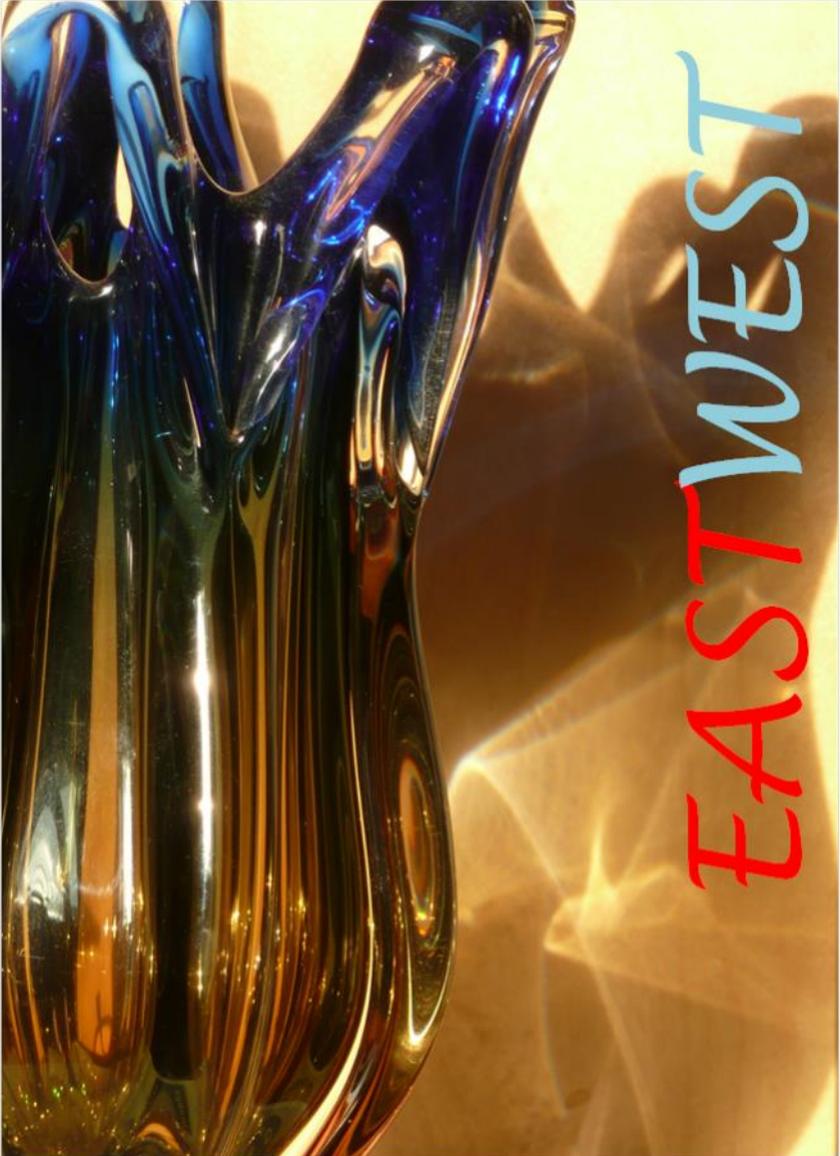

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THE MAGAZINE OF MARLBOROUGH'S COMMUNITY AND CHURCHES

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EAST-WEST

The contents of this edition illustrate the complexity and connectivity of our world. You will first note the insightful and timely article by Paul Collins, (the Ashmolean Museum), in which he draws our attention to our cultural connections with Mesopotamia, (Modern Iraq), and to the development of the Ashmolean collection and the recent Basrah Museum. This prompts me to thank Dr Collins on behalf of T&T and the Marlborough community.

Ancient Iraq, arguably, was a crucible for one of those East-meets-West episodes that have had such a huge impact on global history: from the west, the exiled Jewish community, and from the east, Zoroastrian teaching. The late international architect Zaha Hadid has benefited from her Iraqi heritage as pointed out in my relevant article. In addition, John Osborne tells us that visiting Iraq's neighbour, Persia/Iran, can be much rewarding.

Japan is another East-meets-West case, and here Hugh de Saram eloquently describes some enriching cultural transmissions. Moreover, the forthcoming Olympics in Tokyo, (Japan), has prompted Jonathan Jarjis, (St John's Marlborough), to write for us about the economic pros and cons of hosting such an event.

Looking nearer home Germany often conjures east-west thoughts. My Berlin article deals with witnessing rebirth at a time when Germany was in flux. You will also find a really local flavour in the article by Peter Noble about the technique of fencing.

Finally, I must ask you to spare a thought for the Tower & Town team who produced and distributed this edition in testing circumstances; and also to share my gratitude for them, the authors, plus our community volunteers and key workers who are making a difference.

Raik Jarjis, Editor

Cover: Raik Jarjis

Oxford University's Ashmolean Museum is the oldest public museum in the UK (established in 1683) but its collections from the ancient Middle East were largely formed in the first half of the twentieth century, a direct result of British occupation and administration of large parts of Palestine (modern Israel, Jordan and Palestinian Authority) and Mesopotamia (modern Syria and Iraq) following the end of the First World War. Such a legacy can be viewed as problematic and, as the current curator for the Ashmolean's Ancient Middle East collections, I am working with colleagues to create new displays and a temporary exhibition which will not only reveal the region's ancient stories but tell something of this recent history and the importance of heritage for the region's modern inhabitants. One of the most exciting projects that I have had the privilege of supporting is the development of an archaeology museum for Basrah, Iraq's second city.

