybody; kings, queens, idols and icons, they all flocked to be her darling.

But now she is some sort of pathetic Miss Havisham of the 21st century; withered, faded and patched up in her tattered old best — and it hasn’t helped her reputation much that John Cleese recently said that he wouldn’t touch her with a bargepole.

We call her “Auntie”. It’s an affectionate term for someone who is increasingly becoming so derailed and indeed, per Cleese, seemingly-detested, but as with any old aunt who goes around the twist, our condemnation of her irritating ways is tempered by fond memories of when she was fab and fun. And she was once. Once we would look forward to Christmas with Auntie with glee and eager anticipation. Once she would make our Christmas, she was its highlight, bedazzling and amusing us as we sat amid the piles of torn wrapping paper passing Matchmakers and Twiglets, our eyes never leaving her face as we lapped up the succession of enchanting spells that she cast.

But no more. Last Christmas, the best that she could do was to attract just over seven and a half million of us to pay attention to her withering away in the corner. And that best Christmas Day rating was for a show called Mrs Brown’s Boys, a cod-Irish and deeply-embarassing drag act sitcom which has also been called “the worst comedy ever made” (The Guardian) and “lazy, end of the pier trash”.

The TV critic Paul English, who made that last damning assessment for the Scottish Daily Record, continued: "One half-hour of this, now officially-recognised as the equal of its mass-market and so the public turned to the wireless, with no break of any sort, because of the sheer folly that would be and of the advantages of private over public, etc." The BBC will argue that its old audition tape is record-setting day to notch up sales exceeding $1 million — the release of the Grand Theft Auto 5, a book as a reflex”.

The BBC is well aware of the threat of euthanasia on its current run-down state, which is why it is not until the 710th word of its 1,133-word press release that the BBC’s “outstanding range of distinctive programmes” for Christmas that it can bring itself to even mention Mrs Brown’s Boys.

Even though it knows that Mrs Brown’s Boys wouldn’t have got a look in.

Clearly the BBC is well aware of the embarrassment of its current run-down state, which is why it is not until the 710th word of its 1,133-word press release that the BBC’s “outstanding range of distinctive programmes” for Christmas that it can bring itself to even mention Mrs Brown’s Boys.

As with all of us Cinderellas who can no longer afford to dazzle at the ball, the BBC’s problem is a lack of money. While it may attempt to defend itself vigorously against the growing complaints of “there’s nothing on!” the fact remains that with its £145.50 licence fee frozen until 2020 and controlled by a Government fetishistic of the advantages of public over private, it has very little cash left in the coffee jar for buying new frocks.

And the ignominy of its poverty is made all the worse by the coming of its big anniversary next year. 2016 marks the 90th year since the inauguration of the British Broadcasting Corporation, which largely became an institution because the General Strike of 1926 temporarily closed all of the newspapers and so the public turned to the wireless, with no break of any sort, because of the sheer folly that would be and of the advantages of private over public, etc.

The TV critic Paul English, who made that last damning assessment for the Scottish Daily Record, continued: "One half-hour of this, now officially-recognised as the equal of its mass-market and so the public turned to the wireless, with no break of any sort, because of the sheer folly that would be and of the advantages of private over public, etc.”

Let’s hope so. Let’s hope that the Poldark horse is the outsider that actually makes Poldark such a blatant sex object, readies it for another go at the throne. Let’s hope that the knives of Westminster are not as their primary source of information, as is the case for everyone this Christmas.”

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Sapori Sardi is a bane of authentic Sardinian food and carefully selected Italian wines. Sapori Sardi is owned and run by husband and wife team, Piero and Gul, who have created a warm and friendly atmosphere and have been known to sit and chat with their diners over a glass of Mirto at the end of a busy day!

Piero Taris (Owner & Chef) was born in Sardinia and arrived in London in 1986, aged 26 and full of enthusiasm and passion for the unique flavours of his homeland.

Piero uses authentic products imported from Sardinia together with fresh local produce to prepare a menu that is refined and innovative whilst maintaining the strict traditions of his distinctive region. He has been cooking since he was 11, learning to bake bread from his father, Giulio, who was a Master Baker in the Italian army during the 2nd World War.

Piero began working in a kitchen at 16 and was Head Chef at the age of 21 at the renowned Torre dei Corsari in Costa Verde. He has taught Italian Cuisine to chefs at some of the world’s finest hotels including the Sheraton Group.

