

WINTER 2021

INSIDER'S GUIDE
with J McCarthy's
Robert Mullings

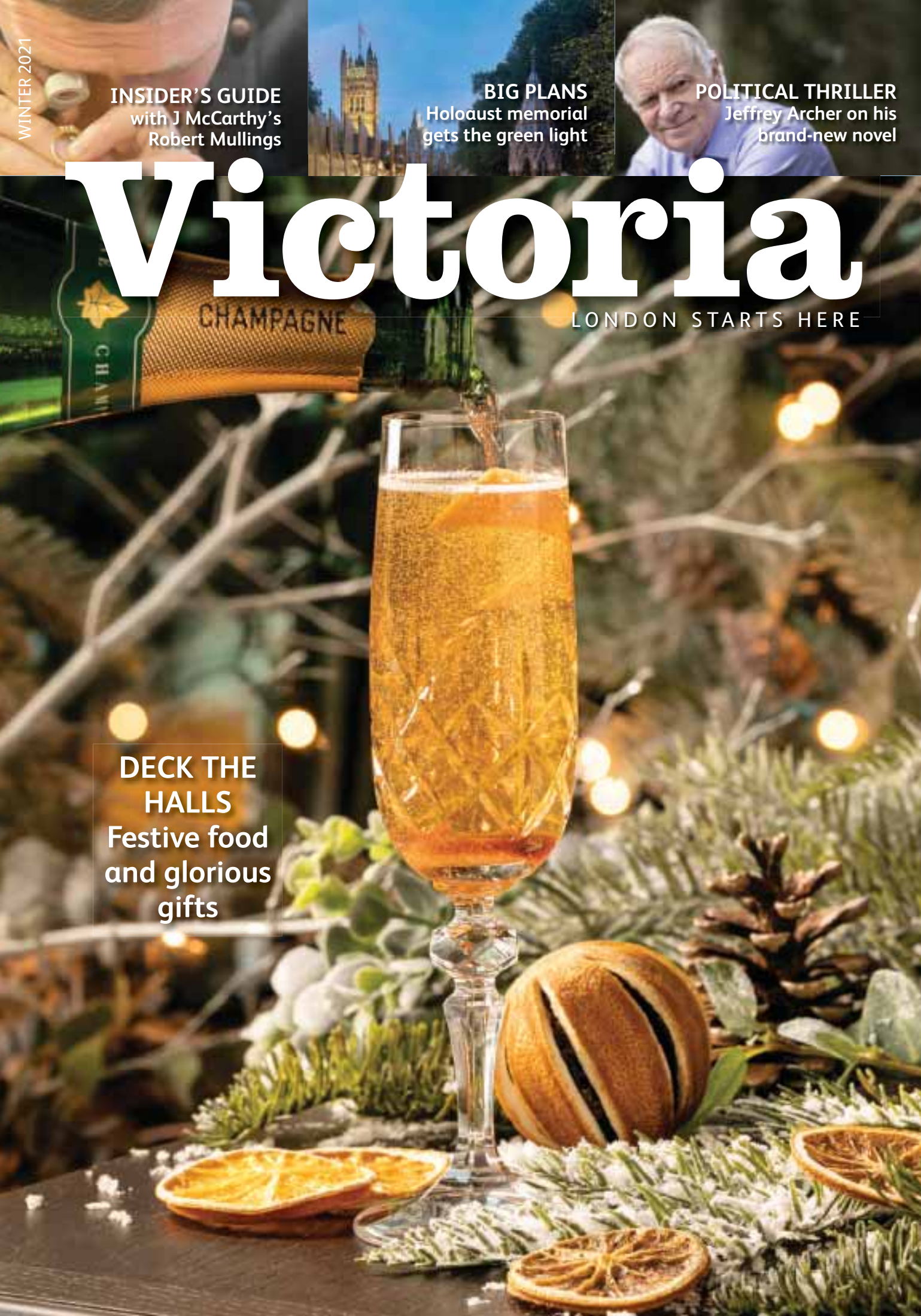
BIG PLANS
Holocaust memorial
gets the green light

POLITICAL THRILLER
Jeffrey Archer on his
brand-new novel

Victoria

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WINTER

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Image: Ben Carpenter

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All the latest news, including the return of the night tube and a book on British leadership

Image © Jake Curtis



Interior designer and Pimlico resident Rose Uniacke has released a new book, *Rose Uniacke at Home*.

It tells the story of how Rose rescued an abandoned house on Ebury Bridge Road, transforming it from a set of dilapidated apartments into a palatial “monastery meets Venetian palazzo”. The book is limited to just 2,500 copies, with 38 fold-out pages revealing intimate glimpses into Rose’s beautiful home.

Northacre and Walpole have collaborated to create the House of Walpole at No 1 Palace Street.

The ultra-luxurious space, with views over the private gardens of Buckingham Palace, will be used to showcase the best of Britain’s luxury craftsmanship. A 3,600 sq ft show apartment will be filled with a curated mix of bespoke pieces from British brands, with a line-up including wallpaper specialists Cole & Son, luxury bedmaker Savoir Beds and textile artist Helen Amy Murray.



Eaton Square Prep School has been shortlisted for the ISA award for excellence and innovation in equality, diversity and inclusion.

The school, which is based at 55-57 Eccleston Square, runs a “language of the term” campaign to celebrate the many languages spoken by the school community. Students also celebrate International Week every year, taking part in cultural workshops from flamenco dancing to pizza-making and Chinese dragon parading. The



▲ A brand-new book on British leadership has been launched at Westminster Abbey.

The tome, titled *300 Years of Leadership & Innovation*, is a lavishly illustrated 600-page hardback crammed with essays on British leaders, from Cromwell and Churchill to Blair and Prince Charles. The book has been released to coincide with the 1721 appointment of Britain's first prime minister, Robert Walpole, as well as the Queen's 95th birthday.

▼ Law firm Cripps Pemberton Greenish has relocated its London office from Chelsea to 80 Victoria Street.

The new space has been designed to accommodate a rise in home working, with fewer desks and more collaborative areas for staff and clients. The firm opted to base its headquarters in Victoria because of its excellent transport links, which are perfect for local and international clients alike.



Image © Marek Sikora Photography

week culminates in International Dress Day, when students come to school in clothing of symbolic value to their country.



London's night tube is set to reopen on the Victoria and Central lines from November 27. The decision comes after more than 140,000 people signed a petition calling for the return of night tube services, citing concern for the safety of Londoners. The service operates throughout the night on Fridays and Saturdays.



Winter events

From Christmas chalets to candlelit concerts, fill your diary with festive events



MERRY AND BRIGHT

The South Westminster Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have a jam-packed schedule of festive events planned this winter.

From December 1-23, an online advent calendar will give you the chance to win exciting prizes from local businesses, including a £100 voucher for House of Fraser and a cheddar truckle from Rippon Cheese.

Then, from December 6, the BIDs are partnering with local businesses to create a trail of wooden chalets selling festive food, drinks and crafts. Each chalet will be decorated according to a different wintry theme (from snowy wonderland to starry nights), and each will be featured on a winter trail map as a fun way for families to explore the area.

For more information, keep an eye on victoriabid.co.uk

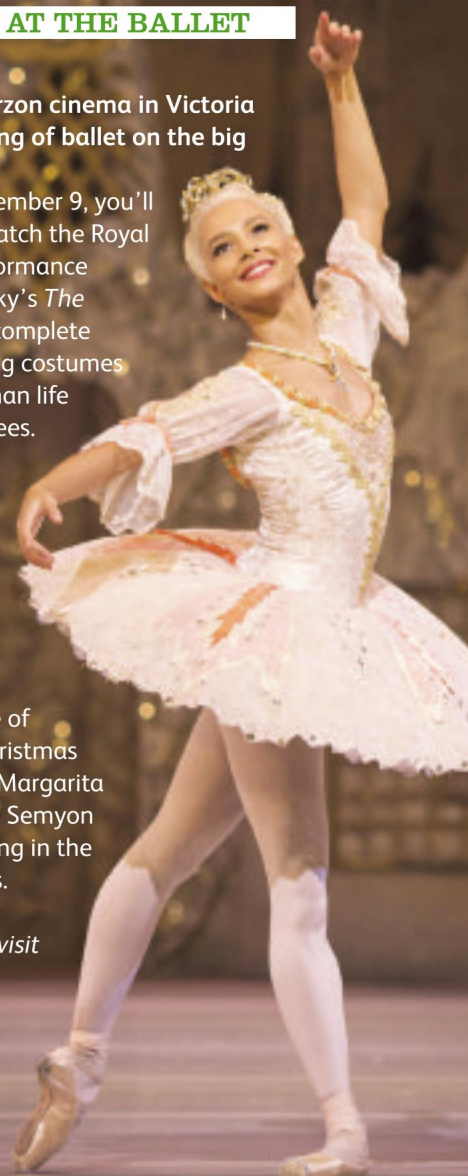
A NIGHT AT THE BALLET

Visit the Curzon cinema in Victoria for an evening of ballet on the big screen.

From December 9, you'll be able to watch the Royal Ballet's performance of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*, complete with glittering costumes and larger than life Christmas trees.

Then, from December 19, there's a chance to enjoy the Bolshoi Ballet's colourful performance of the same Christmas classic, with Margarita Shrainer and Semyon Chudin shining in the starring roles.

For more information visit curzon.com





BIG PICTURE

A landmark exhibition of Caribbean-British art will be on display at Tate Britain from December 1.