To understand the Basrah Museum project it is necessary to understand the longer history of museums in Iraq. This story starts in the aftermath of the First World War with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire by allied forces. Britain, who had occupied Ottoman Mesopotamia (the land 'between the rivers' Tigris and Euphrates) during the war, was granted mandate control over the region. After a major rebellion against the occupation in 1920, a Kingdom of Iraq was established the following year under British administration. European and North American Universities and museums were already applying pressure in these years to undertake archaeological excavations and shortly after the signing of the Anglo-Iraq treaty of 1922, a Department of Antiquities was created with Gertrude Bell - traveller, writer, archaeologist and civil servant (the British administration's Oriental Secretary in Baghdad) – as its Honorary Director. Under the existing law, half of the excavated objects could be exported, the rest were to remain in Iraq. Thousands of objects were sent to Oxford, London, Chicago and Phil-



Figure 1: The Basrah Museum

adelphia. By 1923 antiquities were also piling up in Iraq and something had to be done with them. Gertrude Bell managed to convince the administration to give her a room in one of the government offices in Baghdad. In 1926, the museum moved to a new building and one functioning room was opened by King Faisal on 14th June. A month later Bell was dead from an overdose of sleeping pills.

After Britain formally withdrew from Iraq in 1932 the former Education Minister Sati al-Husri became the first Iraqi Director General of Antiquities. He revised Bell's antiquities laws in Iraq's favour, and the first Iraqi-led excavations were carried out. Planning began for a much larger and more accessible museum but it was not until after the Second World War that it became a reality; the Iraq Museum was opened in 1966. With the oil boom of the 1970s and 1980s regional museums were established across the country. The Iraq Museum delivered to them highly uniform mini-collections of artefacts to display so that the single, unifying story could be told from Dohuk in the north to Basrah in the south (where the museum was housed in a fine Ottoman building of the early 20th century). Then came the disasters of First Gulf War of 1990-91. Many provincial museums, including that in Basrah, were looted in the post-war Shia uprisings of spring 1991 and then stayed permanently shut. The Second Gulf war and invasion of 2003 (the third time in a century that British forces had occupied Iraq) brought more misery with the looting of the Iraq Museum and Mosul Museum.

In 2007 a project to develop a new museum for Basrah was initiated by Lieutenant General Barney White-Spunner who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of British troops in Iraq and General Officer Commanding the Multi-National Division South-East. He was due to be deployed to Iraq in February 2008, and wanted to know what he might do to help protect Iraqi cultural heritage. Following a meeting at the British Museum with its director Neil MacGregor and Dr John Curtis, head of the museum's Middle East Department, White-Spunner assigned Major Hugo Clarke as project manager. The State Board had appointed Qahtan Al Abeed as the director of any future Basrah Museum and he began to work closely with Clarke. A former palace of Saddam Hussein known as "the Lakeside Palace"- which I first visited with John Curtis in 2008 - was adopted as a possible candidate for the museum. However, with no prospect of any British government funding, and the withdrawal of the British army in 2009, a UK charity *Friends of Basrah Museum* was established to help raise funds. Years passed waiting for money promised by Basrah Provincial Council but, as Iraq continued to be plagued by conflict and corruption, this was never forthcoming. Therefore, with the agreement of Qahtan and the Iraqi authorities, the Friends of Basrah decided to use their funds to refurbish one gallery devoted to the history of Basrah; it was opened to the public in September 2016 and was celebrated with an international conference that I attend-

ed. An application was then made to the British government's newly formed Cultural Protection Fund for a grant to complete the museum. This was successful and in 2018 I led a training course for the museum staff and, by March 2019, three more galleries, devoted to ancient Sumer, Babylonia and Assyria had been opened; objects for the museum had been selected by Qahtan from the stored collections in the Iraq Museum. I was back at the Museum in October 2019 and discovered that great strides have been made in creating a building that is now welcoming increasing numbers of visitors. Qahtan had already produced object labels in Arabic and we focused on translations into English. Future work will be the establishment of a modern library on the upper floor of the museum. The aim is to make the museum a cultural resource for academic research as well as popular enjoyment. This is part of a wider initiative now fully supported by the Basrah Provincial Council to refurbish neighbouring buildings and lay out surrounding parks, all adjacent to the waters of the Shatt al-Arab, in order to make this part of the city a focus for families and cultural events into the future.



Figure 2: The Sumer Gallery

Figure 3: The Basrah Gallery

Paul Collins is Jaleb Hearn Curator of Ancient Near East in the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford University, and is currently a Hugh Price Fellow at Jesus College and holds a supernumerary Fellowship at Wolfson College. He has worked previously as a curator in the Middle East Department of the British Museum and the Ancient Near Eastern Art Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. He is currently Chair of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq.