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall is leading a new war on waste – in the kitchen and the supermarket shelves.

By Ella Walker
Press Association

CAMPAIGNING TV chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall is unashamedly bullish about his frugal approach to food.

‘I haven’t got any recipes for completely mouldy lemons that have gone blue, but if it’s muddy at one end, then I’ll cut that end off and use the other half,’ says Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, being quite serious.

This is, after all, a man who was once nicknamed “Hugh Fearlessly-Eatsitall” and his latest book, Love Your Leftovers, sets out to get everyone else doing the same.

The 50-year-old celebrity chef, famed for his River Cottage series and books, is horrified at the amount of food and leftovers we chuck in the bin, and sees odds and ends as “a really legitimate source of ingredients”.

“More than half the meals I put together incorporate something from a previous meal, or something that’s knocking around or needs eating up, that’s wagging its finger at me saying, ‘If you don’t eat me soon I’ll be on the compost’.

“This is something that’s very ingrained in me, but talking to others, it’s something people don’t always have a lot of confidence around,” he says, explaining the drive behind the book.

“There’s a lot we can do to get the best out of our ingredients, throw less away, to save money and address what is amounting to a major environmental problem, and we can all do our bit. But it doesn’t have to be done out of a sense of guilty conscience, it can be done with a great sense of joy and excitement, because – here’s the real crux of it – I’ve always found the dishes I spin out of leftovers to be the most satisfying and delicious.”

From salvaged greens and leftovers lamb transformed into a shepherd’s pie, the Old Etonian does also include recipes for crispy fish skeletons (which he admits is going “out on a limb”) and potato peel soup.

“You can actually spin a really original and delicious little snack from a mackerel skeleton and a little bit of spice from the cupboard,” he buzzes, adding: “And potato peel soup is an absolute revelation!”

Apparently it tastes like the liquefied skin of a baked potato, packed with “an earthy, almost mushroomy, umami flavour”.

Fearnley-Whittingstall’s obsession with leftovers is just one of the many strands of food waste he abhors. In 2010, his Fish Fight campaign successfully fought “crazy EU laws” that allowed 50 per cent of catch, edible fish to be thrown back overboard, dead, and now he’s getting on the case of ordinary shoppers and supermarkets.

“Between a quarter and a third of the food we produce is thrown away, and we bear responsibility for about half of that at home,” he explains, while the other half is the responsibility of the big retailers.

“It’s to do with their incredibly strict cosmetic standards and big piles of food accumulating at the farms, not because the farmers want to throw it away, but because the supermarket said, ‘That carrot’s not straight enough’.”

His recent BBC series, Hugh’s War On Waste, set out to challenge people and companies to radically reduce the amount of food waste they produce.

“Food waste is a solvable problem. We just need to be a bit smart about how we address that, and if we’re going to demand that of the supermarkets – and I think we should – we also have to be ready to do our bit.

“Being based in Devon, his family rarely gets takeout (unless it’s Parmesan). Correct the seasoning and add more stock if necessary, Serve immediately, with the rest of the stock and cooking in the same way until the rice is soft, but retains a bit of bite. The risotto should be quite moist at this stage, neither too dry nor too wet.

“Regardless of the options available, for this foodie, organic, home-grown produce will always be his ideal.

“Even if I’ve been cooking to camera all day,” he explains, “when I get home, for me, the way to relax is still to see what’s in the fridge, grab a couple of things from the garden and improvise the meal – albeit with a glass of wine in my hand.”

So, if your fridge is overflowing with odds and ends, before chucking them in the bin, have a go at one of the recipes from Fearnley-Whittingstall’s new book.
As a big fan of off-the-cuff humour and a self-confessed musical theatre fanatic, Showstopper! The Improvised Musical sounded like it was probably going to be a winner, but I had no idea just how exceptional this show could be, writes Nicky Sweetland.

The team from the 90s improvisation TV show Whose Line is it Anyway played a very successful run at the Adelphi Theatre back in the summer – which proved there is still an appetite for this style of anarchic entertainment. Josie Lawrence and co often parodied musicals over the years, but the idea of being able to sustain both the humour and the ardour for the duration of an entire musical still sounded like a mammoth task, and to do a West End run, well that was either going to be foolhardy or the stuff of legend.