Beginning with the Windrush generation, *Life Between Islands* will journey through 70 years of art and photography, charting everything from the rise of Black Power in Britain to the development of south London's grime music scene.

Find out more at tate.org.uk



THE SEASON FOR GIVING

The Kids for Kids candlelit Christmas concert is returning to St Peter's Church in Eaton Square on December 2.

Attended by distinguished patrons like Joanna Lumley, Timothy West and Lord Cope of Berkeley, all proceeds raised will go to help the forgotten children of Darfur. Expect choirs, carolling, a brass band and plenty of mince pies.

For more information visit kidsforkids.org.uk

What better way to spend Christmas Eve than at Westminster Abbey's famous midnight mass?

The first eucharist of Christmas service begins at 11pm and features carolling, performances from the abbey choir, readings and holy communion. The abbey is also holding a range of advent and Christmas services, including the popular service of lessons and carols on December 23 and 24.

NEW YEAR, NEW YOU

Get a head start on those new year's resolutions with January health reset week, beginning on January 17.

As part of this week-long celebration of healthy habits, the Victoria BID will be partnering with local businesses to offer free taster sessions for residents, including Frame and 1Rebel gym classes, yoga demonstrations at St James' Court, healthy cooking sessions from Ahi Poké London and much more. The classes will be available to book via victoriabid.co.uk from December.



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Autumn sunlight is shimmering on the Thames from my panoramic perch; the plumpest of sofas at Jeffrey Archer's penthouse where – rather fittingly – he can survey much of Westminster.

Baron Archer of Weston-super-Mare is refreshingly honest about the privileged view he bought from F1 magnate Bernie Ecclestone high-on 40 years ago. "Well, the readers pay for it, got to be realistic," he says. And we haven't even started on his exquisite art collection.

It's a gull's-eye view that would give the richly detailed Agas map of Elizabethan England a run for its money, but then Jeffrey could be considered something of a modern

Expelled from the party, he would go on to sell millions more books – the latest of which, *Over My Dead Body*, "a story of murder, revenge and betrayal" is fresh off the printing press.

Yet the 81-year-old's writing skills – he is the son of a journalist mother – were born of adversity. "I'd left the House of Commons in terrible debt, and sat down and wrote the first book *Not a Penny More, Not a Penny Less* because I couldn't get a job," he says. "I thought it was a good story, I assumed it would be published immediately and it was turned down by everybody. Everybody turned it down, 16 houses!"

The master storyteller

Renaissance man himself. A storyteller extraordinaire, his books have sold in their millions.

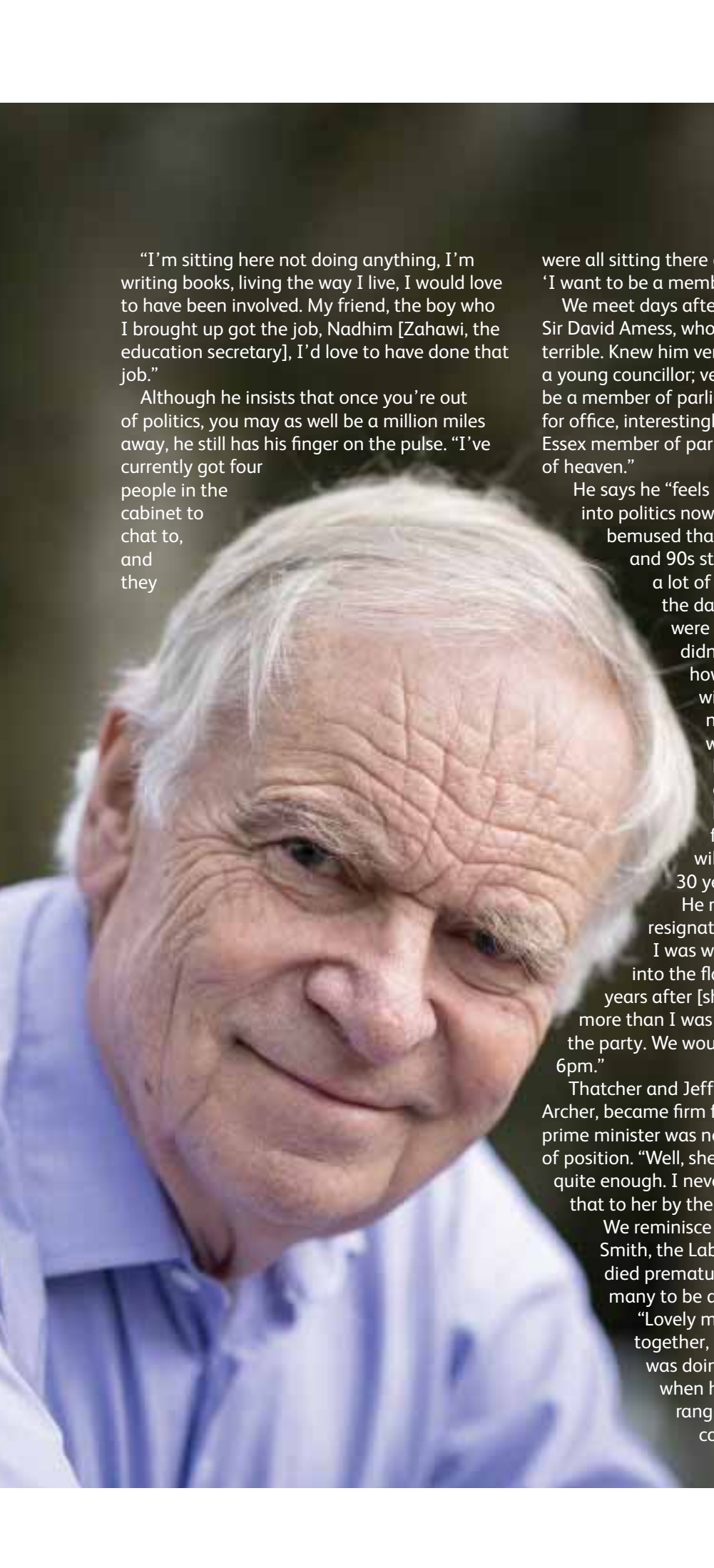
And then there is his political career; he was the MP for Louth at just 29 and became deputy chairman of the Conservative Party, serving both Margaret Thatcher and John Major. In 2001, he served at Her Majesty's pleasure after committing perjury in a trial (in a 1987 libel case against the *Daily Star*) and was sentenced to four years, in which he wrote a three-part series titled *A Prison Diary*.

So, is it lovely to be able to laugh on the other side of your face now? "Yes!" he laughs, "Quite right!"

You'd be forgiven for thinking that in his ninth decade, Jeffrey might be taking things more slowly. Not a bit of it. When I arrive, he is troubled by the rising Covid figures of the day and I moot that he must be relieved to not be in government currently: "No, I'd love to be running the whole damn thing! Well, I wish Margaret [Thatcher] was running it, and I was running around doing what I was told.

With his latest crime novel just out, bestselling author and former politician Jeffrey Archer shows no signs of slowing down

BY CORRIE BOND-FRENCH



"I'm sitting here not doing anything, I'm writing books, living the way I live, I would love to have been involved. My friend, the boy who I brought up got the job, Nadhim [Zahawi, the education secretary], I'd love to have done that job."

Although he insists that once you're out of politics, you may as well be a million miles away, he still has his finger on the pulse. "I've currently got four people in the cabinet to chat to, and they

were all sitting there on that sofa once saying, 'I want to be a member of parliament'."

We meet days after the tragic death of MP Sir David Amess, who Jeffrey knew well. "So terrible. Knew him very well. I remember him as a young councillor; very ambitious wanting to be a member of parliament, but not ambitious for office, interestingly, just wanted to be an Essex member of parliament, that was his idea of heaven."

He says he "feels for young people going into politics now in the new era" and is bemused that the politics of the 1980s and 90s still fascinates. "There are a lot of people who feel that the days of Margaret Thatcher were fairly remarkable. We didn't think so at the time, how could we? And working with her for 11 years, it never struck me that I was going to say 30 years later, 'Was she one of the great prime ministers in history?' No, you don't feel that at the time. What will they say about Boris in 30 years' time?"

He remembers Thatcher's resignation vividly. "It was terrible, I was with her – we moved her into the flat in Eaton Square... 15 years after [she left] I was with her more than I was when I was working for the party. We would go every Sunday at 6pm."

Thatcher and Jeffrey's wife, Dame Mary Archer, became firm friends, but the former prime minister was never reconciled to her loss of position. "Well, she had 11 years, that was quite enough. I never had the courage to say that to her by the way!"

We reminisce about the late John Smith, the Labour Party leader who died prematurely and was reckoned by many to be a future Labour PM.

"Lovely man. We went in-house together, he was a good friend. I was doing a Scottish tour once when he had a heart attack. I rang the hospital to ask if I could see him and they said

“You only get one life
and I’ve been lucky,
lucky, lucky”

he wants to see you now! I went straight in and sat on the end of the bed, and he talked to me about Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. In those days he was shadow business secretary and he’d just appointed these bright young things, and he said, ‘Watch them Jeffrey, watch them carefully!’ and I reported back to Margaret. He was a thoroughly good human being and he would have made a very good prime minister.”

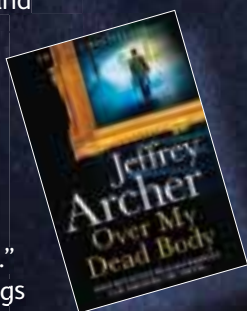
Jeffrey was appalled at shadow chancellor Angela Rayner’s recent comments about “Tory scum”.