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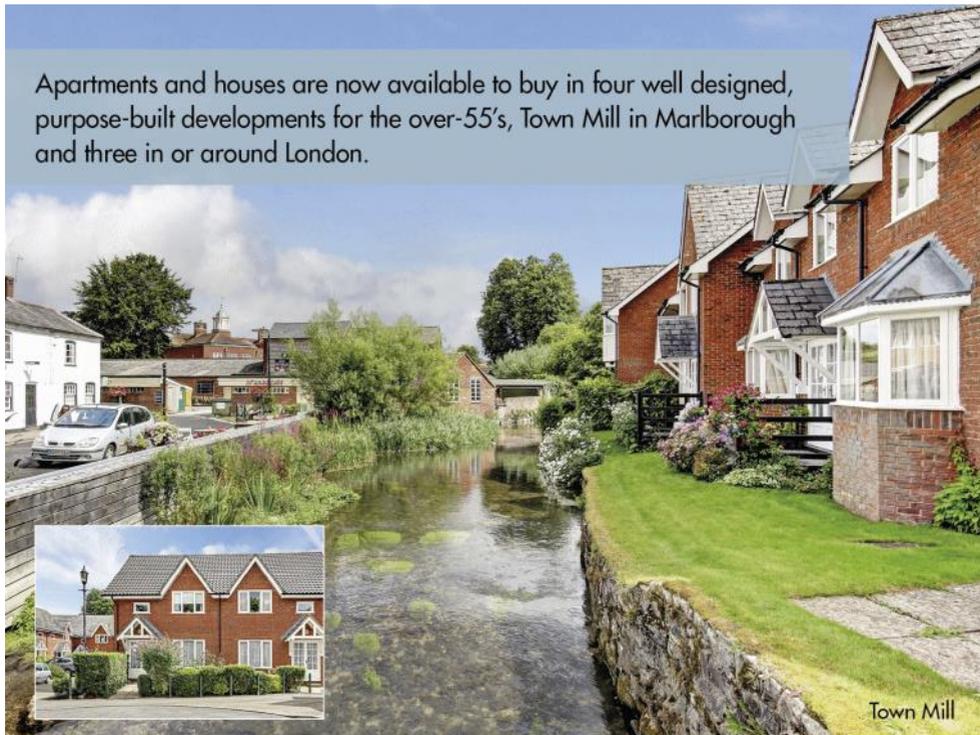
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When I was growing up in Iraq, mathematics was an everyday part of life. My parents instilled in me a passion for discovery, and they never made a distinction between science and creativity. We would play with math problems just as we would play with pens and paper to draw -- math was like sketching. In my teens, my family would go to London each summer, visiting the many art galleries and museums, including the Science Museum. I am forever grateful to my parents for introducing me to art and science in a way that drew no boundaries between them. I believe education at all levels is critical. As a woman, education gives you the confidence to conquer the next step and make exciting new discoveries. (Zaha Hadid, 2015)



A flame burned brightly

Accredited by the Guardian Newspaper for liberating architectural geometry, giving it a whole new expressive identity, Dame Zaha Hadid (1950-2016) was the Iraqi-British architect, and the first woman winner of the Pritzker Architecture Prize. She successfully applied advances in design in order to enable re-thinking of space and form for realising wonderful fluid surfaces and structures. Hence she was able to transform cities around the world through structures that most of her contemporaries could never have dared to imagine. Known in the architectural world as the “Queen of Curve,” Zaha loved to eschew linear lines in favour of curvy, futuristic shapes. Her UK legacy includes the London Aquatic centre and the Investcorp Building in Oxford (“*At Home with Frodo Baggins*”, p11, *T&T May 2017*). And as a trailblazer Zaha’s flame burned brightly from an early age. She graduated in mathematics from the American University of Beirut and headed to London in 1971 where she met her school friend Zina Kafilmout, (then a UCL postgrad architect). Zaha qualified at the Architectural Association School of Architecture (London), where she was described as “A Planet in Her Own Orbit” and possessor of a kind of mythological aura. She was at that stage inspired by the suprematist work (the supremacy of pure artistic feeling) of the Russian artist Kazimir Malevich.

Most importantly, Zaha was a seeker of the unbounded bigger picture; and it is in this spirit that I endeavour painting a somewhat bigger picture of her by looking east for some of her earlier inspirations.

Imagine

I would like you now to imagine yourself in June 1965 admiring a modern building by the Italian architect Gio Ponti. This building belongs to the Iraqi Ministry of Planning situated on the western bank of the river Tigris adjacently to Jisr Al-Jamhuriya, (The Republic Bridge). You would then cross to find your destination immediately on your right, the buildings of Rahibat Al-Taqdama fil Bab Al-Shargi (Secondary/High Convent School at the Eastern Gate). You would also note ahead the striking Nasb Al-Hurriyah, (Freedom Monument), of Tahrir Square.



You would find the Rahibat school on your right and note the Freedom Monument ahead

Now I would like you to imagine being welcomed at the gate of the convent school as a guest for the 5th year leaving ceremony staged by the 4th year students. Founded in 1928 this Catholic school applied high academic rigour and admitted girls from different faiths. On this particular hot June day there would have been an aura of optimism among the pupils. After all, they were a crop of the future makers and heirs of the Abbasid Caliphate that flourished over millennium earlier. And as six 4th year names were announced for the Hawaii dancing sketch you would have noted those of the two 15 year old girls Zina Kafilmout, (my cousin), and Zaha Hadid (*note their 1972 London meeting, previous section*).



Zaha (right) at the Rahibat School

Two Views for Zaha

My thesis is that during Zaha's schooling Baghdad was central in developing Iraqi/pan-Arab visual language; and that she would have found the modernistic views in the vicinity of her school very stimulating indeed. She would have gazed across the Tigris at the Gio Ponti building, and also at the impressive Freedom Monument, Tahrir Square, with its underlying eastern-western connotations that rendered the product both strikingly modern yet also referenced traditions. .

Captured in bronze, the sculpture of this monument symbolises people's strife against tyranny visualised by the mid-20th century co-founder of the Baghdad Modern Art Group, the late Iraqi painter/sculptor Jawad Saleem, (1919-1961), who sought to celebrate Iraqi art history by incorporating elements of Babylonian wall-reliefs and Abbasid art. The project architect for the monument was the prominent Iraqi architect Rifat Chadirji, who was responsible for pushing architectural boundaries within the context of "*International Regionalism*" whilst grounded in the discourse of the Baghdad Modern Art Group.