The premise of the show is that a narrator-cum-master of ceremonies first invites the audience to suggest plots, styles and settings for the actors to portray as a full-scale musical for the evening.

On this particular night, it was suggested that the show would be set on an allotment, with the hotly contested village fete about to take place. Entitled A Marrow Escape, what then ensued was, I’m pleased to say, pure genius.

With a Romeo and Juliet style plot, the rival families made up of the six cast members performed an all-singing all dancing musical feast, with styles ranging from the Rocky Horror Show to a wonderfully performed piece of opera and everything in between.

At points, the made-up dialogue was so funny I thought I might fall off my seat and with some really catchy melodies, provided in conjunction with the astonishingly talented band, I was in musical theatre fanatic heaven.

I watched the show in its final week at the Apollo, and was delighted to hear that I will get another opportunity to experience this unique production, as it has been announced that Showstopper! The Improvised Musical is being extended, with a transfer to the Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue, for just 10 more performances between February 15 and July 25.

Don’t forget, the amazing thing about this production is that you will actually see a different show each time you visit! For more details visit the website theshowstoppers.org.

The tiger is very much the star of the show, and although the performance up until his entrance is charming and reasonably engaging, once the top cat arrives, you can feel the energy in the auditorium ramp up a notch. It’s a shame we don’t get to hear his voice as you would if the show was true to the original story, but Benjamin Wells as the tiger enthralls with his dancing and mime and with the show’s target audience being pre-schoolers and their families, perhaps actions speak louder than words.

For me personally, the running time of 55 minutes with no interval is a bit long, and so I would assume an infant would find the same, particularly when the tiger is not on stage. There are some really nice bits of audience interaction, but once the tiger leaves, the show needs to wind up, and I feel there isn’t any added benefit of more songs and a drawn out ending.

The Tiger Who Came To Tea is at the Lyric Theatre until January 10. For more details visit website thetigerwhocametotealive.com

They’re just making it up as they go along (and it’s brilliant!)
Billy Elliot at the Victoria Palace Theatre

To December 17

Billy Elliot is a funny, heart-warming and feel-good celebration of one young boy’s dream of a gripping tale of triumph over adversity. This original story captured the hearts and minds of the world when the movie was released in October 2000. Nominated for three Oscars and 13 Bafta awards, this poignant film broke box office records across the world.

Elf the musical at the Dominion Theatre

To January 2

This year’s festive must-see show is going to be this heart-warming extravaganza. The show, based on the 2003 film which starred Will Ferrell in the title role, was a smash hit on Broadway and is likely to be London’s hottest ticket this season, despite the much reported high ticket prices. The show stars Nick Park and Richard Loncraine’s Kimba Walsh alongside West End heartthrob Ben Forster, who will once again play the eponymous hero after wowing audiences last year in the role in both Plymouth and Dublin.

A Christmas Evening with Stoll Veterans

December 16

Christmas music and readings in aid of Stoll, a charity providing housing and other services to disabled and homeless ex-service personnel and other people with disabilities in London. Features the Band of the Honourable Artillery Company and the Choir of St Paul’s Knightsbridge, and takes place at St Paul’s Knightsbridge, Wilton Place, SW1X 8HT. Tickets £25. Children under 16 are admitted free. Price includes refreshments. Tickets: 08004118881 or www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2245852

Carols in Trafalgar Square

To December 23

More than 50 carol groups each sing for an hour beneath the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square to raise funds for voluntary or charitable organisations. Reimagining something of a winter wonderland with the world-famous Christmas tree in place (an annual gift from Norway since 1947), the scene is set for an atmospheric recital of classics. From Deck the Halls and Good King Wenceslas to Ding Dong Merrily on High and The Holly and the Ivy, various tuneful groups sing to raise much needed cash for charity.

The World Goes Pop at the Tate Modern

Until January 24, 2016

Over 200 works by artists from Latin America to Asia celebrates the many faces of pop art. This show isn’t about the pop art you know, it’s about the pop art that escaped the history books. And it certainly packs a punch. It’s fun, engaging, colourful and highly influential. The exhibition presents a fresh, exciting, unexpected and sometimes stunning view of this most popular of art forms. It is a chance to engage with the most interesting and influential trends and artists of the last century,

Argentine, Japan, Brazil and Eastern Europe. In an opening gallery painted scintillating red, the work quite literally pops off the walls. Here, traditional techniques are turned on their head, such as Japanese woodblock printing in Ushio Shinohara’s ‘Doll Festival’, (1966) which is reinvigorated with the use of industrial materials like Perspex.