“She did so much harm to her party. Does she not want them elected? The death of David Amess hasn’t helped her, because the outpouring of affection from all over the house shows just how wrong she is. It could be very bad, because we will stay in forever and that’s not good. A democracy needs the thing to switch, and if she becomes leader, they won’t. Corbyn has a lot to answer for.”

So, with a new book, a chock-full diary and indefatigable energy that he shares with his wife, it seems that the Archers remain evergreen. Jeffrey concedes that his regime is “vicious! I think both Mary and I learned our work ethic from Margaret actually. But I’ve been very privileged, and to have a simple gift of telling a story, incredible. I can’t complain.”

Would he change anything that the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune have brought his way? “No, you only get one life,” he says. “I’ve been lucky, lucky, lucky.”

Over My Dead Body, published by HarperCollins, is out now

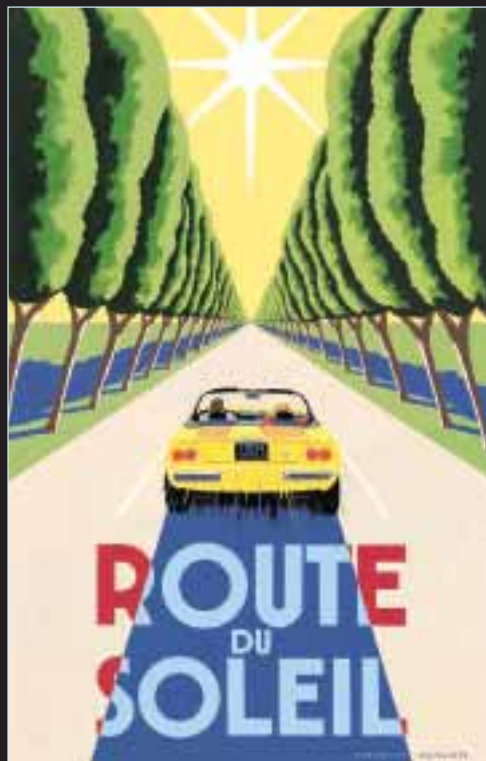
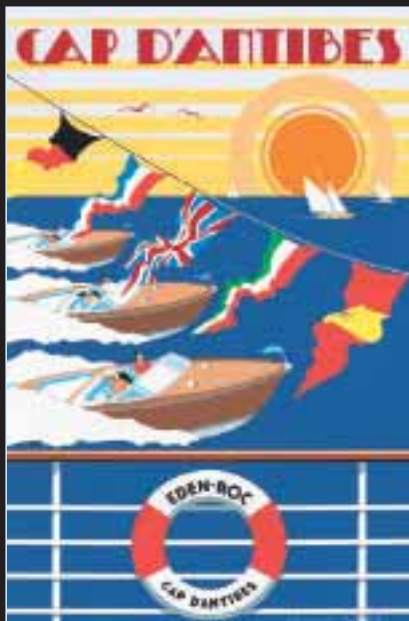
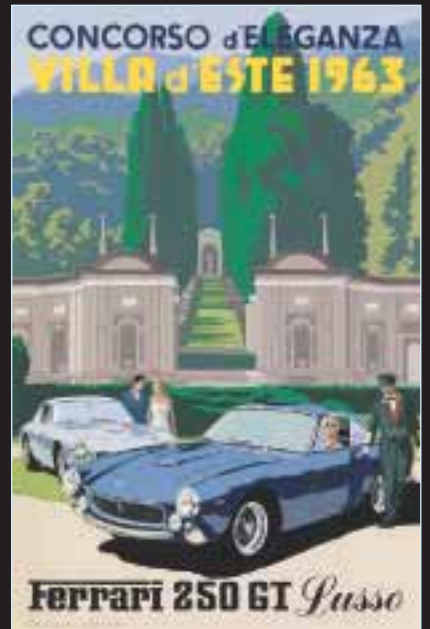




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A Holocaust memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens has been given the go-ahead, but while many welcome the plans, others are questioning the suitability of the site

BY REYHAAN DAY

A significant space

The new national Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre, which will honour the six million Jewish men, women and children murdered during the Holocaust, as well as other victims of Nazi oppression and subsequent genocides in Rwanda, Cambodia, Bosnia and Darfur, has been granted planning permission – with construction set to begin later this year.

The scheme to build the UK's first Holocaust memorial was spearheaded by then prime minister David Cameron in 2013. In 2016, he announced that Victoria Tower Gardens, next to the Houses of Parliament, would be the chosen location, with Adjaye Associates, Ron Arad Architects and Gustafson Porter + Bowman selected to bring the landmark to life through an international competition.

The memorial will comprise 23 bronze sculptures as the main focal point, designed by Ron Arad Architects – with the 22 spaces between representing the 22 countries that housed Jewish communities devastated by the



Holocaust. Adjaye's learning centre will make up the underground space.

After a planning application was submitted to Westminster City Council in 2018, questions over the suitability of the site were raised and a planning inquiry took place over six weeks in autumn 2020.

The scheme has now been given the green light, with the government announcing that it will contribute £75 million towards construction, supplemented by £25 million in charitable donations.

"We are profoundly relieved and appreciative of the government's decision to move forward with the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre in Victoria Tower Gardens," said Adjaye Associates in a statement to *Victoria* magazine. "Our entire team has been driven by the conviction that this memorial and learning centre is a crucial civic asset for Britain's future generations – that there is a paramount importance in a society acknowledging its mistakes. Today's decision is a huge milestone in bringing this project to reality."

"We have a duty to ensure that the history of the Holocaust is never forgotten and never repeated," said former communities secretary Robert Jenrick MP. "The memorial and learning centre will allow everyone to reflect, remember and honour those who suffered and died and to educate future generations in antisemitism [and] where, if unchecked, antisemitism and hatred can lead."

Ed Balls and Lord Pickles, co-chairs of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, added: "[We're] grateful to the minister and the planning inspector for giving such careful thought to our plans and to the objections raised."

These objections are significant, however – and groups opposing the construction continue to gain support.

There are a number of reasons why the project has met with resistance. Westminster City Council suggested that while it supports the "principle" of the memorial, building it next to the Houses of Parliament would contravene planning rules on size, design and location. The fact the gardens are well-used and limited on



space led the council to believe it would be a poor choice of site.

The proposed design, expectedly bold given the designers' reputation, would also obstruct views to the nearby World Heritage sites of Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament; and opponents also suggest that the buildings and park would require heavy security, given that the new memorial would be a "politically sensitive target", according to Save Victoria Tower Gardens, the campaign group to stop the construction of the memorial.

Save Victoria Tower Gardens also states that the government's desire to build the memorial symbolically close to parliament has overridden the need to keep public green space in this part of London accessible. "Victoria Tower Gardens is a precious city-centre green



space, well-used by residents and office workers," the group wrote in a statement to *Victoria*. "Lockdown really demonstrated how valuable parks are for mental and physical health."

The plans indicate that the green space in the park would be significantly reduced – by up to 26 per cent according to the London Gardens Trust. Save Victoria Tower Gardens also states that the fact the proposed buildings breach various planning guidelines but are still being built, offers a dangerous precedent for London's other green spaces – particularly worrying given the need to put extra focus on the climate crisis. Trees lining the western side of the park will be removed, and much of the grass area is set to be hard-surfaced.

Though many Jewish people oppose the construction, with some speaking out that the building of such a scheme in this location would not further understanding of the Jewish experience or combat antisemitism, other Jewish leaders back the project.

"This is a significant moment on our journey towards a major national Holocaust memorial," said chief rabbi Ephraim Mirvis. "Now the sacred work to enshrine our country's commitment to teaching the essential lessons of the Holocaust in a monument and learning centre beside parliament, can truly begin."

Chief executive of the Holocaust Educational Trust, Karen Pollock, noted that "there could not be a more important time to build this memorial, in the shadow of parliament" as the Holocaust "moves from living memory to history".

With the London Gardens Trust launching a legal challenge to the government's decision to award planning permission, time will tell whether this memorial will find a home in Victoria Tower Gardens; but with passionate proponents on both sides, the project has certainly raised valuable questions about public spaces and our duties to the past.



“There could not be a more important time to build this memorial as the Holocaust moves from living memory to history”

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A bao time

Savoury and sweet bao buns offering a “whimsical twist on the urban chic Asian street food classic” take centre stage at new Bao Yum.

The restaurant, located in the Westminster London hotel, serves bao breakfast options such as an English breakfast bao, alongside a lunch and dinner menu that includes the likes of cheeseburger bao, kung pao shrimp and lobster salad.

Pastries, acai bowls, homemade soup and deli sandwiches are also available.

Open 7am-7pm.

30 John Islip Street



Wining and dining

All the latest food and drink news, including new openings, seasonal menus, Christmas markets and more

BY ALICE CAIRNS AND
JONATHAN WHILEY



Ahh, bistro

Bistro favourite Muriel's Kitchen will open three new food and drink concepts at the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square next year.

Launching in early 2022, there will be an espresso bar, “relaxed” cafe and standalone restaurant with its own branded entrance. Menus will be seasonal and inspired by the South Kensington original.

Quick bites...

Nepalese restaurant **Aloo Tama** recently opened in Westminster. Located at 18 Greencoat Row, it's open for lunch and dinner.

Enjoy a caffeine fix at **Black Sheep Coffee**, which has opened another cafe in Victoria. The latest can be found at 6-10 Elizabeth Street serving speciality-grade Robusta beans. It's open seven days a week, from 6.30am weekdays and 7am on weekends.