Two Views for Zaha: The Liberation Monument and the Gio Ponti building across the Tigris

When Fusion and Architecture Mattered

It is fair to state that cultural/artistic fusions could be liberating for those aspiring to spread their wings; and that Zaha was undoubtedly a true subscriber to this. She grew up in a liberal Baghdadi household with ancestral roots in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. Her schoolmates were also predominantly from multi-cultural professional families who valued learning and modernity. Moreover, her schooling era was when the capital city was entering its initial phase of '*metropolization*', in which Baghdad's courtships of A-list architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright and le Corbusier, provided means for constructing a progressive identity encompassing elements of spatial modernity. With such rich heritage the outcome was not surprising when the mythical Iraqi bird, Zaha, spread its wings and flew west in order to liberate architectural geometry, giving it a whole new expressive identity.

East-West: Britain and Japan

Hugh de Saram

In 1600 at the battle of Sekigahara, Tokugawa Ieyasu defeated a rival to become the first Shogun (general) to unite a country seething with quarrelling warlords (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Sekigahara#/media/File:Sekigaharascreen.jpg shows a magnificent Japanese screen painting commemorating this event – think Bayeux Tapestry).

Arguably his most decisive move, once established, was to close Japan to all foreigners, many of whom were missionaries commissioned by Rome to work to bring the country under the worldwide influence of the Pope. Ieyasu was having none of it and took drastic measures to make sure it didn't happen. The only contact allowed was through the tightly controlled port of Nagasaki at the westernmost, remotest end of the country.

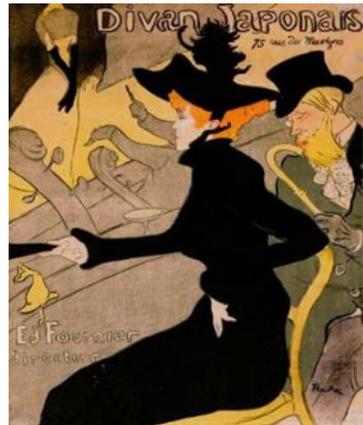


In 1997 I spent a term teaching in a Japanese high school. In one of many east-west discussions, my Japanese mentor extolled the beneficial effect of Ieyasu's closure of Japan to foreigners on the development of Japan's unique and special culture. I found myself arguing that, from Britain's experience, it was not necessary to close the country to foreigners in order to retain and develop one's unique culture. Indeed, one could argue, Britain's culture had been uniquely enriched by remaining open but fiercely independent; that our continental neighbours regarded us as just as much different in our island fastness as did Japan's continental neighbours in their view of Japan, but that our openness to people, trade and ideas had made us immeasurably the richer whereas Japan, up until the arrival of Commodore Perry 250 years after Sekigahara, was inward-looking and under-developed by comparison.

However, in 1868 Japan overthrew rule-by-Shogun, reinstated the supremacy of the Emperor (the Meiji Restoration) and reformed itself at breakneck speed to jump from feudalism to western-style democracy. It embarked on a phenomenal catch-up race with the West, leading to its becoming one of the most modern and powerful nations on earth.

Japanese culture quickly became the rage in Western Europe. Vincent van Gogh famously acknowledged the influence of Japanese woodblock prints on his own art.

He was a particular admirer of Hokusai's famous *Great Wave*, and his *Blossoming Almond Tree* owes an obvious debt to Japan. Hiroshige's *Plum Blossom* of 1857 was directly echoed 30 years later in van Gogh's *Japonaiserie: Flowering Plum Tree; after Hiroshige*.

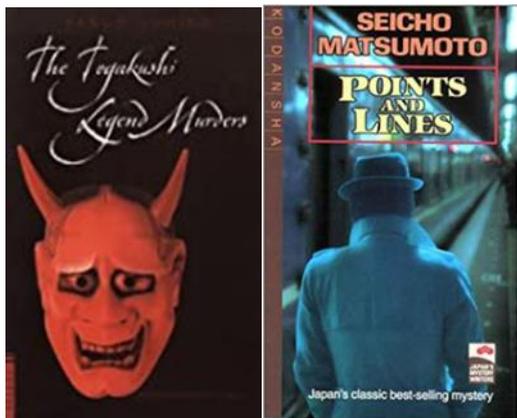


In 1892 Toulouse-Lautrec was commissioned by Edouard Fournier to produce *Divan Japonais* as part of the refurbishment of his Paris cabaret with Japanese motifs and lanterns.

The Japanese love Shakespeare. London is regularly visited by Japanese theatre companies playing Shakespeare, in Japanese, to full houses; worth watching, even if you don't understand Japanese, for their endearingly different stagecraft.

Film-maker Akira Kurosawa exemplifies perfectly the interplay between western and eastern culture. On the one hand, Kurosawa took two of Shakespeare's greatest plays, *Macbeth* (as *Throne of Blood*) and *King Lear* (as *Ran*), and made them into stunning films. To my mind, his *Ran* ("Chaos") is a masterpiece that outdoes its mighty original. On the other hand, western film-makers have equally rendered homage to Kurosawa. *Rashomon* set a trend illustrating how multiple eyewitnesses of the same event see and remember confusingly contradictory versions; it even gave rise to "the Rashomon effect". And then of course there is the immortal *Seven Samurai*, surely one of the best films ever made, most famously copied in *The Magnificent Seven*. Perhaps most surprisingly, Kurosawa, with other Japanese film-makers, collaborated with American colleagues in the making of the Hollywood blockbuster *Tora Tora Tora*, portraying the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, that "date which will live in infamy".