Walt Disney’s Sleigh Bells at BFI Southbank

December 12

The world premiere of the new restoration of the Walt Disney film Sleigh Bells (1928), featuring the first ever Disney character, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, a long-eared precursor to Mickey Mouse, will take place at BFI Southbank on December 12 as part of a programme of A Disney Christmas: Seasonal Shorts, screening other festive Disney gems from the 1930s to the present day.

Cats at the London Palladium

Until January 2

Enduringly popular musical Cats will play at the London Palladium for a strictly limited run until January 2, 2016. Beverley Knight is Grizabella the Glamour Cat. For more details visit the website catsthemusical.co.uk

Barry the Penguin at the Theatre Café, Shaftesbury Avenue

December 12

Barry the Penguin will visit along with some of his friends and includes many of the songs from the stage musical. This is a FREE listings service for local charitable and community organisations.

The Theatre Royal Stratford East, with their acclaimed team at Theatre Workshop, will present a new adaption of Shakespeare’s so-called problem play with a good idea, writes Nicky Sweetland.

In fact, owing to the subject matter, you could say it was “ill conceived” – Desperate Measures, based on Measure for Measure, sadly proves that you can’t always improve a story by adding music and a bit of a contemporary twist.

The show, which is playing at the Jermyn Street Theatre, falls very short in terms of a professional production and although the young cast shows some promise, it feels at all times like a mediocre school play.

Perhaps basing a new musical on one of Shakespeare’s so-called problem plays wasn’t such a good idea, writes Nicky Sweetland.

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Set in 1960s London, the musical poses of Robin Hood, what society may have been like had the free love revolution been ripped out the bad before it gathered pace, and instead the government had imposed a moral crackdown outlawing sex out of wedlock.

A pop star, a nun, a zealot deputy prime minister and lots of ladies of the night could make for a speedy and amusing farce but the script, music and direction are just far too contrived and the production clunky and slow. That’s not to say it is all bad and the show markedly improves in act two, mostly due to the addition of daughter of acclaimed theatrical director Sir Trevor Nunn, gaining more stage time and proving there is obviously real acting talent in her genes.

There are also a few nice ensemble numbers with some good choreography and the musical accompaniment is sympathetic but with sound levels another issue, the solo voices are often overpowered.

With original musicals both far few and far between, it’s important to experiment with different stories and settings, but perhaps a play that doesn’t fit happily into genre is not a wise choice as a starting point.

Innovation is not made to measure

The prince of thieves is on a mission

WITH the pantomime season really starting to gather pace, there is one place that’s really worth a visit.

The Theatre Royal Stratford East delivers great pantomimes for audiences of all ages year upon year. Its speciality lies in producing a show that reflects the dynamism of its vibrant community and capturing new audiences through its innovative storytelling, making it arguably one of the most relevant and entertaining pantomimes in London.

This Christmas audiences will be transported to the land of Sleafordham by the Olivier Award nominated and critically acclaimed team at Theatres Royal Stratford East, with their new adaption of Robin Hood. Combining the timeless story with a contemporary and fresh script and original music, this version hopes to impress audiences during its run at the renowned East London producing house.

Robin Hood, the prince of thieves, and his band of merry men are on a mission this Christmas! As he robs from the rich and gives to the poor, he’s on a quest to save good King Richard and the poor people of Sleafordham by trying to defeat evil Prince John. But who will save the day? Will it be brave and daring Robin Hood? Or will it be the feisty and fearless Maid Marian?

Under the direction of Theatre Royal Stratford East’s artistic director, Kerry Michael, this magical story is full of laughter, energy and surprises along the way and is likely to be enjoyed by all generations.

Kerry said: “Pantomime is a big part of our annual programming at Theatre Royal Stratford East and I’m thrilled to be working with such a great and creative team, yet again. We pride ourselves on delivering pantomime inclusive to all, which speaks to the people – and this year is no exception. For many young people this will be their first experience of the theatre and we aim to make it one they will want to repeat.”

Robin Hood is running until Saturday, January 23. For more see stratfordeast.com
It’s time for fun, Cinders

The panto season is upon us and theatre critic Nicky Sweetland will join the audiences to see as many shows as she can (oh yes she is!)