Eat & drink Directory out & in



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We publish 25,000 copies of Victoria magazine every issue.

A very conservative estimate is that between four and eight people will look at each magazine.

To be a part of the Food & Drink Directory please email Julie@pubbiz.com





Open for business

Atul Kochhar's hotly anticipated new restaurant has now opened. Mathura is housed in the old Westminster Fire Station, making use of original features like the carriage doors, watch room and fireman's pole. Set over two

floors, it also incorporates an open bar and a choice of private dining rooms.

The menu takes inspiration from India and its neighbouring countries, including the flavours of Iran, Sri Lanka, China and Nepal.
4 Greycoat Place

Christmas cheer

Enjoy spiced mulled wine, mince pies and lots more festive fare at the Ecclestone Yards Christmas market. The courtyard, a five-minute walk from Victoria station, will allow shoppers to experience an early taste of the season with live music and independent traders selling a selection of hand-crafted gifts from jewellery to slippers.

From November 14, 11am-5pm on Sundays and from December 4 on Saturdays and Sundays in the lead-up to Christmas

Seasonal set menu

With the festive season approaching, Lorne has launched its Christmas set menu. Offering three courses for £39, starters include the likes of chicken ravioli with creamed parsnip, truffle and roasted chestnuts and cured Loch Duart salmon with white crab.

Mains include daube of beef with smoked butter mash and roast Cornish cod with champagne velouté, while mulled wine poached pear and chocolate crèmeux feature on the desserts.

The modern British restaurant, known for its seasonal fare, will be serving the menu throughout December.

76 Wilton Road



Eat & drink Directory out & in



LA MAISON DU CHAT

We are a small, independent, cosy cat cafe in the heart of Pimlico's beautiful grid. Patrons can enjoy a hot drink, cake or a bite of lunch in the company of our purrfect rescue cats; we also take bookings for brunches and afternoon teas. All the cats are up for adoption and we stock a range of pet foods for both dog and cat owners alike. Weekly 'Yoga with Cats' classes are set to begin in our newly opened basement, which is also available for private hire and Christmas parties too!

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CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON TEA IN KONA

Get into the festive spirit this year with a Christmas Afternoon Tea in Kona. Warm up with a Hot Chocolate Bauble before indulging in an abundance of sweet and savoury treats – and scones, of course – packed full of flavours that represent Christmas including turkey, roast beef, cranberries, chocolate, cinnamon and chestnut.

Kona is a luxury but laid-back restaurant snuggled in the corner of the grand Victorian Courtyard at Taj 51 Buckingham Gate. Our afternoon teas are award-winning and well-known for bringing an exotic twist to a traditional English classic.

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133 Victoria Street

Wine and spirits merchant

Jeroboams has selected five bottles to take you through the festive season in style.

Champagne Billecart-Salmon Rosé, £70

Available in full and stocking-filler half bottles (£38.95), Billecart-Salmon's iconic rosé has a beautiful pale pink colour with a nose of wild strawberry and pink grapefruit. One of the finest rosé champagnes available.

2018 Chianti Classico, Castello dei Rampolla, £24.95

Unquestionably one of Tuscany's greatest producers, using minimum intervention techniques to make some of the most evocative wines of the region. Chianti at its most classical and elegant.

2017 Kelly Washington Organic Sauvignon Blanc,

Festive feasting

Locally sourced treats and tips for the Christmas season BY REYHAAN DAY

The Rubens at the Palace

Executive chef Ben Kelliher talks us through preparing the big day's big bird – and how to make your vegetarian guests a once-in-a-year meal to remember.

"Christmas is not complete without turkey and all the trimmings. When I prepare Christmas lunch, either for my family or for our guests at the Rubens, I buy turkey crowns and legs. As the meat from the crown and legs is so different, you need to prepare and cook them separately.

"The stuffing I make normally consists of cranberries, chestnut, sausage and sage and the turkey is bone-tied and rolled with enough stuffing to bring out the aroma and flavours.

"I usually roast the turkey with onions, carrots, celery and chicken stock. Throughout the two-and-a-half hour cooking time, don't forget to continue basting the meat – this will help keep it moist. You can't really go wrong with adding truffle butter under the skin.

"Vegetarian guests shouldn't be an afterthought on Christmas Day. I usually prepare a chestnut and cashew nut roast with fragrant herbs like dried rosemary, sage and thyme. Also, why not add finely chopped onion and garlic, butternut squash and carrots to the mixture, and serve this with roasted parsnips and carrots on couscous. The other guests won't know what they're missing!"

39 Buckingham Palace Road





Marlborough, £17.95

This isn't your average Marlborough sauvignon and you would be forgiven for mistaking this incredible wine as being from the upper Loire. It's sure to be a crowd-pleaser at any party.

2018 Moss Wood Pinot Noir, Margaret River, Western Australia, £24.95

Margaret River may be more famous for its cabernet, but Moss Wood has been making this rich yet elegant pinot since the 1970s and has perfected the style over the years. An extraordinary wine.

2016 Oldenburg Syrah, Banghoek Valley, South Africa, £13.95

A Jeroboams favourite from the moment it first landed. Brambles, Christmas spice and hints of truffled mushrooms on the finish; there is just so much to enjoy in every sip.

50-52 Elizabeth Street



Jon Harris, commercial director at local favourite **Rippon Cheese**, gives us his top three cheeses to indulge in this Christmas.

Spenwood

Spenwood is a full-flavoured, unpasteurised sheep's milk cheese that has been matured for just under a year in Berkshire. It's smooth, sweet and nutty, with hints of caramel and it's always a crowd pleaser. It pairs amazingly well with a sweet Moscatel sherry.

Shropshire Blue

Shropshire Blue is a great addition to any cheese board. A deep orange cheese flecked with blue, it delivers a full and rounded flavour and is a great alternative to the traditional stilton. The ideal soulmate for that glass of rich deep port.

Bath Soft

Made on Park Farm near Bath and based on a 1908 recipe, this is truly a star. Full of savoury flavour and rich cream, once ripe the cheese oozes luxury. Great all year, but well worth pairing with a Madeira wine at Christmas.

26 Upper Tachbrook Street



Crosstown, dealer of London's most decadent doughnuts, has launched its festive flavours for this year – perfect for Christmas parties or indulgent days off.

New doughnut flavours include spiced with miso caramel; pecan chocolate cake; Cointreau custard with mulled wine glaze; and cranberry matcha cake. The company has also introduced new ice cream flavours including Baileys, gingerbread and chocolate orange – all of which can be gift-wrapped for a more personal touch. The Christmas doughnut selection (six or 12) starts from £25.95; plus ice cream pint from £29.95. Doorstep delivery is available across the UK.

14 Sir Simon Milton Square

Maurilio Molteni, head chef at Italian restaurant **Tozi**, shares his favourite meal to make at Christmas – and a few tips to help you serve up something special.

First course: truffle risotto

"I love to make truffle risotto as a first course at Christmas. If we're lucky enough to have some white truffle left over from truffle season, we'll use that – but otherwise, winter black truffle is fantastic; it's a festive, opulent and sexy dish that my family love."


Main course: shoulder of lamb

"For the main course it's all about slow braised meat. To get the best out of it, marinate it overnight with vegetables, garlic, rosemary and lovely Italian white wine, before cooking for four hours at 160 degrees. In the meantime, prep your Castelluccio lentils, braised cavolo nero and roasted parsnips for the side. When the wonderful flavours come together, it smells just like Christmas to me."

8 Gillingham Street



Good spirits



Inspired by the Churchill War Rooms in Westminster, a new book raises a glass to the former statesman's remarkable life

BY ALICE CAIRNS

Churchill, that larger than life Brit, has supplied subject matter for hefty biographies, history textbooks and think-pieces aplenty. Now a new book from the Imperial War Museum – inspired by the Churchill War Rooms – examines the former prime minister's life through the medium of cocktails.

"It's a fun, fresh way of looking at Churchill," explains the museum's Kieran Whitworth. "His relationship with alcohol is well-known: I would describe it, like the man himself, as complex and prodigious. He certainly did drink more than the average person, but he was very rarely seen to be worse for wear."

Although mixed drinks weren't Churchill's tipples of choice, *Churchill's Cocktails* uses mixology to capture something of his spirit. Thus, a ruby-hued cocktail reflects his love of pink silk underwear, his cigar-smoking is commemorated in a cocktail topped with an aromatic smoke bubble, and his relationship with his wife, Clementine, is the inspiration behind a

sweet champagne cocktail with a hint of citrus. "We drew on so many sources when we were putting the book together, but one place inspired us more than any other," explains David Fenton, head of retail at the Imperial War Museum. "When you go down those steps, it's almost like you can feel Churchill's presence."

David is referring, of course, to the Churchill War Rooms: the top-secret Whitehall bunker in which Churchill and his ministers masterminded Britain's war effort. Now part of the Imperial War Museum, it's a subterranean maze of map rooms and meeting rooms that's been preserved exactly as it was in 1945 – right down to pencil notes and forgotten sugar cubes. Churchill's own chair remains in pride of place in the Cabinet Room – one arm scuffed by his heavy signet ring, the other bearing the indentations of his fingernails.

"It's just this little door in the governmental district, but when you step inside and walk down the steps,

you're transported straight back to the 1940s", says Kieran. "I've been with the Imperial War Museum for 20 years now, but I still get a shiver when I walk down there. It's just this powerful feeling – that this was where history happened."

No wonder, then, that the Churchill War Rooms provided plenty of inspiration to the team behind *Churchill's Cocktails*, acting as the location for the photo shoot that captured the cocktails in situ. From martinis in the map rooms to brandy in the bedroom, this historic space makes the perfect backdrop for a boozy celebration of a life lived large.