My favourite east-west crossover, however, is the shared Anglo-Japanese love of whodunits. Both countries have produced a stream of gripping crime-writers. Two of the best from Japan are *Points and Lines*, by Seicho Matsumoto – a gift for railway lovers – and *Togakushi Legend Murders*, by Yasuo Uchida, both available in English on Amazon. I can promise you, you won't be able to put them down!



Olympics: Money-maker or Money-taker?

by Jonathan Jarjis

The modern Olympic Games are a party where both the East and West celebrate sport, multiculturalism, peace, unity.

Since its introduction in 1896, as well as the wide array of sports and contestants, there has been a wide range of host cities. Aside from a power statement that has been used by countries in the past, such as the USA, former USSR and China, there are many reasons a country might host the Olympics, such as raising the morale of the people through patriotism or giving them a once in a lifetime chance to attend the Olympics, creating jobs, boosting the economy through tourism as well as being an opportunity to invest in long-term infrastructure such as transport links and build cutting-edge sports facilities for post-games. Yet, interest to host the Olympics has taken a harsh decline, with many claiming that the Olympics are a bad investment for the host country. Japan decided to host the Olympics to help their lacklustre economy, but the past tells they could possibly get the very opposite.

Japan has many reasons to be skeptical going into the Olympics. The celebration that was once millions is now billions in cost; hence the question is whether Japan will be able to repay the \$12.5bn estimated cost and eventually achieve economic growth. It is ironic that the very country that began the Olympic Games, Greece, suffered economic failure when it hosted the 2004



Olympics. Moreover, this debt has prevented Greece from hosting sporting events, so instead of using the Olympic facilities to bring in money, most of the facilities remained unused. The result of this is that many of the stadiums are left in a derelict and depressing state, such as the 8,000 seat stadium built for table tennis which is now empty and desolate. Today, many blame the 2004 Olympics as the cause of the Greek Recession. Yet, hosting the Olympics has not just had negative economic impacts in the past, but negative social impacts too, such as the case with the 2016 Rio Olympics that costed \$13 billion. But will Japan suffer the same fate as Athens and Rio? Rising costs due to the delay of the Games to 2021 (some sources claim it could cost \$5 billion in order to do things like maintaining the venues and hiring volunteers) suggest there is a possibility.

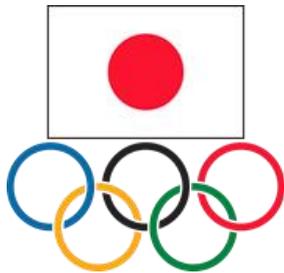
On the other hand I would like to emphasise that it is not all gloom and doom. The Olympics still has the ability to be a roaring success, as demonstrated by the London 2012 Olympics. Hosted partly as an attempt to restore prosperity in poorer



areas of London, the London Olympics was at the time hailed as a great success; it decreased unemployment over the whole of London, regenerated areas hosting the Olympics, such as Stratford and Tower Hamlets, massively improved transport links – Stratford is now second to only

King’s Cross as the most connected areas in London, and the Olympics is thought to have generated an extra £10 billion in income for the UK economy. The Games also delivered on the morale boost – more than two thirds of the UK’s population believe the £9 billion cost was worth it – and received admiration from the UK, with the then Mayor of London Boris Johnson calling it ‘the greatest Games ever’, as well as the rest of the world admiring it, with the New York Times calling the London Olympics an ‘extra-strength dose of mood-enhancing drug’. Yet, what is perhaps more impressive was the Olympic legacy, which refers to the long-term benefits of hosting the Olympics. The London Olympics have had a fantastic legacy, which ranges from the 8,000 affordable homes now available as part of the former athletes’ village to the 40,000 jobs on and around the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park; and also to the numerous sporting events held post-games in former Olympic venues, including the 2017 World Championships in Athletics and home matches for the football club West Ham United. Not bad for an Olympics that went £528 million below its £9.29 billion budget.

In conclusion, London 2012 proved that hosting the Olympic can still be a gold medal in itself. Yet, ultimately the Olympics guarantee no victory, so the risk of an Athens or Rio-like event always lingers. Either way, all eyes will be on the Japan in 2021, to see if they can provide the greatest celebration on Earth.



Sadly there is nothing in the calendar at the moment other than stay at home so here's a little light relief:

Bird Quiz: The following are well known British birds. Answers next month; no prizes but if you submit your own to jun.compiler@towerandtown.org.uk before 12th May the winners will be named and congratulated (assuming not too many!)

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------------|----|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Layer in the heather | 16 | Shellfish fielder |
| 2 | Royal angler | 17 | Division on mountain crest |
| 3 | 2.5 cm of grain husks | 18 | Horsey pastime |
| 4 | Friend of John and the friar | 19 | Arthur's magician |
| 5 | Painful with a sore throat | 20 | Price of the blade |
| 6 | Muddy happy pooch | 21 | Tethered by string |
| 7 | Mourning for pet cat | 22 | Castle |
| 8 | Slice liquid | 23 | Steamed up record breaker |
| 9 | Gale force fuel | 24 | Wolf's wintery abbreviated call |
| 10 | Fear might make you... | 25 | Cowardly striker |
| 11 | Elizabethan neckwear | 26 | Mariners' curse |
| 12 | Seaside musician | 27 | Sounds like a victor of talk |
| 13 | Boxing practice line | 28 | Fleet-foot Jonathan |
| 14 | Astral heather | 29 | Dark time of storm |
| 15 | Flipping small rock | 30 | Moon bird (has settled) |



Persia? Iran? What's In A Name John Osborne

The name **Persia** gives the country a romantic edge. We get Persian carpets and Persian cats from it, and over two thousand years ago there was the mighty Persian Empire, the formidable opponents of the ancient Greeks in the Persian wars.