Cinderella
Lyric Hammersmith ***

I’ve seen a lot of pantomimes over the years. In fact last year I saw 13 productions by the end of the season, and although there is still a lot of snobbery about the genre, with the right formula, a panto can make for a fabulously entertaining show to rival the biggest West End blockbusters.

The key elements are that it needs to be funny for both adults and children, have great characters, good music and must never forget that there is a story to be told.

Over the coming weeks I will once again be venturing into the world of panto and I started this year’s marathon with Cinderella at the Lyric Hammersmith.

The Lyric is well known for its Christmas productions and over the years has gained an enviable reputation for cool and contemporary takes on some of the classic fairy tales. This year’s show is no different, with the fable of the downtrodden stepdaughter having been given a trendy lift by up and coming playwright Tom Wells.

There are no glass slippers for this feisty Cinders, played with real aplomb by Krystal Dockery, who instead dons a pair of spangly converse trainers to go to the ball. Krystal is a former ensemble member who has made the jump to lead cast and proves she is more than up to it with her energy and sparkle.

Her Prince Charming is another Lyric alumni, Karl Queensborough, whose innocent and urban portrayal is adorabke. He also shows a real vocal aptitude, both when performing solo and when singing a lovely duet with Krystal.

These aren’t the only memorable songs but they could really do with being a few more musical interludes, especially for the very underused ensemble and with a talent like Sam Buttery in the cast it feels a shame he is not utilised further.

Buttery, who is best known for being a contestant on BBC’s The Voice, plays Buttons and when he finally gets his chance to shine, shows his vocal prowess with a mesmerising finale. He teams up with the Ugly Sisters, Booby and Licious (Matt Sutton and Peter Caufield) for some of the comedy elements, including the obligatory slop scene, which unfortunately felt a bit under-rehearsed and lacked the slick timing that would make it funnier.

Not your regular pantomime dames, the Ugly Sisters are actually a bit more like a couple of uncouth blokes. They have a good rapport, both with each other and with the audience, but some of the humour aimed at the adults feels a bit tasteless, which means they come across as just too unsophisticated.

The same cannot be said, however, of the dazzling Sarah Crowe, who plays the evil stepmother with a perfect dose of acid wit and a measure of divaish flair.

The show as a whole is both beautifully costumed and designed and the magical transformation scene to close act one is truly stunning.

With its unique local nuances, I’m sure Cinderella will be another hit with the patrons of the Lyric Hammersmith.
Coming soon at HIDEAWAY

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Revered by many as possibly the greatest ever soul/gospel voice from outside the United States, the “UK Queen of Soul” has a new album in the works and is set for a huge 2016 - snap up your seats for this intimate two-night run while you still can!

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206A King Street W6 2015/05992/FUL Installation of 2no. electrical charging points for vehicles and 1no. feeder pillar; formation of 2no. designated 'Electronic Vehicles Only parking bays'.
Erection of a single storey roof extension; installation of 1no. rooflight in the rear roof slope.

42 St Peter's Square W6 2015/05996/FUL Erection of a single storey front roof extension; installation of 1no. rooflight in the front roof slope.

7 Wİnslow Road W6 2015/05589/FUL Erection of a rear roof extension; installation of 1no. rooflight in the rear roof slope; installation of 2no. electrical charging points for vehicles and 1no. feeder pillar; formation of 2no. designated 'Electronic Vehicles Only parking bays'.

2015/05559/FUL Conversion of first and second floor level to 2 rooms as single storey rear extension; installation of French windows; removal of existing windows and 1no. existing rooflight in the rear roof slope.

66 And 64 Hartwood Road W6 2015/05506/FUL Erection of rear roof extensions and 2no. external rooflights; formation of a roof terrace at first floor level.

26 Finlay Street W6 2015/05621/FUL Amendments to previously approved planning application ref: 2015/0577/FUL, granted 15th December 2014 for the erection of a single storey rear extension to the side of the existing building.

26 Finlay Street W6 2015/05682/LBC Approval of a planning permission refusal 2015/0526/FUL, granted 15th December 2014 for the erection of a single storey rear extension to the side of the existing building.

14 Kinnoul Road W6 2015/05661/FUL Erection of a single storey rear extension at first floor level; construction of new rear roof; installation of French window; removal of existing windows and 2no. external rooflights.