"We obviously all know that Churchill was a complex character – a man of his time. It's important to



acknowledge that and show all sides of him", says David. "I hope that in talking about the Churchill War Rooms, we can also remember that a whole miniature town full of people worked down there, 24 hours a day, during World War Two. It was a remarkable place and Churchill is just one part of that."

A final word of caution: those wishing to sample all 30 of the recipes in the book may need to take some tips from the man himself.

"Churchill liked to be known by the British public as someone who could handle his drink," says Kieran.

"Because of that, he would always sip his drinks very slowly. I don't think you can go far wrong if you do the same! One thing I always remember when I think about Churchill is that despite the alcohol and the cigars, he lived until he was 90, and packed more into his life than most people ever will. Perhaps clean living isn't all it's cracked up to be!"



Make your own... Churchill War Rooms martini

This truly unique martini has a special ingredient: bitters made from moisture found within the Churchill War Rooms, the secret wartime bunker in Westminster from where Churchill led the nation to victory. However, when making this at home any available bitters will do.

INGREDIENTS:

75ml Inverroche Gin
Classic
5 drops historical war
room bitters

Garnish:

One baby beetroot

Glass:

Nick and Nora

Equipment list:

Mixing glass, jigger,
bar spoon, Hawthorne
strainer

METHOD:

Add the ingredients to a mixing glass, add cubed ice and stir for approximately 20 seconds. Strain into a chilled glass and garnish it with one baby beetroot, or an olive pick if preferred.

Christmas Eve

SATIN PYJAMAS

Slumber in style with this blush pink pyjama set. It's perfect for opening presents in too.

£40, Accessorize, 32 Victoria Station, accessorize.com

HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT CHRISTMAS JUMPER

Wear your love of democracy on your sleeve with this Westminster-inspired winter warmer.

£45, Houses of Parliament Shop, 12 Bridge Street, shop.parliament.uk

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS GIFT SET

A pair of relaxing bath bombs to soothe you to sleep on Christmas Eve.

£9.50, Lush, 42 Victoria Station, lush.com

MILK CHOCOLATE SPOON

Swirl into hot milk and top with mini marshmallows for a tasty Christmas Eve treat.

£3.50, Whittard, 29 Buckingham Palace Road, whittard.co.uk

SLIPPERS

These fluffy faux-fur slippers will keep you cosy while you wait for the big day.

£32, Waitrose (click and collect), Bressenden Place, johnlewis.com

**ALPHABET
VELVET
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£5,
M&S,
Cardinal
Place,
Victoria Street,
marksandspencer.
com



BUCKINGHAM PALACE SLOE GIN

Made with botanicals gathered from the palace gardens, this gin is full of festive flavours like plum, marzipan, cranberry and clove.

£30, Buckingham Palace Shop,
7 Buckingham Palace Road,
royalcollectionshop.co.uk



That's a wrap

Victoria's shops are brimming with gift ideas for family and friends

BY ALICE CAIRNS

STUDED SOCKS

Accessorise boring brogues with these star-studded black ankle socks, a stellar addition to any wardrobe.

£7.50, Oliver
Bonas, 49
Victoria Station,
oliverbonas.com



FESTIVE BAUBLE

This bauble is full of limited edition shower gel with a pine and patchouli scent, inspired by a 1970s Christmas Eve.

£14, Molton Brown, Cardinal Place,
92 Victoria Street,
moltonbrown.co.uk



**CORONATION
CUFFLINKS**

These enamelled cufflinks were inspired by the coronation cope worn by King Charles II in 1661.

£17.95, Westminster
Abbey Shop,
Broad Sanctuary,
westminster-abbey.org

Stocking stuffers

Gift guide



VICTORIAN BANGLE

This beautiful "lover's knot" bangle dates from the Victorian era and is delicately wrought in gold and diamonds.

£2,250, J McCarthy, 11 Artillery Row, jmccarthy.co.uk



THE GRAND WREATH

Weighing in at over a kilo, this festive showstopper contains enough chocolate to keep the whole family happy until 2022.

£75, Hotel Chocolat, 133 Victoria Street, hotelchocolat.com



GLITTER SHOES

Children will love wearing these glittery pumps, also available in gold and silver.

£76, Papouelli, 51 Elizabeth Street, papouelli.com



FROSTED MOON PERFUME

This wintry scent for men and women is full of soft, woody notes.

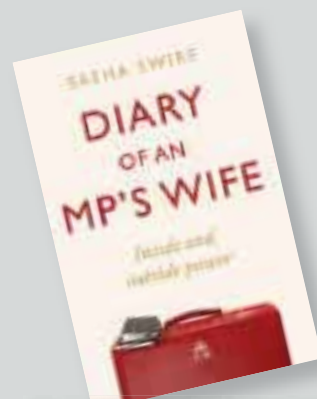
Les Senteurs, 71 Elizabeth Street, lessenteurs.com



VELVET MINI BAG

This emerald green bag will bring a splash of Christmas colour to any outfit.

£295, Me+Em, 45 Elizabeth Street, meandem.com



DIARY OF AN MP'S WIFE BY SASHA SWIRE

Compulsive reading packed with wicked Westminster gossip.

£9.99, Waterstones, Cardinal Place, 88 Victoria Street, waterstones.com

Under the tree

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Gift guide



2022 DIARY

Keep track of your year with this beautifully hand-bound desk diary, featuring marbled paper from Brazil and a cloth spine.

£60, **Shepherds Bookbinders**, 76 Rochester Row, bookbinding.co.uk

CHAMPAGNE

Count down to midnight with a bottle of bubbly – this Laurent-Perrier La Cuvée is packed with white fruit and citrus flavours.

£43, **Jeroboams**, 50-52 Elizabeth Street, jeroboams.co.uk



Happy New Year



CHESTNUT BAKERY GIFT CARD

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Chestnut Bakery, 17-21 Elizabeth Street, chestnutbakery.com



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Gymbox, 123 Victoria Street, gymbox.com

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Feline good



Combining coffee, cake and cats, Moreton Street cafe
La Maison du Chat is the purrfect place to catch a break
while making some furry friends

BY JONATHAN WHILEY

Brothers Harry and William – bound by love – had to be separated in the end. “When they got here I realised Harry was living in William’s shadow,” says Florence Heath, referring to two of her rescue cats but soon aware of how it might play out. Sound familiar? “Oh my God,” she says, “it’s going there, but it’s true. Harry was being bullied... he doesn’t have any teeth, so when he was in that situation he wasn’t able to fight back. His brother was a bit of a bulldozer and would come in front of him if others were bugging him, but I felt William needed his own life.”

Before we go full Oprah, Florence points out she didn’t name the cats herself. William has since been adopted but six-and-a-half-year-old “gentleman cat” Harry – the ginger one, naturally – remains in the company of nine other rescue cats at La Maison du Chat.

A new cat cafe on characterful Moreton Street, Florence opened in December 2020 but nine days later, a nationwide lockdown was enforced. What was already a complicated venture – Westminster City Council had to grant planning permission due to the unique use for the new venue (a former estate agent) – was made that bit trickier.

Thankfully, Florence – a Pimlico resident – was supported by others in the community. “A number of locals made it their mission to ensure that independent businesses would still be here at the end of lockdown,” she says. “They came in to specifically buy coffee and a pastry. It sounds like nothing, but at that point it was huge and I’m so thankful.”

On the morning I visit there are a couple of regulars who call in and enjoy a coffee in a glass-partitioned area which divides the cafe. Here the cats come and go as they please from a tunnel which leads to their bedroom.

“I want it to be a community hub,” says Florence. “Generally cat cafes have a booking fee, but I don’t do that here. Financially it might have been a better idea, but it’s not

the vision. We brought in a £5 minimum spend to cover the costs, but that’s it. The idea is that people can come in more than once.”

Mercifully it’s no woo-woo shrine to the feline and the cats are gentle and friendly rather than aloof. Four-month-old black cat Cosmo drapes himself in my lap almost instantly. “Cosmo was found in a bin in Cyprus, almost dead,” Florence says. “I was surprised he made it through, but he has a lovely nature.”

There are a maximum of 10 cats at the cafe at any one time; all are rescue cats and can be adopted, providing it’s the right home (there are checks and forms in place, naturally). “In Tunisia I’ve got 187 cats that are ready to travel,” Florence says, “which has backed up during Covid.”

Previously a geologist, Florence travelled extensively for work and for years encountered the cultural cruelty and neglect that many animals are subjected to. In 2013 she helped set up a charity to rescue animals in north Africa – rehoming cats in the UK – and two years later, unexpectedly lost her job when an oil crisis caused her company to close.

In 2018, having given birth to her daughter, she was determined to turn her back on a corporate life and embark on a new venture combining her compassion for animals, crowdfunding to make it possible.

“I started planning it in early 2019 when I had the idea,” she says. “The model is a business and then once we get into profit, we’ll be paying a good percentage of the profits into the charity [Furry Ears Rescue].

“The idea is that we raise enough funds so we can cover the vet bills. Ideally that will go through the charity – we’ll make a donation to the charity and the charity will cover those costs. I know there will be a constant source of income for the charity and then obviously I’ll be fundraising on top of it.”

Each Monday there is a coffee morning (10-11am) for those over 65 and on Tuesday





mornings (10-11.30am) there is time for mums to bring their new babies (aged up to six months).

"It gives the mums a bit of a breather in a calm space and it exposes the babies at a young age to animals, which I think is really important", says Florence.