But **Iran?** The name recalls the news stories of the last year: attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf; the USA's killing of a top Iranian general; the mistaken shooting down of a civil airliner as it departed from Tehran's international airport; disturbances on the streets of Tehran and other major cities; a hard-line Islamic regime and now the Coronavirus....

Some time ago my wife and I lived and worked in Iran and in recent years we have regularly led tours there. In fact, we should be there now with our nineteenth group but – not surprisingly, you may think – it didn't recruit enough takers. The most frequent question that people ask when they hear that we go to Iran (aka Persia) is: "Is it safe?" The answer is, of course: "We wouldn't go if it wasn't."

The monuments from the long history of Iran, the wonderful, tiled decoration of the buildings – palaces, mosques and so on – and the beautiful gardens are deservedly famous. Visitors rightly expect to be entranced by these. But the unexpected aspect of your visit is the amazing friendliness of the people. Everywhere you go, instead of any hassle you might have expected from a hostile regime, you find smiling, courteous people, greeting you with "Welcome to Iran!" And a sense of humour: in Islam it is said that we mortals can know only ninety-nine of the one hundred names of God; only the donkey knows the hundredth*.

Only the other day I received an e-mail out of the blue from someone whom I don't know but who has travelled there: *"I loved Iran and all the ancient history. I also loved the local people who were so welcoming to us. I am so glad we went there, despite everybody advising us not to go! They missed a treat."*

Or, as we say, never judge a book by its cover.

(*Because however hard you beat him, he still won't say anything.)



Following the historical coming down of the wall in 1989 the German Reichstag decided on 20 June 1991 to transfer the parliament and seat of government from Bonn to Berlin; creating Europe's youngest capital by July 1999. There were also discussions about the Nazi history of the WWII damaged dome-less Reichstag Building and the opportunity presented 1Km south of it by the attractive 60 hectares bombed site of Potsdamer Platz, straddling the erstwhile border between east



and west, and which on 11 November 1989 hosted an early Berlin wall crossing. This was also the site where on 21 July 1990 ex-Pink Floyd member Roger Waters staged a charity concert of his former band's rock extravaganza, The Wall, to commemorate unification.

I was fortunate to be one of the first western scientists to visit East Germany after the momentous events of 1989. An early invitation to deliver a lecture at Rossendorf Forschungszentrum, the nuclear research centre on the outskirts of Dresden, led to several long stays during 1990s as a guest scientist from the University of Oxford. On one such a stay in Dresden I received an invitation to give a lecture at the Hahn-Meitner nuclear institute in Berlin. This proved to be much more rewarding than expected.



I was busy looking through my lecture notes when the modern morning train moved out on time from Bahnhof Dresden-Neustadt. Two other lines of thought crossed my mind during the journey: the first concerned anticipating meeting my scientist friend, Dr Andrea Denker, (now head of the Synchrotron Accelerator, Berlin), at the train

platform in Berlin; the second was realising that I have missed the wrapping in reflective material of the 19th century Reichstag Building as devised by the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claud. This required 24 year effort, and the artwork was realised in June 1995 following a political vote. The installation, however, proved to be transformational until the building was unwrapped and handed over to the builders for renovation and construction of the iconic glass and mirrors dome by the British architect Norman Foster. Many hailed the cleansing values of the artwork and acknowledged the metaphorical new beginning symbolised by its unwrapping.

Andrea took me to the institute where I gave my lecture. This freed us for some Berlin touring on the following day. It was on that particular day that I witnessed a capital in the making.

A Red Box with a view

We passed the dome-less ruin of the Reichstag Building as we headed to our destination 1km south along Ebert strasse. Soon we arrived at the southern right corner of Tiergarten Park and the object we sought was there clearly on our left at Leipziger Platz 21.....THE RED BOX.



Designed by Schneider und Schumacher “The Red Info Box” was intended to be a temporary structure to provide information about, and a viewing station for, the construction around Potsdamer Platz. It was raised eight meters above the ground on irregularly-placed steel tubes in exuberance not commonly noted in Berlin at that time.

Andrea and I looked at architectural exhibits within the interior of the Box before climbing to the top platform in order to view the biggest building site in Europe which was expected to turn into a futuristic centre of commerce at the heart of Europe's youngest capital city. But there was also in sight a folly from times past on our left, namely a Berlin Wall curved section waiting to be submerged under the dunes of time, as would be the Red Box and our own tracks from that innocent day at the would be capital Berlin.



Potsdamer Platz: as I saw it from the Red Box in 1997, and recently (below)



Why I get cross when people tell me they don't watch *The Repair Shop*.

I say 'cross', prodding the keys on my computer in an irritated fashion, but it's more a case of being inexplicably disappointed. I obviously don't need to explain why I'm not reviewing an exhibition at the moment, so here's my quarantined alternative about an equally important matter!

Do you need to go out? No. **Wednesday's/8pm/BBC1** is where you need to be to watch the new series of *The Repair Shop*. (There's a whole archive of previous older episodes on iPlayer for when you've finished watching *The News*.)

Anyway, for those of you new to the club wanting to know a little more, I shall say this: this show has a lot to do with love.

We all have objects, items, family heirlooms that we love, cherish and treasure. A lot of us also own items that we feel are beyond repair and unsalvageable. This is where the extraordinary *Repair Shop* craftsmen and craftswomen step in. For every object brought into the barn, (the large workshop nestled in the South Downs) one of the experts will inquire into the story and provenance behind said object, understand exactly what it is the owner would like doing to it, and then get cracking with the restoration work. The experts range from horologists, teddy bear conservators, furniture makers, milliners, master saddlers and leather extraordinaires, blacksmiths, silversmiths, basket weavers and radio and wireless experts. (Plus many more.)