109 Claxton Grove W6 2015/05425/FUL Erection of a single storey rear extension; installation of 2no. electrical charging points for vehicles and 1no. feeder pillar; formation of 2no. designated 'Electronic Vehicles Only parking bays'.

109 Claxton Grove W6 2015/05526/LBC Planning applications.

7 Wİnslow Road W6 2015/05425/FUL Erection of a rear roof extension; installation of 1no. rooflight in the front roof slope; installation of 2no. electrical charging points for vehicles and 1no. feeder pillar; formation of 2no. designated 'Electronic Vehicles Only parking bays'.

2015/05589/FUL Erection of a single storey roof extension; installation of 1no. rooflight in the rear roof slope; installation of 2no. electrical charging points for vehicles and 1no. feeder pillar; formation of 2no. designated 'Electronic Vehicles Only parking bays'.

2015/05559/FUL Erection of a single storey roof extension; installation of 1no. rooflight in the rear roof slope; installation of 2no. electrical charging points for vehicles and 1no. feeder pillar; formation of 2no. designated 'Electronic Vehicles Only parking bays'.

2015/05559/FUL Erection of a single storey rear extension at first floor level; construction of new rear roof; installation of French window; removal of existing windows and 2no. external rooflights.

26 Finlay Street W6 2015/05589/FUL Erection of a single storey rear extension at first floor level; construction of new rear roof; installation of French window; removal of existing windows and 2no. external rooflights.

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South London Press (1865) Ltd. is part of the Tindle Newspapers Ltd., a group of privately owned, independent, family newspapers.
NEW Queens Park Rangers manager Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink faces a baptism of fire as he leads his team into action against two of the Championship’s leading promotion contenders.

Fifth-placed Burnley visit Loftus Road on Saturday, before leaders Brighton & Hove Albion travel up to W12 next Tuesday. Just 13 months after taking charge of lower league Burton Albion, Hasselbaink continues his rapid rise up The Football League ladder following his appointment last Friday. Incredibly, he becomes QPR’s 19th manager in 10 years (if you include caretakers – see table).

It’s hardly surprisingly, then, that both parties seem to be exercising a degree of caution – the new man has signed a rolling contract, rather than a long-term deal. David Oldfield, who was Hasselbaink’s assistant at Burton, joins him in west London. R’s interim head coach Neil Warnock revealed the news after Nedum Onuoha sealed a 1-0 victory at Reading last Thursday night. “Jimmy will find it tough but there’s no reason why he can’t be successful,” Warnock said.

- Former Dutch international and Chelsea striker Hasselbaink cut his managerial teeth in Belgium with Royal Antwerp before landing the Burton job in November 2014.

Opportunity

The 43-year-old said: “It was not an easy decision to leave Burton but when you get the opportunity to come somewhere like QPR, with the club where it is and the squad we have at our disposal, it was something I couldn’t turn down.

“I feel that this is a club on the up – it has an exciting feeling about it. And I want to keep that feeling going by taking more positive strides forward.

“I am happy to get the opportunity here at QPR, to lead QPR family to be at the front of it all, put my stamp on things and take the club forward.

“This is an incredibly proud moment for me and I will give my all to represent the badge of the club.” Director of football Les Ferdinand said: “We went through a very meticulous recruitment process that generated a lot of excellent candidates. “We have been hugely impressed by his work at Burton. Having won League Two, he leaves them at the top of League One, which is an incredible achievement.

“No-one can question Hasselbaink’s admirable accomplishments in a short time at Burton but the hurry-up of the Championship is a world away from the two leagues below it. As such, his appointment represents another gamble by a club that has spun the managerial merry-go-round too many times in the past and lost.

Relish

From his point of view, it’s a chance he should relish. Last week’s victory at Reading – where sacked manager Steve Clarke, a recent Fulham target, after the game – leaves R’s exactly halfway in the table.

But Hoops are only three points behind the top six and given the unpredictable, often volatile, nature of the second tier, that gap could be closed before the year is out if Hasselbaink can get QPR playing.