There are yoga sessions with the cats in the basement room on Saturday mornings at 8.30am – a 45-minute yoga session followed by a green smoothie and "cat cuddle time" – and you can also book for brunch or a

traditional afternoon tea (loose leaf tea in pots and cake supplied by artisan bakers).

Like much of Moreton Street, it's something of a hidden gem where – unlike his Buckingham Palace namesake – Harry remains a popular and ever dignified presence.

La Maison du Chat is open from 8am-7pm every day at 55 Moreton Street. laimaisonduchat.co.uk

AND FOR THE DOG-LOVERS...

Plenty of places in Victoria and Westminster provide paws for thought (ahem)...

M VICTORIA runs a "six-legged brunch" every Saturday from noon until 4pm. Take your pooch to the Victoria Street restaurant and enjoy a three-course menu (£35). Those with two legs can expect shakshuka, steak and eggs and a pancake stack, while four-legged friends can enjoy chicken jerky three ways, biltong risotto and dog-friendly peanut butter cookies.

Upgrade your hound in the style stakes with

a trip to **OVERGLAM** in Eccleston Yards. The designer doggie boutique sells hoodies, sweatshirts, T-shirts, jumpers and even a ski collection, alongside accessories such as collars, leads and harnesses.

Treat man's best friend to toys, treats, blankets, bowls and beds at **MUNGO & MAUD** on Elizabeth Street. There's a Christmas collection to browse with gift ideas for pets and it also stocks a range for cats too.

Furry friends can live their best life at dog-friendly **ST ERMIN'S HOTEL** on Caxton Street with the "canine concierge service". Pampered pooches can enjoy complimentary stays for up to two dogs per room with a cosy dog bed, treats and a water bowl part of the service at 18 dog-friendly rooms available on the first floor. Better still, a "dog concierge" can assist with local exercise, grooming parlours and a whole lot more.



Make a wish - generational wealth

The pandemic has prompted many of us to take stock and think about the future we want for ourselves and for future generations. People who previously may not have had time to prioritise and think about their succession planning, are taking the opportunity to have open discussions about the future and the transition of wealth between generations.

With so much continuing uncertainty in the world, a flexible approach to such discussions is needed. In particular when it comes to Wills, while complexities in your situation may require a complex structure, an overly rigid approach could leave your family unable to react to unexpected changes in circumstances in the future.

Putting a Will in place should always be top of the agenda when starting any succession planning. Your Will transfers your assets to those you most trust to carry out your wishes and ensures they have sufficient powers to administer your estate. It can be tailored to align with how much discretion, or control, you would like to afford your family.

However, a Will must include certain formalities which make it difficult to provide more human guidance to those carrying out your wishes. A way of giving more accessible guidance is to: draft your Will in flexible terms; give those who will be responsible wide discretion; and, write supporting non-binding statements in 'letters of wishes'. These can be a very effective and powerful tool which give more scope for transferring your personality onto the page.

A letter of wishes should be personal to you but its informality makes it easier to involve your family in your succession planning, creating a road map which gives clear direction for lifetime structuring and manages expectations around the transition of wealth.

There is the added benefit that these statements can be updated in a cost-efficient way as your family circumstances and finances evolve. Further letters can amend your guidance without the need to sign new formal documents.

Taking the time to set up flexible succession structures now will help to prevent potential difficulties arising in the future.

If you would like to find out more about how to structure your Will and the most effective way to communicate your wishes, please call a member of our private wealth team on 020 7591 3333 or email victoria.fairley@crippspg.co.uk.



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Mumbai, May 1, 1975. India's first, "exclusive" business club – The Chambers – opens its doors at the Taj Mahal Palace. It's regarded as "an exalted club for global achievers who have redefined horizons and scaled great heights."

Fast-forward 46 years and the first European outpost of The Chambers has opened at Taj 51 Buckingham Gate Suites and Residences in Westminster. And, in keeping with its billing as "a rarified space" and a chance to enjoy "enhanced privileges and ultra-niche experiences with membership by invitation only for a select few", the launch event saw the current Indian cricket team in attendance (head coach Ravi Shastri was also launching his book) alongside the likes of cricketing legend Michael Holding.

"One of the key things that makes The Chambers unique is our offering of unique experiences for our members over a series of 'Rendezvous' specially curated events, many including experts in fields such as sports, politics or arts," says Mehrnavaz Avari, UK area director and general manager at Taj 51 and St James' Court. "In that spirit, the book launch was an ideal way to represent the Rendezvous series in London."

Naturally, they are tight-lipped on famous members; Mehrnavaz simply says, "We have a wealth of high-profile members from across the world in leadership, business and entertainment."

Primarily, The Chambers is aimed at a business clientele with eight locations currently (six in India, one in Dubai and its new London outpost) and plans are in place for a launch in New York "soon".

"The Chambers' locations are ideal for the business community as they offer unrivalled spaces in close proximity to business hubs and destinations," says Mehrnavaz. "The Chambers in Taj Bengal, Kolkata, for example is close to the key business districts of the city and the government centres, while The Chambers in the Taj Mahal Palace, Mumbai, not only has views of the Arabian sea, but also resides close to the business hub and international airport, the optimum location for business travellers looking to do business while enjoying beautiful scenery."

For those who become a global member, following a "rigorous vetting process" on an "invite-only" basis, the benefits are clear. "Members enjoy a lifetime of unfettered access to all its accompanying benefits and privileges, together with the rare chance to enjoy





An elite enclave

Hotel brand Taj has launched an uber-luxury private members' club in Westminster, where global achievers can connect with other highly accomplished individuals

BY JONATHAN WHILEY

unparalleled benefits across a second generation, via a one-time transfer of membership to a son or daughter," says Mehrnavaz. "Members can also share select privileges with their spouse by availing the complimentary add-on card facility."

Specific benefits include the likes of a 25 per cent discount on room bookings with complimentary breakfast at Taj hotels, 25 per cent off non-alcoholic drinks and food at restaurants and bars, 25 per cent off at Taj's Jiva spas and 50 per cent off laundry services.

Facilities at the latest club – a beautifully designed space by Conran and Partners – include individual work "pods", a bar, private dining space (which can also double as a meeting room) and a lounge offering both Indian and international cuisine.

After a reduction in business travel worldwide, the launch timing is curious. But Mehrnavaz believes the timing is "perfect". "Post-pandemic we have found our members are enthusiastic to travel to key destinations in order to revive and sustain their business relations and international affairs," she says.

Does she believe the new club will help put Westminster further on the map? "Taj The Chambers is for a community of accomplished acclaimed achievers," she says.

"The new club will give members access to an uber-luxury private and exclusive ambience at one of the city's most central postcodes, helping the business community in this zone to thrive and connect with like-minded people."

New Look

For a *Clueless* in the 21st century at Christmas time look, this two-piece tartan suit – jacket, £39.99 and skirt, £23.99 – is the way to go.

VICTORIA PLACE SHOPPING CENTRE, 115 BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD

Oliver Bonas

A great size for all the necessary party items, this pearl velvet spot clutch bag, £38, comes in a cute bucket shape.

49 VICTORIA STATION

Accessorize

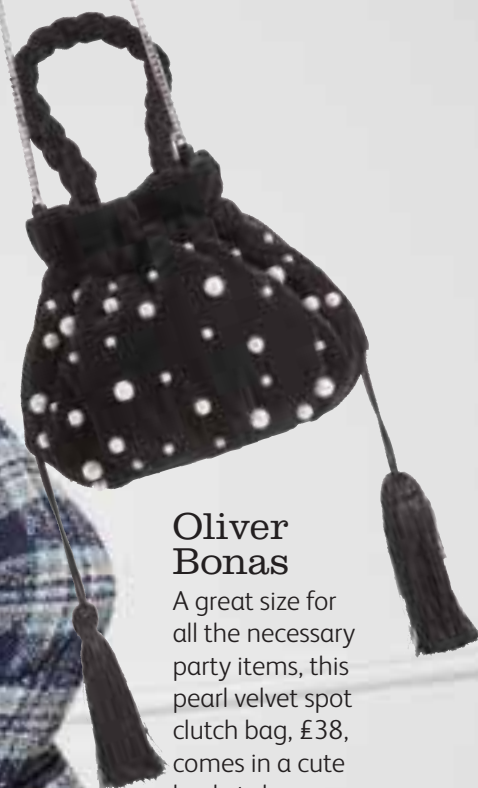
If you just want a nod to the Christmas season, these Christmas tree drop earrings, £4, are possibly the most stylish shrubs you'll ever hang from your ears.

32 VICTORIA STATION

Jones Bootmaker

The Belle Rose, £125, in either black or cream, is the ultimate winter party shoe, with a heel for extra glam and can be worn with smart trousers, dresses or skirts.

84 VICTORIA STREET



Party pieces

Step into winter party season in style with these on-trend fashion finds from Victoria

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

Levi's

For a casual soiree, the cable crew, £95, check shirt, £70, trench coat, £160, and loose taper crop jeans, £110 are the ultimate in relaxed style.

HOUSE OF FRASER, 101 VICTORIA STREET

M&S

This patterned pure silk tie, £25, is an elegant addition to wear with a suit for the more formal festive party. **CARDINAL PLACE, VICTORIA STREET**

Clarks

The Wallabee boot in burgundy velvet, £210, is everything that a festive Clarks Originals shoe should be, with a distinctive carpet-inspired pattern.