I suppose the reason why I adore and ramble on about this show so much, (and why I implore people to take time to watch it) is not only because the objects and the stories are wonderful; but it is the love, skill, dedication and determination of these experts which is what I find totally absorbing. They take time to intimately know and care for these items, deconstructing and reconstructing every crevice. They are immensely skilled, and yet so modest! They don't need to act or put on television bravado – they genuinely love what they do. It is pure joy when the pieces are returned to their owners and they leave the barn, smiling from ear to ear, not only because of the transformation, but because of the memories it has brought back. Some are funny, some are sad, some are beautiful – but every one of them is in some way, about love.

Tissues at the ready everyone!

In 'normal times' Gabriella is our Arts Review columnist

Marlborough Churches Together

Regrettably all our churches are closed for worship until further notice.

A letter from Mustard Seed

Dear Friends,

A month ago was the last day we were open and how strange the month has seemed. We hope none of you has been personally affected by this terrible virus: we are all so aware of the physical and mental suffering that this situation has caused. All our staff are well and want me to let you know that they are missing you.

We've just 'celebrated' Easter: inevitably muted but there is something about affirming the central hope of our faith that death is not the end amidst great fear of physical death. As the Queen so powerfully said, 'We shall come through this'. We want you to know that we are looking forward to that day when we can serve you with our wonderful homemade cakes, soups etc and offer books that will sustain and nourish our souls.

God Bless you

Rachel, Nicola and all the staff at Mustard Seed



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FROM THE REGISTERS

Funerals - we pray for the families of:

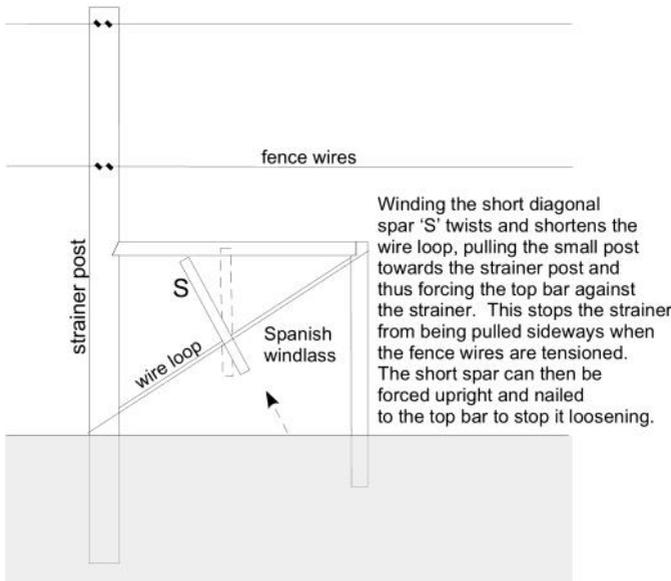
- 29 March John Robert Stacey Philpott (86) of Kingsbury Terrace, Marlborough
North Wilts Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett
- 5 April Kenneth George Round (94) of Townmill, Marlborough
North Wilts Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett
- 9 April Jesse William Pomfret (91) of Manton Hollow, Marlborough
North Wilts Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett
- 10 April Victor White (91) of West Manton, Marlborough
North Wilts Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett
- 14 April Raymond John Whant (90) of Wantage Road, Hungerford
Marlborough Cemetery
- 14 April Sylvia Lawrence (91) of Purcell Court, George Lane, Marlborough
North Wilts Crematorium, Royal Wootton Bassett

Those who have wandered the forest since last Autumn may have seen the structure below and wondered at its complexity and purpose.

Many (and I do mean many) years ago whilst in the 6th form, my friend and I landed a summer job with a forestry company in North Wales. The task was singular: to erect a fence around a nature reserve that happened to be on a steep mountainside. Apart from learning a lot by trial and error about lifting and carrying heavy wooden stakes, awkward rolls of fencing wire, and how not to slip with such loads on steep grass or scree, I learned about fence construction.

To build post by post, stapling the wire as you go, would produce a very poor, slack-wired, wobbly-wiggly fence. To get the wire tight it has to be tensioned between two strong 'strainer posts', ours were 6 foot logs buried 2 feet in the ground but even these would be pulled off vertical when tension was applied with the 'wire-winch'. We were taught to support the strainers with a diagonal bracing post on either side. This worked for us in our rocky terrain but in softer ground those diagonal braces could be slowly pushed into the ground and the wires would gradually go slack. The later and sturdier technique, as used in the forest and on many local downland fences, looks complicated but is very effective using a tensioning device called a Spanish Windlass, as explained in fig.1.

To take the tension on the other side of the strainer post a second Spanish windlass structure is required.



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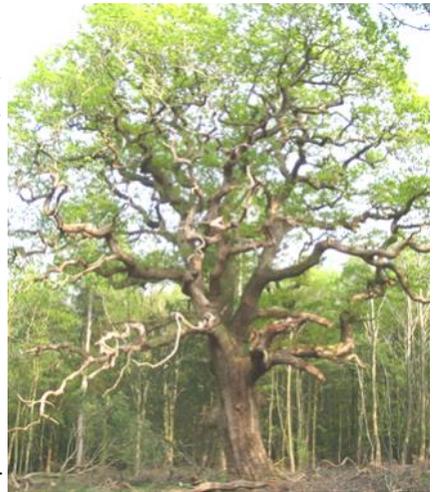
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Before the Coronavirus lockdown came into force, I spent a couple of weeks using Peter Noble's excellent guide to find all the named oaks in Savernake Forest. At present, three of these (Ayers, Slingsby and Cathedral) are missing their identification boards.