** Key county cricket dates

- **SURREY** will begin their 2016 campaign with a visit to Trent Bridge to play Nottinghamshire on Sunday, April 10.
- **Gareth Barry’s** men will end against Durham at the Emirates ICC, with a four-day match starting on Monday, September 12. Prior to the opening competitive fixture there will be a three-day match between Surrey and Loughborough MCCU at the Kia Oval from Thursday, March 31 to Saturday, April 2.
- As a Surrey regaining Division One status, their only festival cricket next summer will be played at the Guildford Festival, where Warwicks will provide the opposition from Saturday, July 2 until Tuesday, July 5. As in 2015, the two matches played at Woodbridge Road will be split, with Surrey’s first visit to the ground being a London One-Day Cup match against Sussex on Tuesday, June 14.
- For their opening T20 Blast fixture Surrey will travel to Chelmsford to play Essex on Friday, May 20, with the first big match at the Kia Oval coming against Glamorgan on Thursday, May 26.

** Now for the good news...

- **WHILE Jose Mourinho continues to enjoy youth with suspicion, Chelsea’s under-18s continue their brilliant season. Now unbeaten in 10 games, they thrashed West Ham United 4-0 in the U18 Premier League.**
- **Jacob Maddox, Miro Muehim, Trevoh Chalobah and Ike Ugbo scored the goals that keep the young Blues four points clear at the top.**
- **Manager Joe Edwards said: “I was really disappointed after the game away at West Ham earlier in the season. We were second to everyone and did not show the character or desire that is needed in a Chelsea versus West Ham match. I think the boys have been looking forward to putting that right ever since. That’s been evident in our preparations throughout the week and in the way we started the game.”**

**relevant**: Paul Lagan

Paul Lagan
**Floundering Fulham on slide**

_{By TONY McDONALD}_{

_Floundering, rudderless Fulham are in urgent need of the kind of instant boost only a new manager can provide if they are to halt their slide down the table._

_In their three league games since manager Kit Symons was fired on November 8, Whites managed 1-1 draws at lowly Milton Keynes Dons and at home to Preston North End and have now been thumped 3-0 at Nottingham Forest. All three opponents are in the bottom half of the Championship table._

_Fulham are there, too, having dropped to 16th, just six points clear of the relegation zone, and without a win in their last five._

_Symons, even when they lost they usually entertained in games overflowing with chances and goals. But now they are losing or drawing and struggling to score, managing only five in the last five matches, while conceding 14 from the same run of wireless fixtures._

_With no sign of a permanent replacement for Symons being unveiled as LWN went to press, the last thing a managerless club needs is a visit from its in-form local rivals._

_Brentford will arrive at Craven Cottage on Saturday off the back of a run that has seen them lose just one of their last nine league games._

_Of course, caretaker head coach Peter Grant tried to put a positive spin on defeat at the City Ground, where Forest central defender Matt Mills headed goals from corners either side of a strike from Chris O’Grady._

**Can’t defend set-plays**

_“The way we played we were excellent for big periods of the game,” said Grant. “But it’s the old Achilles’ heel – if you can’t defend a set-play, then you’re going to have trouble in this division, because this division’s built on set-plays.”_

_The loss could have been heavier but the crossbar denied Mills a hat-trick of headers in time added on. At the other end, Ross McCormack and recalled centre-forward Matt Smith had good chances denied by Forest keeper Dorus de Vries._

_Grant went on: “I thought today, apart from the set-plays, we defended ever so well, we created chances and moved the ball as well as anybody I’ve seen in this division – and I’ve seen a lot of games in this division this season._

_“Our two central midfield players (Scott Parker and Jamie O’Hara) dominated the game. We had to take Scotty off with a slight tightness in his legs just because of a lack of goals.”_

_However, many Fulham fans don’t share Grant’s estimation of Parker’s worth. At 35, the manager is now re-assessing their ability to finish in the top four._

_The only time we had a contact with the ball (in the penalty area) was the (Nemanja) Matic one, where it was difficult for him, with the mask he was wearing. It was also difficult, as the cross was fast and it was difficult for him to react – to give direction to the ball._

_“But the other ones, the crosses short and low crosses – naff, if you are in the box, you have to attack the ball and touch it, so these are big chances that do not go into the statistics of the game, because there is not a real shot on target. But these are real chances to score.”_

_In the first half against Bournemouth we were a bit passive and didn’t press enough. We were not intense enough with or without the ball to cause our opponents problems._

_In the second half, we did that. And in our best period, when everybody was waiting for us to score, they were there and we scored. We have had a penalty when Simon Francis handled the ball and they were offside when they scored. But the referee made a mistake and the linesman made another mistake. That’s football.”_
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