149 VICTORIA STREET

Tailor Made London

This bottle green wool-silk melange with blue windowpane, cut uniquely to your measurements and made with bespoke detailing, £POA, isn't just a great blazer for the party season, it's an all year round piece.

15D ECCLESTON PLACE



Party atmosphere

Munich Cricket Club

It's always Oktoberfest at Munich Cricket Club, a bierkeller that comes complete with live oompah bands, German beers served by the stein and authentic Bavarian food. At Christmas, the entire hall is decked out in festive style while the biergarten is transformed into a winter wonderland. With vats of simmering mulled wine and three traditional German markets on site, it's an atmospheric location for any Christmas party.

1 Abbey Orchard Street



Bbar

This cocktail bar and restaurant is located beneath London's largest living wall. At Christmas, you can expect to find festive cocktails, live DJ sets and a delicious menu of South African food, including veggie and plant-based options. Partygoers also have the option to book a private events room for their festive celebration.

43 Buckingham Palace Road

STK Steakhouse

Known for its buzzing atmosphere, STK Steakhouse has its own in-house DJ and a chic lounge space in which diners are encouraged to dance and mingle. Groups can sample cocktails, tuck into bao buns and even hire STK's luxurious private bowling alley for their own exclusive use.

30 John Islip Street

Party time

Christmas parties are back, and we couldn't be more excited. Whether you're planning a catch-up with friends or a celebration with co-workers, check out our pick of venues for your festive gathering

BY ALICE CAIRNS

Private dining

THE PELICAN ROOM

Tucked away in the Ivy Victoria is the Pelican Room, a private dining room seating 20 guests. The long table decorated with seasonal flowers and the Art Deco lighting make this an eminently Instagrammable spot for a festive feast.

66 Victoria Street



Quirky activities

Flight Club

Take part in a festive darts championship at Flight Club, which offers indoor and outdoor spaces for groups of between 37 and 650 guests (as well as semi-private rooms for smaller groups). Partygoers can order cocktails, pizzas and sharing plates at the touch of a button, and the winner of the tournament will have the option to order a special celebratory sharing cocktail that's served in a trophy.

6 Sir Simon Milton Square

1Rebel

Those craving a festive adrenaline rush should consider 1Rebel as a Christmas party venue. Groups of up to 80 guests can hire the Ride Studio, the largest spin studio in the UK, which comes with a state-of-the-art lighting and sound system.

The 1Rebel team are happy to bring in DJs, MCs,



1Rebel



Flight Club

drummers, guitarists or even a live pyro act to give your party that special something, and post-workout shakes and prosecco can be thrown in too.

Nova South building, 5 Allington Avenue

Studio Pottery London

Enjoy a spot of festive team-building at a bespoke pottery workshop. Catering for groups of between 20 and 40, these 90-minute classes will teach you how to prepare and throw clay to create your own mini masterpiece. Your completed work will be glazed and fired, to be collected within two to four weeks. Lunch or dinner can be provided by neighbouring restaurant Wild by Tart, as well as pastries by Ole & Steen and wines by Batonnage.

29 Eccleston Place



Studio Pottery London



THE MEZZANINE

This brand-new dining area at Wild by Tart is on a mezzanine level, with views over the restaurant and open kitchen below. Seating 15 guests, the pretty space comes decorated with flickering candles and winding greenery.

3-4 Eccleston Yards

THE SNUG

Smaller groups will love the Snug, a cosy private space in the newly opened Blue Boar Pub. Up to six guests can enjoy this intimate den with comfy leather sofas, table service and sophisticated British pub food from renowned chef Sally Abé.

45 Tothill Street



From quick facial fixes to a relaxing Russian banya, these treatments in Victoria will help you look and feel your best

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

Party prep



BETTER BROWS

When husband and wife Piyush and Alka Mehta realised there was a need for brow services in localised areas, they set up Better Brows. The company offers threading and waxing for brows and the entire face, as well as tinting, lash services and henna tattoos. Alka says: "The best way to get that perfect shape is continuous consultation with your therapist to ensure the best possible results are being achieved in accordance with your natural brow shape and your facial features, and to ensure that you are having treatments at regular intervals. This will mean that your brows retain their optimum shape over a longer period of time." *Victoria Place Shopping Centre, 115 Buckingham Palace Road*

THÉRAPIE CLINIC

For a quick facial fix ahead of the festive season, Thérapie Clinic offers a range of injectables to help smooth and plump any areas of concern.

The first treatment is anti-wrinkle injections to correct any fine lines, crow's feet and forehead wrinkles.

It works by injecting small doses into targeted areas to block the signals between the nerves and muscles, allowing muscles to relax.

Second are dermal fillers, which are great for anyone losing volume on the face, or areas of the face. Juvéderm uses hyaluronic acid, which occurs naturally in the body and is synthetically produced in a pure form to be injected in specific areas of the face.

The last is lip filler, again using hyaluronic acid, injected with a very fine needle into the lips and great to enhance any lip of any person.

147 Victoria Street





LONDONCRYO

The LondonCryo Facial Chill and Glow is a facial with gusto as it uses a targeted light sequence to address skin concerns.

Ideal for the winter months, the 30-minute treatment exclusive to the clinic uses cold and light therapy.

Founder Maria Ensabella says: "When done regularly it helps to clear away toxins below the skin surface, leaving you with clear, rejuvenated skin.

"The LED face mask reduces fine lines by stimulating collagen production, and combats acne through its antibacterial benefits. The Cryo blast provides a range of skin benefits such as plumping and tightening of the skin, reduction of crow's feet and collagen stimulation within the deeper layers of skin."

It is the unique combination of both the Cryotherapy and LED that improves the complexion, ready for any occasion.

15c Eccleston Place



THE BATH HOUSE

For a unique way to invigorate yourself before or after a night out, try parenie, the classic Russian banya treatment performed in a steam room with aromatic bunches of oak, birch and eucalyptus leaves.

The parenie ritual strengthens the immune system and detoxes the body, in a private steam room where birch and eucalyptus leaves capture steam and drive it down onto your body. The Bath House adds: "The heat penetrates your body, de-stressing you and relaxing the muscles, the natural oils and aroma of the leaves refresh the skin and clear any congestion, and the music of the experience transports you to a different place."

A private banya can be booked for families or work parties, with a steam room, treatment rooms and lounge where you can enjoy Russian food and drink including caviar and vodka.

1 Grosvenor Gardens

The women of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) offered invaluable assistance on the battlefield during World War One – and their good work continues today

BY CORRIE BOND-FRENCH

A woman cyclist first aid scout of the FANY rides along in her distinctive uniform © Alamy

It can count such wartime heroes and George Cross recipients as Violette Szabo, Noor Inayat Khan and Odette Hallows within its ranks, with 27 Croix de Guerre, 17 military medals, one Légion d'honneur and numerous other gongs – including MBEs – to boot. Then there are the mentions in despatches and the work that continues to this day supporting civil and military authorities in times of crisis and beyond.

Yet few people are fully acquainted with the magnificent, unsung work and history of the quirkily named FANY – the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (Princess Royal's Volunteer Corps),

aid, a drilling in cavalry movements, signalling and camp work, so that nurses could ride onto the battlefield to attend to the wounded who might otherwise have been left to a slow death.”

When World War One broke out, the British government blocked the FANY involvement, at which point the Corps opted to work with the French and Belgian armies instead. The first FANYs went out on October 27, 1914, bringing casualties back within hours. In just two days, they had set up a military hospital and sent for reinforcements.

By 1916 the British government asked for their help, and a total of 390 FANYs were active

A force to be reckoned with

which has survived against all the odds as a quasi-military, all-female independent charity based on Horseferry Road in Westminster.

In 1907, a number of Edwardian women saddled up and rallied to the call when Captain Edward Baker, a badly injured Boer war veteran, appealed for ladies with horses to train as first aiders, the idea being that they could help save lives by providing early treatment on the battlefield. He wrote: “During my period of service with Lord Kitchener in the Soudan Campaign, where I had the misfortune to be wounded, it occurred to me that there was a missing link somewhere in the Ambulance Department which, in spite of the changes in warfare, had not altered very materially since the days of Crimea when Florence Nightingale and her courageous band of helpers went out to succour and save the wounded.

“On my return from active service I thought out a plan which I anticipated would meet the want, but it was not until September 1907 that I was able to found a troop of young women to see how my ideas on the subject would work. My idea was that each member of this Corps would receive, in addition to a thorough training in first

during the conflict, including former suffragettes such as Phyllis Lovell. At the forefront and often under fire, lives were lost. Many back home had concerns about women being so near the front, but the FANYs proved invaluable and determined. Sir Arthur Stanley, head of the British Red Cross Society, summed up the FANY spirit: “The courage of a lion, the hide of a rhinoceros and a capacity so great that it could nurse the worst form of typhoid or start a frozen car.”

Many FANYs stayed on in Belgium and France to help after the war. They formed a guard of honour when the body of executed nurse Edith Cavell was exhumed in Brussels for reburial in England.

After World War One, other female units such as the WAAF and WRNS disbanded, but the FANY's independence and military support ensured its survival. The War Office provided army accommodation and training assistance, and the organisation was formalised. Through its constitution, members decided to keep a military structure, with a clear remit to support civil and military authorities in times of crisis.

After the outbreak of World War Two, the FANY expanded to 6,000 members, of whom 4,000



FANY drivers in fur coats, Western Front, WW1 © Alamy

“They have the courage of a lion, the hide of a rhinoceros and a capacity so great that it could start a frozen car”

served with the Auxiliary Territorial Service. The Queen was just one of many taught how to drive an ambulance at this time.