A friend and I have been debating which tree is the most impressive. Several factors need to be considered such as height, diameter, shape and location. The Cathedral Oak has an enormous girth but it has been heavily pollarded and it is pinned up against a wire fence on the North-Western boundary of the forest. The famous Big Belly Oak is held together by a metal belt and stands beside the very busy A346 road to Salisbury. The elusive Duke's Vaunt is rather sad as its remains are propped up with a chain and a long green post. Children need look no further than Saddle Oak 1 – perfect for climbing on and recreating scenes from Robin Hood.

My friend's favourite is King of Limbs, hidden in the eastern end of Savernake. My preference is for the Braydon Oak, not far from the Arboretum. The latter is a wonderful collection of trees, mostly labelled, including Redwoods, exotic Firs, Spruces, Hemlocks and Pines from all over the world. Easily missed, the Arboretum is on the right-hand side of the Grand Avenue (heading away from Marlborough) before you reach Eight Walks in the centre of the forest. There are a couple of places to park and, once inside, well mown paths lead you through delightful avenues of trees.



Ayers Oak

Of course, there are many ancient oaks in Savernake which have not been singled out for naming. One of the best collections is along the length of Marie Louise Ride, parallel to the A346, beyond Cadley. With traffic at a minimum, this is an ideal time to explore this area and reflect upon the centuries of human history through which they have grown. Three months of social distancing sounds like eternity to me – for the oldest oaks its just one of maybe 4000 seasons they've already lived through.

Please also explore the Tower and Town online gallery for more splendid photos of these monarchs.

News from the Churches

Janneke Blokland

Congratulations to Janneke who will be leaving us in the summer to start her new role as Chaplain at Hurstpierpoint College, in September. We wish her well in her exciting new post and hopefully there will be an opportunity to say farewell later in the summer. Janneke has a blog at <https://jannekeblokland>

The Christian calendar

The calendar celebrates the Ascension of Jesus Christ on Thursday 21st May and Pentecost (the birthday of the church) on Sunday 31st May. Services will be on the internet.

Christian Aid Week 10th – 16th May

Christian Aid Week is moving online! We are building a vibrant, virtual Christian Aid Week so you can take part with our online community. We would love you to join in to show love for our neighbours near and far, as a global family.



During Christian Aid Week : It's more important than ever that we come together as a community to worship and to share fun and fellowship. That's why during Christian Aid Week we will be live-streaming worship each day, and hosting a fun daily quiz to join and raise funds.

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/appeals/key-appeals/christian-aid-week>

St Non's Retreat

The retreat on the Pembrokeshire coast will be from Tuesday September 15th to Friday 18th (pandemic allowing) and led by Lynn Busfield who many will remember from her time as a member of the clergy here; her Celtic theme will suit this beautiful place.

Book with Barney on barney.rsdl@gmail.com or 512205 .

MAPAG

Meetings are on hold at present, but they would encourage you to support the Devizes foodbank. <https://devizesdistrict.foodbank.org.uk/>



also to support Alabare struggling to support the homeless and vulnerable in the community. <https://www.alabare.co.uk/>

Please browse the church websites

(addresses below) for news and to offer or receive help

Marlborough Quakers

<http://www.marlboroughquakers.org.uk/>

have conducted their Sunday meetings for Worship online with Zoom for the past weeks satisfactorily and would welcome visitors.

More information from Rachel or Barney Rosedale (512205)

Christchurch

<http://christchurchmarlborough.org.uk/>

It is regretted that in accordance with advice received from The Methodist Church, due to the outbreak of Coronavirus, there will be no worship services at Christchurch until further notice. Worship material is being made available each week that people may find helpful for private devotion. If you would like to use this material yourself please go to the link on their website.

Marlborough Anglican team

www.marlboroughanglicanteam.org.uk/

We are a vibrant, outward looking team of churches in Marlborough that are currently active online only. We look forward to opening our doors again, when the current crisis has passed. For now you can find inspirational messages on our blog page and listen to weekly services.

St Thomas More

<https://marlboroughandpewseycatholics.org.uk/notice-board/>

Following Government guidance the Church of St Thomas More, George Lane, is closed until further notice (also Holy Family Church, Broadfields Estate, Pewsey). Please refer to the Parish Website for news and information or contact Father John on 513267 or marlborough@catholicweb.org.uk.

Emmanuel Marlborough

<https://www.emmanuelmarlborough.org/>

You're welcome to join in Sunday services by searching for the Emmanuel Church Marlborough channel on YouTube, or with this link <https://tinyurl.com/r248hhj>.

You're welcome to contact our pastor, Reuben, with any concerns during this time of crisis. If anyone is unable to obtain any essential items or needs help getting prescriptions, etc, please feel free to post a request on our Facebook page or email us. Let's find ways to show love in our community!

God Our Protector

Whoever goes to the LORD for safety, whoever remains under the protection of the Almighty, can say to him, "You are my defender and protector. You are my God; in you I trust." He will keep you safe from all hidden dangers and from all deadly diseases. He will cover you with his wings; you will be safe in his care; his faithfulness will protect and defend you. You need not fear any dangers at night or sudden attacks during the day or the plagues that strike in the dark or the evils that kill in daylight.

Psalm 91 v 1 – 6 .

Disclaimer : News from the Churches was prepared whilst the churches were closed and the country was in lockdown and it may now be out of date !

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<i>Family News</i>	Jessy Pomfret	family.news@towerandtown.org.uk	
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