The remaining 2,000 members became part of the Special Operations Executive (SOE), serving as signallers, coders, drivers and support staff. Significantly, 39 were female agents who were parachuted into occupied France, some receiving military honours posthumously.

The FANY's capabilities have evolved over time, as horses gave way to motorised ambulances. Their unique skill set has expanded to encompass disciplines including basic military skills, first aid, acting as loggists to key decision makers or watchkeeping in operations rooms.

There are opportunities for adventurous training too, with hill walking and sailing. Riding members can ride military horses in the Lord Mayor's Show and members can even apply for their French military parachute wings – 22 FANYs currently have the coveted brevet.

Based in SW1 but called on to provide support nationally 24/7 and 365 days a year, the FANY now consists of 150 active members and around 300 associate members and veterans. All female volunteers are aged 21-65, hailing from a wide range of backgrounds and professions.

You may have seen them marching at the Cenotaph marking Remembrance Sunday, or on horseback at the Lord Mayor's Show, but their support work behind the scenes will have been less visible.

In the past few years alone, Corps members have provided support at crises including the pandemic at the NHS Nightingale Hospital and as personal staff officers at the ICU at the Royal London Hospital.

They also assisted the military gathering data from recently arrived Afghan refugees, and offered operational support at the Westminster Bridge, London Bridge, Manchester Arena and Fishmongers' Hall terrorist attacks. They provided support after the fire at Grenfell Tower and to Essex Police following the discovery of 39 bodies in a lorry. They even gave assistance within the operations room at the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral.

All of this support is offered by the FANY's pool of fully vetted, professionally trained volunteers who do not get paid, and who often use their annual leave to help. As civilian volunteers, the organisation receives no government funding. The challenge to raise enough money to cover the operational costs of their support work is continual, helped in part by member subscription and by grants, donations and fundraising events.

During World War One the FANY's chosen motto was “Arduis Invictus”, loosely translated as “In difficulty, undaunted”, and unofficially as “I cope”. In a year which marks the centenary of Violette Szabo's birth and the 80th anniversary of the first SOE parachute mission, the indomitable spirit of the FANY remains a force to be reckoned with.



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Happy holidays

Ruth Duston OBE, OC, chief executive of the South Westminster Business Alliance, including the Victoria and Victoria Westminster BIDS, shares her travel memories and top local spots

BY HELEN BLOW

What is your earliest travel memory?

A family holiday to Camber Sands in a caravan. I was about four years old and I got lost on the beach, which is probably why it's ingrained in my mind. I was rescued by these lovely people who managed to find my parents from the crowds of people there. We went there regularly when I was very young.

What was the first destination you remember being amazed by?

My first family holiday to Italy was an amazing experience, but my big wow trip was to Japan to mark a special birthday. It's just like stepping out of any other cultural experience that you've had and into something quite unique and spectacular. We went up into the mountains and stayed in a traditional Japanese house. I remember very formal mealtimes when we dressed in traditional clothes and ate things we'd never seen before. If you're into your raw fish – or even things still wriggling around on your plate – you'd love it, but I remember being quite hungry a lot of the time!

What is your most adventurous holiday to date?

I don't like roughing it, I do like staying in a nice hotel and my creature comforts, so I've never

veered off the beaten track and done something more adventurous where I've had to go camping for instance. The adventure for me is going to a completely new culture, like Japan.

What has been your favourite destination?

One of my favourites was probably Boston in the USA; unlike some US cities, you can walk around easily and take in all the heritage and history. I found the people really friendly and loved the seafood.

Where was your most recent trip?

We went on a family holiday to Juan-les-Pins, in the south of France, quite near Cannes. We





Ruth Duston



St Lucia



The Corinthia

stayed in a beautiful French house down by the beach with a pool. Everything was in walking distance so we could get around without a car. That was also our last holiday before the pandemic hit.

What is your most disastrous holiday memory?

I've had a few, but a trip to St Lucia in the Caribbean with my six-year-old daughter and my mother was the worst holiday I've had. It was like Butlin's in the Caribbean. The service was terrible and there were queues everywhere. In the outside restaurants, bats would be flying around while we ate.

What three things would you never travel without?

I once flew to the USA to speak on a Cunard cruise but when they flew us out to New York to join the ship, my luggage never arrived, so I had to buy as much as I could before getting on the ship. It never did arrive, so learning from that, I would never travel without my toothbrush, my lip salve and probably underwear!

What is the best hotel you've ever stayed in?

My most favourite hotel has to be the Corinthia in London; it's not just the luxury but the quality of the finish, the experience and the service. You're always made to feel so special and it's got a fantastic spa too.

Which destination is still on your bucket list?

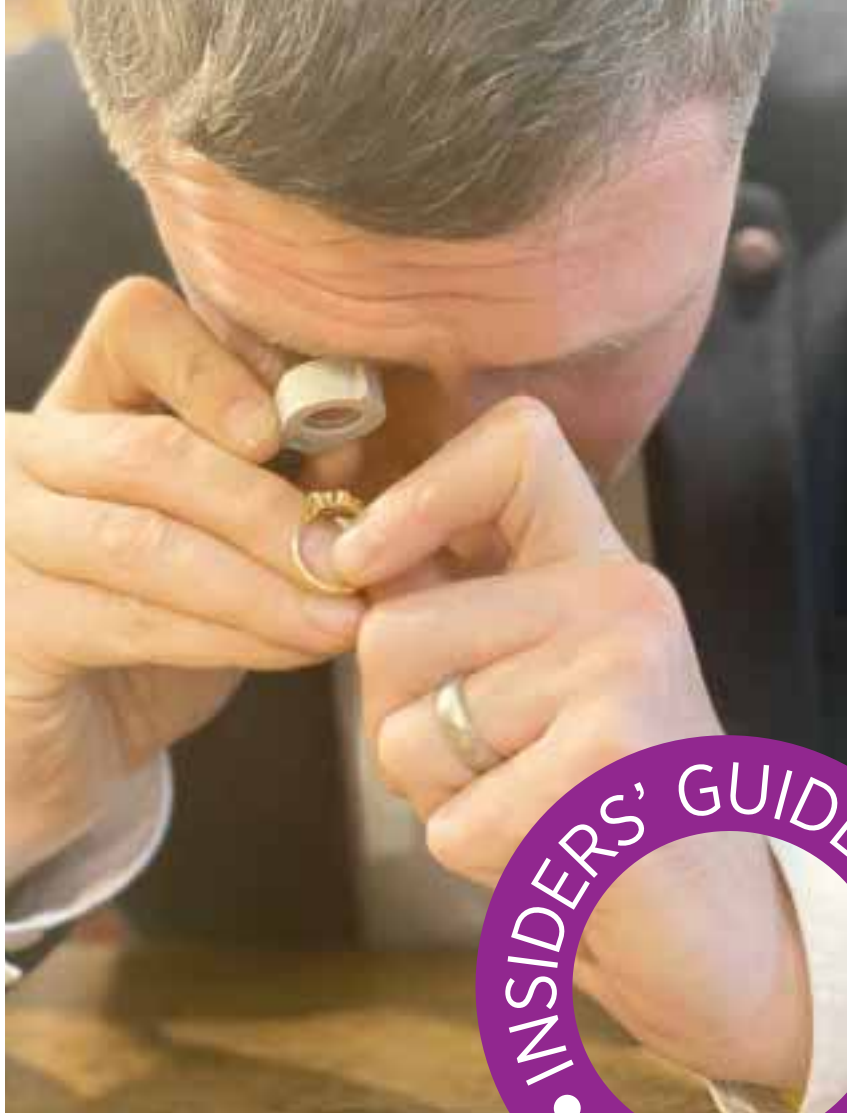
I would like to go to Argentina. We would probably have done that last year if it wasn't for the pandemic. It's a vast country that tells lots of different stories and would offer a very different cultural experience.

Which country's cuisine is your favourite?

Definitely Italy. I am the queen of pasta, and I also love the ice cream and the red wine. Italian food all the way for me.

Where do you eat and drink in Victoria?

My favourite place to eat is The Goring; I love the menu as there's always something different. For cocktails it would probably be The Ivy, as it's got a great atmosphere. And I love popping into Peggy Porschen on Ebury Street for their amazing cupcakes.



Robert Mullings heads up J McCarthy, a family-run jewellery institution established in 1798. Starting off as a pawnbroker in Strutton Ground, it was famously bombed during the Blitz in 1940. The shop on Artillery Row has been the jeweller's home ever since that historic day. Robert shares his favourite spots in Victoria and Westminster...

AS TOLD TO
SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

Your favourite coffee shop?

My favourite shop is Keen on Artillery Row, a couple of doors down from our shop – the coffee and staff are the best! Iris & June are great too.

Restaurant?

A Wong on Wilton Road is fantastic. Andrew is a friend and has gained a Michelin star.

Cocktail spot?

I prefer a pub! The Albert on Victoria Street is my go-to.

Space for a bit of peace and quiet?

St James's Park. It has pockets of calm amid the chaos of central London.

Independent shop?

Other than us, Mr Monocle is a traditional Turkish independent barbershop on Artillery Row.

What's new for J McCarthy?

Every piece is unique – with almost everything being antique vintage or secondhand. This means you never know what you'll find when you visit us. We are also launching our online shop at the start of November, so for the first time, if you can't make it to us during your lunch break or before we shut at 4.30pm then you won't be missing out. Also check our Instagram stories for new pieces daily.

11 Artillery Row, jmccarthy.co.uk



From top:
Robert Mullings
at work, Keen
on Artillery Row
and St James's
Park

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